Election Uncertainty

PREVENTING ATROCITY CRIMES IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

EARLY WARNING COUNTRY REPORT JULY 2019

UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

SIMON-SKJODT CENTER
FOR THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE

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EARLY WARNING PROJECT

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UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

FOREWORD

Genocide and related crimes against humanity are devastating crimes in their scale and scope, in their enduring scars for survivors and their families and the long-term trauma they cause in societies, and in the economic, political and social costs and consequences that often extend far beyond the territory where they were committed.

Working to prevent future genocides requires an understanding about how these events occur, including considerations about warning signs and human behaviors that make genocide and mass atrocities possible.

We know from studying the Holocaust and other genocides, that genocides are never spontaneous. They are always preceded by a range of early warning signs. For example, years before it became a genocide, the Holocaust began with abuses of power and gross human rights violations against Jews and others. If these signs are detected, their causes can be addressed, preventing the potential for catastrophic progression and loss of life.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's founding charter, written by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, mandates that our institution strive to make preventive action a routine response when warning signs appear. Wiesel wrote that "only a conscious, concerted attempt to learn from past errors can prevent recurrence to any racial, religious, ethnic or national group. A memorial unresponsive to the future would also violate the memory of the past."

The Museum's Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide was established to fulfill that vision through transmitting the lessons and legacy of the Holocaust and "to alert the national conscience, influence policy makers, and stimulate worldwide action to confront and prevent genocide." The Center's Early Warning Project works to fulfill this aspect of the Museum's mandate by using innovative research to identify early warning signs — in doing so, we seek to do for today's potential victims what was not done for the Jews of Europe.

In many places, such violence is ongoing—in countries such as Burma, Syria, and South Sudan. These cases are well known. But this risk assessment's primary focus—and the gap we seek to fill—is to highlight a case where atrocity crimes have not yet begun and focus attention on scenarios that could plausibly unfold.

Preventing genocide is of course difficult. In deciding how to respond, policy makers face an array of constraints and competing concerns. The choice to prevent one potential tragedy often takes a back seat when policy makers are confronted by multiple ongoing conflicts. But we know from the Holocaust what can happen when early warning signs go unheeded. We aim for this risk assessment to serve as a tool and a resource for policy makers and others interested in prevention. We hope this helps them better establish priorities and undertake the discussion and deeper analysis that can help reveal where preventive action can make the greatest impact in saving lives.

Naomi Kikoler
Acting Director
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July 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Côte d'Ivoire's 2020 presidential elections near, the country is at a crossroads: It can continue an era of relative peace or revert to the type of ethnic-delineated violence that has marred its past. Every political transition in the country's history has resulted in violence against civilians. Most recently, the crisis that erupted as political parties disputed presidential election results in 2010–11 led to systematic civilian targeting by both sides—that of current President Alassane Ouattara and former President Laurent Gbagbo—including the alleged commission of atrocity crimes by Gbagbo and his followers. Although atrocity crimes—large-scale, systematic violence against civilian populations— are not yet taking place in Côte d'Ivoire, early warning signs are apparent. Immediate attention and early action by the Ivorian government and international partners are required to mitigate risks, prevent violence, and help save lives. To this end, at the end of this report we offer detailed recommendations to the government of Côte d'Ivoire, political party leaders, civil society, foreign governments and international organizations, and the media.

Our analysis suggests that in the period before, during, and after the election, clashes between the main political parties may lead to violence and mass atrocity crimes. In past high-stakes elections, members of political parties have demonstrated the willingness to use violence. Risk is heightened during this period in part because of the zero-sum nature of Ivorian politics; politicians and their supporters perceive the 2020 elections to be "winner-take-all" for political and economic control of the country. In the past, this attitude has led political leaders to manipulate ethnic identity and economic grievances, dividing communities and inciting violence to solidify allegiances and generate political support. Today there is a risk of the resurgence of such exclusionary ideology.

Four major structural factors underpin risk for atrocity crimes in Côte d'Ivoire. First, Côte d'Ivoire has experienced two civil wars in the past 20 years, both of which involved deliberate violence against civilians and intentional ethnic targeting. Second, political affiliation is defined along ethnic and regional lines, making electoral competition a fight for group dominance. Although political parties are not homogenous—Côte d'Ivoire comprises people from more than 60 ethnicities speaking over 80 languages—a person's identity tends to determine his or her party affiliation. Past exclusionary ideology discriminated against northerners and risks a resurgence; at the same time a new exclusionary ideology, discriminating against non-northerners, is being developed. Third, disputes over land ownership and access between Ivorians of different ethnicities and between Ivorians and foreigners are a pervasive source of conflict that can be harnessed by politicians to generate support. Fourth, socioeconomic inequalities and regional disparities feed the narrative that some groups of Ivorians have unfair advantages, or even that some groups are a threat to others.

In the context of these structural issues, five factors have precipitated the escalation of risk today: (1) the breakup of former political alliances, (2) partisan divisions within the armed forces, (3) the political opposition parties' perception of abuse of power by the ruling party, (4) widespread access to arms, and (5) dangerous speech in political and public discourse.

According to our analysis, potential triggering events in the next one to two years may occur before, during, or after the elections, which are scheduled for fall 2020. Potential flashpoints include the designation of the members of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), a perception of high-

profile partisan targeting for judicial prosecution, the potential mishandling of former President Gbagbo's return from custody at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, and the announcement of election results.

In all scenarios, we assess that violence would not start at the party leadership level and would not—initially, at least—be condoned publicly by leaders, who are all interested in being seen by Ivorians and the international community as peacemakers. Rather, any violence would start with demonstrations, which could escalate to become riots, thereby bringing in political party–affiliated youth groups (which may have access to arms), communal militias, private security companies, groups of ex-combatants, and the army. Around the country, local grievances, such as those concerning land conflict, could feed the fire. People may use a period of political unrest, fueled by hate speech and fear-mongering spread by political leaders, to settle personal scores, thus expanding the reach of the conflict by calling on ethnic solidarity within and across regions as justification for taking up arms.

Writing in summer 2019, several factors remain uncertain, limiting our ability to describe plausible atrocity crime scenarios in detail. In particular, until the major fault lines in the presidential elections become clearer, it is difficult to anticipate the most likely perpetrator and target groups. This uncertainty should not, however, be taken as a reason to discount the risks for atrocity crimes. We identify three pairs of potential conflicting parties, which could shift as parties declare their candidates, the IEC does or does not reform, and former President Gbagbo clarifies his position and intentions regarding the election.

1. If former rebel leader Guillaume Soro and President Ouattara both run for the presidency, confrontation between their supporters could escalate to include, and ultimately split, the army. Because it is unknown exactly what portion of the army would follow Soro, it is unclear whether one side would have the upper hand and whether one group of civilians would suffer more fatalities; this worst-case scenario could lead to atrocities on both sides.

2. The composition of the IEC in advance of the elections, or the elections themselves, may lead to violence between supporters of the former allies, the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) and the ruling Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (Unified RHDP). In this case, the PDCI has less capacity to commit violence than the Unified RHDP, making their supporters the more likely target group, especially if the Unified RHDP employs the military to respond to demonstrations.

3. Finally, if former President Gbagbo, who until recently was on trial for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court, decides to return to Côte d'Ivoire and contest the 2020 election, then his return and his potential candidacy could trigger protests and violence. For example, his return to Côte d'Ivoire could lead to a clash between Gbagbo's partisans in the Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) and the supporters of the Unified RHDP: people who are against his release from prison, supporters of President Ouattara, and some victims of the 2010–11 crisis. The scenario of FPI versus Unified RHDP violence is also plausible if the former president's wife, Simone Gbagbo, runs instead of him.

Table 1. Key Actors

PEOPLE		
Name	*Position*	*Political Party*
Alassane Dramane Ouattara	President 2010–present; former International Monetary Fund and Central Bank of West African States economist	The Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix), or RHDP; formerly of the Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR)
Guillaume Soro	Former leader of the rebel movement Forces Nouvelles; former prime minister; recent president of the National Assembly	President of the Comité Politique movement (as of June 2019 Soro is not in a political party); supported by several political parties including Le Rassemblement pour la Côte d'Ivoire (RACI).
Aimé Henri Konan Bédié	Former president 1993–99; president of PDCI-RDA	Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (PDCI-RDA)
Laurent Gbagbo	Former president 2000–2011; recently acquitted of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court and currently in exile in Belgium	Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI)
Charles Blé Goudé	Founder of the Coordination des Jeunes Patriotes, 2001; known as "the street general" for his capacity to ignite crowds; acquitted of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court	Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI)
Simone Ehivet Gbagbo	Former First Lady 2000–11; sentenced in 2015 to 20 years imprisonment for undermining the authority and security of the state but granted amnesty by President Ouattara in 2018; influential in the FPI and in evangelical circles	Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI)
Youssouf Bakayoko	President of the Independent Electoral Commission since February 25, 2010; oversaw legislative elections of 2011 and 2016, municipal and regional elections of 2013 and 2018, presidential elections of 2010 and 2015, and the referendum of 2016; these elections have been widely criticized, making him one of the most controversial figures in Ivorian politics	Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (PDCI-RDA)
Mamadou Koné	Appointed president of the Constitutional Council (which has jurisdiction over the presidential and parliamentary elections) on February 3, 2015, by President Ouattara	Initially in the Forces Nouvelles before joining the Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR), which became the Unified RHDP
Robert Guéï	Former military ruler 1999–2000	Union pour la Démocratie et pour la Paix en Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI)
Félix Houphouët-Boigny	Deceased; former president 1960–1993	Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (PDCI-RDA)

POLITICAL PARTIES			
Acronym	*Name*	*Description*	*Associated Ethnic Groups*
PDCI	The Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire)	Côte d'Ivoire's oldest political party, created in 1946 by Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Its current leader is Henri Konan Bédié, former President of Côte d'Ivoire from 1993–1999. It is now the main opposition party to the Unified RHDP of President Ouattara.	Supporters of the PDCI are generally of the Akan ethnolinguistic group, especially of the subgroup Baoulé, and from the southern, central, and eastern regions.
FPI	The Ivorian Popular Front (Front Populaire Ivoirien)	Established in 1982 by former President Laurent Gbagbo. Now, although the party is still united, it splits along two tendencies, one closer to Gbagbo and the other closer to Pascal Affi N'Guessan.	Ethnic groups from the western region (Bété, Guéré, Krou, Wê) dominate the FPI, which also draws other Akan ethnic subgroups.
RDR	The Rally of the Republicans (Rassemblement des Républicains)	Founded in 1994 by Alassane Dramane Ouattara as a liberal offshoot of the PDCI, it was part of the RHDP coalition from 2005–2018. However, as of January 26, 2019, the RDR has ceased to exist, and it is now part of a new political party, the Unified RHDP, a former coalition that Ouattara recently transformed into a political party.	Supporters of the RDR are generally of ethnic groups from northern regions (Malinké, Sénoufo, etc.).
RHDP	The Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix)	Founded in 2005 as a coalition party including the PDCI, RDR, and other small parties. The RHDP has ruled Côte d'Ivoire since the crisis in 2011. In January 26, 2019, it became a political party of its own—renaming itself the Unified RHDP—and it is dominated by former partisans of the RDR since the PDCI has refused to join this new party.	Supporters of the RHDP are generally of ethnic groups from northern regions (Malinké, Sénoufo, etc.).
RACI	The Rally for Ivory Coast (le Rassemblement pour la Côte d'Ivoire)	Created in February 2019 as a political party supporting Guillaume Soro, who is expected to run for president in 2020.	Supporters of the RACI are generally of ethnic groups from northern regions (Sénoufo, etc.) and former members of the Forces Nouvelles.

Table 2. Recent Conflict Timeline

DATE	ACTIVITY
1960	France grants independence. Felix Houphouët-Boigny holds the presidency until his death in 1993.
1990	Political parties are legalized. Incumbent President Houphouët-Boigny beats opposition leader Laurent Gbagbo in the country's first elections.
1993	Henri Konan Bédié becomes president upon the death of Houphouët-Boigny.
1995	President Bédié is reelected; however, the elections are boycotted by opposition parties in protest of restrictions imposed on their candidates.
Dec 1999	President Bédié is overthrown in a military coup, and the presidency is taken over by General Robert Guei.
Oct 2000	President Guei is forced to flee. Street protests demand he step down after refusing to acknowledge he lost the election. Laurent Gbagbo takes the presidency.
Sep 2002	**The first civil war begins.** Soldiers mutiny in Abidjan over dissatisfaction with the disarmament process after the October 2000 conflict between the followers of rebel leader and northerner Alassane Ouattara and President Laurent Gbagbo. The rebellion builds momentum, and rebel forces take over the country's north.
Dec 2002	Three rebel groups, the MJP (*Mouvement pour la justice et la paix*), the MPIGO (*Mouvement populaire ivoirien du Grand Ouest*), and the MPCI (*Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire*) merge into the *Forces Nouvelles*.
Jan 2003	The Peace Agreement of Linas-Marcoussis is signed, under the auspices of France.
May 2003	The first UN peacekeeping mission in Côte d'Ivoire, the *Mission des Nations Unies en Côte d'Ivoire* (MINUCI) is authorized by the Security Council. A year later, in April 2004, it is replaced by the *Opération des Nations Unies en Côte d'Ivoire* (ONUCI).
Mar 2004	The first contingent of a UN peacekeeping force deploys as President Gbagbo cracks down on opposition rallies.
Nov 2004	The Ivorian Air Force strikes the French position. French forces retaliate by destroying all Ivorian Air Force airplanes; violent anti-French protests ensue. The UN imposes an arms embargo.
Apr 2005	Peace talks in South Africa declare an "immediate and final end" to hostilities.
Jun 2005	Massacres occur in the western town of Duekoue, with estimates ranging from 100–800 civilians killed by Ouattara's forces.
Mar 2007	**The first civil war ends.** Gbagbo's government and Soro's New Forces (*Forces Nouvelle*) rebels sign a power-sharing peace deal. Soro is named prime minister.
May 2009	Rebels hand over ten zones in the north to civilian control.
Oct 2009	Juan Mendez, special adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, warns that action is needed to prevent genocide in Côte d'Ivoire, especially calling attention to hate speech.
Nov 2010	**The second civil war, or "the crisis," begins** with the presidential runoff poll between opposition leader Ouattara and incumbent Gbagbo.
Dec 2010	The Independent Electoral Commission declares Ouattara the winner of the presidential election runoff. Gbagbo refuses to accept the results, and the dispute escalates to violence.
Dec 2010	Côte d'Ivoire's ambassador to the UN warns that the country is "on the brink of genocide," while the UN accuses Côte d'Ivoire's state media of inciting hatred against it and its peacekeepers.
Apr 2011	**The second civil war ends.** Ouattara's forces, with the help of French forces under UNSC Resolution 1975, capture Gbagbo and deliver him to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Gbagbo faces charges of crimes against humanity for violence against civilians following the 2010 election.
Sep 2011	The Truth, Reconciliation, and Dialogue Commission is launched.
Jan-May 2017	A series of army mutinies erupt in various cities over disputes about pay, bonuses, and working conditions.
Jun 2017	The UN peacekeeping mission, ONUCI, is officially ended.
Oct 2018	Six civilians are killed in protests around municipal elections.
Jan 2019	The International Criminal Court acquits Gbagbo and Charles Blé Goudé (leader of the Young Patriots movement supporting the FPI, also known as "the Street General" for his role in organizing often violent street movements and demonstrations) of charges of crimes against humanity over the 2010–11 violence.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years, Côte d'Ivoire has faced two civil wars, both involving intentional violence against civilians and arising in moments of political contestation. As Côte d'Ivoire's 2020 presidential elections near, the country is at a crossroads: It can continue the era of relative peace that has been the norm since the 2010–11 crisis, or it can revert to the type of ethnic-delineated electoral violence that has marred its past. Although atrocity crimes[1] are not yet taking place in Côte d'Ivoire, early warning signs are apparent. Immediate attention and early action by the Ivorian government and international partners are required to mitigate risks, prevent violence, and help save lives.

From 2002–2006, Côte d'Ivoire experienced its first civil war, which saw the commission of crimes against humanity and war crimes. The war was waged between the country's north and south (each region historically favored by different political parties) over issues of ethnicity and who could call

Figure 1. Côte d'Ivoire Country Map

Box 1. Côte d'Ivoire Key Facts

Population
- Côte d'Ivoire is located in West Africa, sharing borders with Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, with an area of 322,463 square kilometers (roughly the size of New Mexico). The total population is approximately 26.3 million and Abidjan, the largest city, is home to 4.9 million people. As of 2018, 50.8 percent of the total population lives in urban areas.[1]
- The median age is 19.9 years, and approximately 60 percent of the population is under age 25, making Côte d'Ivoire one of the youngest countries in the world.[2]
- French is the official language, and more than 80 languages are spoken throughout the country.[3]
- The most prominent ethnic groups are Akan (28.8 percent), Gur (16.1 percent), Northern Mande (14.5 percent), Kru (8.5 percent), Southern Mande (6.9 percent), and non-Ivorian (42.3 percent).[4]
- Muslims constitute 42.9 percent of the population, followed by Catholics (17.2 percent), and Evangelicals (11.8 percent). Other religions account for 9 percent of the population, whereas 19.1 percent of people are not religious. The majority of foreign workers are Muslims (72.7 percent).[5]

Economy
- Côte d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer of cocoa beans and ranks high for coffee and palm oil.
- Since 2013, Côte d'Ivoire's growth rate has been one of the highest in the world—its GDP grew 7.5 percent in 2018 alone.[6] However, the percentage of the population below the poverty line was estimated at 46 percent in 2015; in 2018, Côte d'Ivoire ranked 170th among 189 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index.[7]
- Horizontal socioeconomic inequalities between socioprofessional groups[8] has spurred a series of conflicts and led to several strikes by trade unions, paralyzing public services in 2017.

History
- Côte d'Ivoire gained independence from France in 1960. For part of the French colonization, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso were united and called Upper Volta (first as part of the French Union and later as a self-governing colony) until 1947.
- Côte d'Ivoire experienced a civil war from 2002–06 and a resurgence of violence—called "the Crisis"—in 2010–11.
- The country's recent history has been shaped by the manipulation of ethnicity and conceptions of "Ivorian" identity by political actors. This has contributed to conflict over land tenure and the commission of atrocity crimes, including crimes against humanity, during the two civil wars.

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[1] Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *The World Factbook: Côte d'Ivoire* (Langley, VA: CIA), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iv.html.
[2] CIA, *The World Factbook: Côte d'Ivoire*.
[3] David M. Eberhard, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, eds., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 22nd ed. (Dallas, Texas: SIL International, 2019), http://www.ethnologue.com.
[4] CIA, *The World Factbook: Côte d'Ivoire*.
[5] CIA, *The World Factbook: Côte d'Ivoire*.
[6] World Bank, "Economic Outlook in Côte d'Ivoire: Robust Growth but Threatened by the Effects of Climate Change," press release, July 12, 2018, https://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/news/press-release/2018/07/12/economic-outlook-for-cote-divoire-robust-growth-under-the-looming-threat-of-climate-change-impacts.
[7] United Nations Development Program (UNDP), "Côte d'Ivoire: Human Development Indicators," Human Development Reports, UNDP, http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CIV.
[8] For instance, teachers in public schools are paid less in comparison with other civil servants such as police, members of the military, or customs officers.

themselves Ivorian. Politicians used the hyper-nationalist ideology of *Ivoirité*—designed to exclude northerners from access to political power—to incite interethnic conflict and leverage economic and ethnic grievances to garner political support. The elections of 2010 were intended to consolidate the civil war's peace process, but instead led to a recurrence of violence as protests broke out over the contested results.

The second civil war, regarded as "The Crisis," illustrates the connection between politics, ethnicity, and region of origin in Côte d'Ivoire. Partisans—or political supporters—perceived the zero-sum nature of electoral competition and, with the support of their leadership, took violent action to secure the benefits of political power for their ethnopolitical groups. The country has not yet recovered from those wars and atrocity crimes. Peace is still fragile; hatred and high levels of ethnic and political polarization still characterize the social context in Côte d'Ivoire.

As we approach the first seriously contested presidential elections since the 2010–11 crisis,[2] there is a risk of the resurgence of exclusionary ideology. The zero-sum nature of Ivorian politics suggests that politicians and their supporters perceive the 2020 elections to be "winner-take-all." Many of the risk factors present before the previous conflicts persist, and additional precipitating factors have emerged since 2010–11. This report assesses the factors that account for the risk of a recurrence of crimes against humanity, describes plausible scenarios that could lead to atrocity crimes in the next 12 to 18 months, and proposes policy options to mitigate the risks.

METHODOLOGY

This report is the fourth in a series of studies[3] on selected countries facing relatively high risk for atrocity crimes, yet lacking sufficient policy attention to addressing those risks. These reports are designed to delve deeper into country-specific contexts and help inform preventive action.

The Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide's Early Warning Project seeks to provide governments, civil society, development partners, and vulnerable communities with advanced and reliable warning for potential atrocity crimes. The project aims to highlight situations where mass atrocities—"large-scale, systematic violence against civilian populations"[4]—are not yet taking place but where early warning signs are apparent. We selected Côte d'Ivoire because it has consistently ranked in the high-risk category of countries in our Statistical Risk Assessment,[5] and the risk appears to be increasing. Côte d'Ivoire ranked 11th in our most recent assessment, up from 27th and 24th in previous years.[6] Our most recent statistical analysis estimated Côte d'Ivoire to have a 9.4 percent, or approximately 1 in 11, chance of a new mass killing beginning in the country in 2018 or 2019.[7] This high-risk ranking contrasts with a period of relative stability and economic growth in the country since 2011,[8] as well as the departure of the UN peacekeeping operation in June 2017. We concluded that deeper inquiry would help understand the nature of the risks and focus international attention on potential violence in Côte d'Ivoire.[9]

Information in this report is based on field research in Côte d'Ivoire (see the appendix for details), as well as on expert consultations and a literature review. The report's conceptual framework and research questions draw from the atrocity prevention framework developed by the United States government.[10] We begin by detailing structural risk factors—that is, characteristics that are slow to change but create the context in which conflict and atrocity crimes might occur. We then discuss precipitating factors, which further heighten the risk for systematic violence against civilian populations. Based on this analysis, we describe scenarios of atrocity crimes that we judge could *plausibly* occur in the next two years.

STRUCTURAL RISK FACTORS

Here we highlight four structural characteristics—presented in order of importance—at the root of the potential for atrocity crimes in Côte d'Ivoire: (1) the recent history of war and mass atrocity crimes, (2) the role of ethnicity in politics, (3) disputes over land, and (4) socioeconomic inequalities.[11] By themselves, these factors do not cause atrocities, but contribute to underlying risk conditions.[12] Although they are not unique to Côte d'Ivoire and are largely resistant to change in the near term, understanding these structural risk factors is critical to understanding the risk for atrocity crimes in Côte d'Ivoire.

Table 3. Early Warning Project Statistical Risk Assessment Results and Key Risk Factors

Rank (out of 163 countries)	
2017–18	27 (4.3%)
2018–19	11 (9.4%)
Key Risk Factors	

The following factors have the greatest influence on the model's estimated risk for Côte d'Ivoire, compared to an average country. These variables are not necessarily causal—they indicate heightened risk for mass killing but do not themselves cause mass killing to occur.

- Any mass killing (since 1945): Côte d'Ivoire experienced mass killing in 2010–11
- High infant mortality rate: 55.8 deaths/1,000 live births
- High ethnic fractionalization
- Lack of freedom of movement for men
- Regime type: Anocracy (mix of autocratic and democratic characteristics)[1]

[1] See "Methodology: Risk Factor Sources," Early Warning Project, https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/methodology-risk-factors.

RECENT HISTORY OF WAR AND ATROCITIES

Scholars agree that countries that have experienced atrocities in the past are at greater risk of future atrocities. Côte d'Ivoire has experienced two civil wars in the past 20 years, both of which involved deliberate violence against civilians targeted based on their ethnic identity. Those past conflicts—both precipitated by elections—illustrate the zero-sum nature of electoral competition in Côte d'Ivoire and how elites harness interethnic grievances to generate political support, sometimes enabling or commissioning atrocity crimes.[13]

The First Civil War: 2002–2006

The first civil war was "characterized by limited direct fighting between the nominal warring parties, but serious and sometimes systematic abuses against civilians," perpetrated by both sides.[14] This included the targeting of civilians on the basis of their ethnic, religious, and political identities. Preceding the war, Robert Guei unseated President Henri Konan Bédié in a coup on December 24, 1999, heralding a yearlong period of violence against civilians, repressive governance, and systematic

abuses.[15] In 2000, Laurent Gbagbo won the presidential election against Guei. Gbagbo's primary competition, Alassane Ouattara, was barred from running because of claims that he was not a "true Ivorian," as a northerner whose parents were allegedly born in Burkina Faso. In the context of broad sociopolitical instability, the announcement of the election results, perceived by many to be illegitimate owing to Ouattara's exclusion, precipitated a larger conflict.

In September 2002, soldiers of northern origins, later joined by "Dozo" traditional hunters[16] and other recruits, rebelled to oust Gbagbo and, in their minds, "correct" long-standing grievances, "including the widely held feeling of many northern Ivorians that they were consistently politically excluded and systematically discriminated against over the past decade."[17] State military forces responded by launching an operation in low-income neighborhoods around Abidjan, where their tactics—including burning, arbitrary arrests and detentions, disappearances, rape, and summary executions—displaced approximately 12,000 people, mostly immigrants.[18] By the end of September, the rebel movement, *Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI), had taken control of most of northern Côte d'Ivoire (50 percent of the country). As the MPCI advanced, it allegedly committed abuses including killing suspected government sympathizers, targeting people based on ethnicity, and using death squads made up of rebel combatants and civilian vigilantes.

As 2002 neared its end, the MPCI merged with two other rebel groups to become the *Forces Nouvelles*.[19] A new ceasefire and peace agreement, the *Accords de Linas-Marcoussis,* were concluded shortly thereafter in France in January 2003, including provisions for elections, disarmament, and a Government of National Reconciliation. On March 4, 2007, the parties signed a final peace agreement in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, retaining Gbagbo as president and instating the *Forces Nouvelles* leader, Guillaume Soro, as prime minister.

Throughout the conflict, both sides targeted civilians based on ethnic, religious, and political identities. After the war, there was no accountability for crimes committed by either side. In the face of impunity and in the absence of nonpartisan and reliable state security forces, vigilante and self-defense groups emerged as the only providers of security, especially in the relatively lawless western regions, laying the foundation for future violence.

The Second Civil War ("The Crisis"): 2010–11

The second civil war, a postelectoral crisis arising out of disputes over the rightful winner of the 2010 election, again saw the commission of atrocity crimes. The Crisis involved formal state and rebel armed forces, as well as informal armed groups (i.e., vigilantes, communal militias, and youth groups).[20] The way this conflict started and then spiraled illustrates the connection between politics, ethnicity, and region of origin in Côte d'Ivoire. It demonstrates that political competition is enough to motivate large-scale group-targeted violence in moments of confrontation.

Box 2. The Independent Electoral Commission and Polling Operations in 2010

In 2010, the politically polarized Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) produced contested results—at least in part due to issues in polling operations—that triggered the Crisis.

In the first round of the presidential election on October 31, 2010, polling operations were poorly administered because of "the very late and superficial training given to polling station staff," occurring "generally less than 48 hours before the start of voting."[1] However, according to national and international observers and Ivorian civil society organizations, the failure of polling station staff to check for traces of ink on voters' hands, in addition to other irregularities, did not harm the integrity of the voting process.[2] Moreover, after the first round, only 1 of the 14 presidential candidates—Henri Konan Bédié—filed a complaint. His complaint was rejected by the Constitutional Council, suggesting that the conflict was more about Bédié's dissatisfaction with the results than the process itself.

The IEC appeared weaker in its handling of voting and of polling operations during the runoff election on November 28, 2010. Although polling station staff received better training between the two rounds of elections, several irregularities arose during the runoff: voter intimidation, issues with ballot secrecy, and incorrect sealing of ballot boxes.[3] More importantly, the IEC—that, as its name suggests, is supposed to be *independent*—became politically polarized, with representatives of both candidates in the IEC refusing to accept the election results. Ultimately, the chairman of the IEC declared Ouattara the winner. The Constitutional Council[4] overturned his decision based on Gbagbo's complaints that voting should be void in eight departments[5] because of blatant irregularities,[6] thereby declaring Gbagbo the winner. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (UN SRSG) in Côte d'Ivoire, Y. J. Choi, confirmed and certified Ouattara's victory declared by the IEC[7] and this conflict of legitimacy between the IEC and the Constitutional Council over election results triggered the Crisis. When Gbagbo refused to leave office, the United Nations and the African Union condemned his actions, and "instead of recounting the votes, the pro-Ouattara FRCI (*Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire*) decided to remove Gbagbo from power by force. The operation was actively supported by the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and French Forces (*Operation Licorne*) based on UN Security Council Resolution 1975."[8]

[1] The Carter Center, "International Election Observation Mission to Côte d'Ivoire. Final Report: 2010 Presidential Elections and 2011 Legislative Elections," report, Carter Center, Atlanta, GA, 2011, p. 54, https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/cote-diviore-2010-2011-elections-final-rpt.pdf.

[2] Most of the irregularities occurred in the northern regions favorable to Ouattara. Therefore, the partisans of former President Gbagbo would considered that these irregularities harmed the integrity of the voting process, whereas partisans of Ouattara and most international observers would say the opposite. Even to this day, the 2010 elections are hotly debated.

[3] Convention de la Société Civile Ivoirienne. (2011), "Mission d'observation electorale en Côte d'Ivoire. Election presidentielle 2010," Press release, October 31, 2010, http://news.abidjan.net/h/392993.html.

[4] "The Constitutional Council is an institution established by Ivorian Law No. 94-438 of 16 August 1994. Its role is to ensure that major elections and referendums are held regularly, and without incident. It decides on the conformity of laws with the constitution and certain regulations before they come into force. Ideally the IEC announces preliminary results and the Constitutional Council validates, but if the IEC is unable to announce them within three days, the Constitutional Council must take its place for final validation of preliminary results." Doudou Sidibé, "Peace Processes in Côte d'Ivoire: Democracy and Challenges of Consolidating Peace after the Post-Electoral Crisis," Accord Conference paper (1), March 21, 2013, 8, https://www.accord.org.za/publication/peace-processes-cote-divoire/.

[5] The incriminated voting operations concerned the following regions: Beoumi, Bouaké, Boundiali, Dabakala, Ferkessedougou, Katiola, Korhogo, and Sakassou.

[6] For more information about this conflict on the election result, read, The Carter Center "International Election Observation Mission to Côte d'Ivoire. Final Report," 64–66.

[7] By UN Security Council Resolution 1765 (2007), SRSG Choi was mandated to certify that all stages of the electoral process provided all necessary guarantees for the holding of open, free, fair, and transparent presidential and legislative elections in accordance with international standards.

[8] See article 1 of the UNSCR 1975: "Urges all the Ivorian parties and other stakeholders to respect the will of the people and the election of Alassane Dramane Ouattara as President of Côte d'Ivoire, as recognized by ECOWAS, the African Union and the rest of the international community, expresses its concern at the recent escalation of violence and demands an immediate end to the violence against civilians, including women, children and internally displaced persons." This resolution is under chapter VII, authorizing the use of force. Sidibé, "Peace Processes in Côte d'Ivoire: Democracy and Challenges," 8.

Roadside stalls in a town in western Côte d'Ivoire. *USHMM/Mollie Zapata*

The Crisis began around the 2010 elections, when the electoral commission declared Ouattara the winner, but incumbent President Gbagbo refused to step down. An Ivorian court proclaimed Gbagbo the winner, while the international community recognized Ouattara's victory. Elite state security forces and pro-Gbagbo militias—including the *Jeunes Patriotes*, whose leader was subsequently tried alongside Gbagbo at the International Criminal Court—launched a targeted campaign of violence against perceived Ouattara supporters, in which they "beat them to death with bricks, executed them by gunshot at point-blank range, or burned them alive."[21]

In the west, where violence was most intense, Gbagbo-aligned militias and Liberian mercenaries systematically targeted civilians based on ethnicity, killing those who were not of the Guéré or other politically aligned ethnic groups and raping women. For example, on March 25, 2011, pro-Gbagbo militias massacred approximately 100 civilians in far western Côte d'Ivoire. They identified and targeted northern Ivorians and immigrants and executed men, women, and children. According to one witness, "They came in accusing us of being rebels, and said, 'If you're Dioula [from northern Côte d'Ivoire], you can try to flee, if you're Guéré [natives of the area and largely Gbagbo supporters], stay, we're not concerned with you. But if you're Malian or Mossi [an ethnic group from Burkina Faso], we'll kill you.' And then they started killing."[22] In response, pro-Ouattara forces, including the *Forces Nouvelles* and other armed groups, launched a campaign to take over the country. This included horrific reprisal violence in Guéré areas, "including by point-blank execution,

dismemberment, and immolation."[23] In Duékoué, a western town and stronghold of Gbagbo support, Ouattara-supporting militants led massacres of Guéré civilians in March 2011, with estimates of up to 800 fatalities.[24] Similar, although smaller-scale, attacks occurred in Abidjan as well, targeting those of ethnic groups perceived to be supporters of Gbagbo and the FPI. In April, Ouattara's forces took Abidjan, backed the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), which was mandated to use "all necessary measures" to "protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence…including to prevent the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population."[25] Fighting finally ended in mid-May, as Gbagbo's last holdout supporters were defeated.

THE ROLE OF ETHNICITY IN POLITICS: FROM "IVOIRITÉ" TO "RATTRAPAGE"

Ivorian political leaders have historically leveraged ethnicity and capitalized on interethnic grievances to garner political support. Today, ethnicity is Ivorians' predominant identifier and people see control of political power as crucial to securing benefits for their ethnic groups.[26] This pattern increases the likelihood that groups interpret political disputes as threats by one ethnic group against another, as evidenced by the group-targeted violence that arose during both civil wars.

With the advent of multiparty politics in the 1990s,[27] the three main political parties—Gbagbo's *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI), Houphouët-Boigny and later Bédié's *Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI), and Ouattara's *Rassemblement Des Républicains* (RDR)—recruited supporters who ascribed to the party of the leader from their ethnic group, region, and religion (see Table 1: Actors for a list of the ethnic groups tending to support each party). Although political parties are not homogenous—Côte d'Ivoire comprises people from more than 60 ethnicities—each tends to be dominated by specific ethnic groups. While for 30 years President Houphouët-Boigny publicly strove to eliminate ethnic associations and contain the influence of ethnicity within Côte d'Ivoire,[28] he paradoxically relied on ethnic clientelism to establish and consolidate presidential power. He built a nationwide network of elites that acted as the representatives for their own ethnic groups, creating a system—that persists today—in which people depend on their ethnic leaders to access political and economic benefits.[29] The onset of multiparty politics upon his death tore apart the fragile equilibrium between southern Baoulé[30] elites, who had become accustomed to a system rigged to their advantage, and elites of other ethnicities. (The Baoulé are part of the larger Akan group that accounts for the majority of Ivorians. PDCI leadership—Houphouët-Boigny and Bédié—are Baoulé).

Ethnicity became increasingly politicized and contentious under Houphouët-Boigny's successor, Henri Konan Bédié. Bédié abandoned Houphouët-Boigny's commitment to ethnic equilibrium and instead institutionalized the exclusionary ideology of *Ivoirité*, entrenching ethnic divisions in all aspects of government, including undermining the independence of the judiciary.[31] Ivoirité, that is "Ivorian-ness," distinguishes so-called "true Ivorians" from foreigners or Ivorians of foreign origins (i.e., those from northern Côte d'Ivoire who have ethnic ties to Burkinabe, Malians, etc.) and aims to prevent the latter from depriving the former of their privileges.[32] Indeed, this ideology was used as justification to exclude Ouattara—whose father was rumored to have been born in Burkina Faso—from being eligible to run for president in the 1995 and 2000 elections. Although President Ouattara's government has taken steps toward minimizing the influence of Ivoirité,[33] and it is no longer publicly discussed, this powerful ideology was a driving factor of the civil wars and could reemerge as political competition opens up approaching the 2020 elections.

Box 3. Northerners vs. Southerners: A Long History of Exclusion

Economic and migration policies implemented during the presidency of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who led the country from its independence in 1960 up to his death in 1993, brought both economic prosperity and intergroup tension to the country. Houphouët-Boigny favored immigration policies to attract foreign workers from neighboring countries to develop Côte d'Ivoire's agriculture-based economy. Although successful for economic growth, this policy had negative effects on intergroup relations. When the country went into economic crisis owing to falling commodity prices and structural adjustment programs mandated by the international community in the 1990s, economic competition between groups became more apparent.

High unemployment compelled people from the cities to return to villages and search for jobs on plantations, where they realized that foreigners and northerners had taken land that southern and western Ivorians considered theirs. Northern Ivorians have religious, linguistic, and ethnic ties to Burkina Faso, Mali, and other countries and are often thought of as foreigners by other Ivorians. Ivorians, especially those from the South, saw foreigners and northern Ivorians as unfairly privileged imposters. This perception was part of the motivation for the first civil war and was prevalent when Gbagbo came to power in 2000. He and his followers saw their opportunity to "take the country back" from "foreigners," privileging the ethnic groups of their supporters, especially the Bété, Guéré, and Krou from the southern and western regions over others. Tellingly, this attitude later influenced Ouattara and his supporters, who see their time in power (2010 through the present) as *le rattrapage*, their turn to reap the benefits of state control for their ethnic groups.

Today, a new ideology is further polarizing Ivorian society between populations originating in the north and those originating in the south. Under the presidency of northerner Alassane Ouattara (2011–present), ethnic politics is expressed through the concept of *rattrapage*, that is, "catching up." Its aim is to make elites of northern ethnicities "the exclusive and absolute holders of the country leadership,"[34] which they see as their due after years of perceived exclusion by the Ivoirité ideology. Through rattrapage, northerners now occupy many leadership positions in public administration.[35] This is a source of contention for elites from other regions since it has become difficult for them to access high-profile public offices. Like Ivoirité, rattrapage has the potential to exacerbate intergroup tensions, although thus far, unlike the former, it has not been institutionalized in the laws of Côte d'Ivoire.

DISPUTES OVER LAND

Disagreements over land ownership (i.e., land tenure) are by far the primary cause of conflict—including intercommunal violence, population displacement, and destruction of property[36]—in Côte d'Ivoire, especially in rural and agricultural areas.[37] In times of national political competition, these intercommunal and interethnic tensions may be harnessed by politicians and the media to rile up supporters,[38] thus increasing the risk that a hyperlocal conflict is widely perceived as a threat to the broader ethnic or religious group. This quotation from a young man of the Wê community of western Côte d'Ivoire illustrates the tie between ethnicity and land access:

Box 4. High Risk in the West: The Role of Climate Change and Population Movement in Increasing Risk for Violent Conflict

In Côte d'Ivoire, climate change has led to geographic shifts in agricultural resources over the past three decades, interacting with the identified ethnicity- and economy-related structural risk factors to increase competition for resources between groups, thereby raising the stakes in any conflict.[1] These shifts put intense pressure on the country's western regions (Guiglo, Danané, Toulepleu, etc.)—historically the most violent in times of conflict—where *autochtone* and *allochtone* Ivorians, foreigners and former refugee returnees, are today competing for land and diminishing resources.[2]

Recent rainfall deficits, the depletion of soils, and a lack of arable land negatively affect agriculture, pushing farmers to seek more suitable land as theirs degrades. Internal migration to arable land causes both demographic pressure and land pressure, as farmers from different ethnic groups compete over scarce resources, often resulting in intercommunal conflicts that fall along ethnic lines. In addition, the scarcity of pastoral areas because of the expansion or shifting of farms has already triggered deliberate large-scale attacks on both pastoralists and farmers in the North (e.g., Korhogo) and in the East (e.g., Bouna).[3]

The shift of the "Cocoa Loop"—Côte d'Ivoire's most lucrative agricultural region—from east to west illustrates the effect of changes in agriculture on already fragile social cohesion and increasing intercommunity conflict. The Cocoa Loop initially consisted of the following departments (Côte d'Ivoire's third-level administrative subdivisions) of the center east: Dimbokro, Daoukro, and Bongouanou. This large area, which produced the most cocoa and coffee in the country and where labor needs attracted the largest number of internal migrants and international immigrants, has experienced a significant decline in production over the past three decades because of profound changes in agriculture—owing to the effects of climate change, but also to human action such as the overuse and overextension of agricultural land.

Today, the Cocoa Loop has moved to the west (Duekoué, Guiglo, Soubré, San Pedro, etc.), which has become the "Promised Land" on which farmers and migrants converge. This area, of course, already has its own farming population. To add another layer of complexity and competition, Ivorians displaced during the civil wars are now returning to the west only to find that the land they believe to be theirs has long been taken over or sold to others. It is hardly surprising that the violence in 2010–11 centered in this region, where supporters of Gbagbo and Ouattara clashed and already exigent tensions over land issues fueled the fire.

[1] The Cocoa Loop was the primary producing region in Côte d'Ivoire in 1973 for cocoa and in 1980 for coffee; the country's most lucrative crops. Yapi Affou and Kouadio Tano, "La Boucle du cacao en Côte d'Ivoire: une situation migratoire inversée," in *Migration, Social Change, and Development*, ed. Andre Quesnel and Vimard Patrice (Paris: Orstom, 1991), 311, http://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins_textes/pleins_textes_6/colloques2/34597.pdf.
[2] Koffi Justin Kouassi, "Les conflits fonciers ruraux en Côte d'Ivoire," Fiche d'analyse, March 2017, http://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-analyse-1094_fr.html.
[3] Jeremy Speight, "Bouna, une 'instabilité permanente?' Foncier, autorité et violence post-conflit en Côte d'Ivoire dans la longue durée," *Afrique contemporaine* 263–264, 3 (2017): 197–215; RFI, "Côte d'Ivoire: au moins 20 morts."

> *This land and its forests are those of our forefathers, those of the Wê people . . . .*
> *For decades, and in waves, the Baoulé [another important Ivorian community]*
> *and the Burkinabe people are illegally settling in the Goin-Débé classified forest*
> *to cultivate cocoa and the state is doing nothing. While we, we respect the law*
> *and have, for a long time, deserted the classified forests. A few months ago, we*
> *organized ourselves to go get our land. We too want to work our land, to enjoy*
> *its fruits.[39]*

There are, broadly, three types of land conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, which occur in all regions and arise in diverse terms. First, land conflicts arise between Ivorian ethnic groups originating from different regions,[40] especially between Ivorians who are native to the area where the land is in question (*les autochtones*, or indigenous) and Ivorians who migrated there from other regions within the country (*les allochtones*, or nonnative). Since region is often synonymous with ethnicity in the Ivorian context, conflict between Ivorians from different regions is effectively ethnic conflict.[41] Second, land conflicts between Ivorians and foreigners have been taken advantage of by politicians through the Ivoirité ideology. Although this ideology is no longer publicly discussed, the tensions it produced remain pervasive.[42] An interviewee in the eastern town of Bondoukou noted,

> *[T]he security forces are slow to intervene when violence erupts against*
> *foreigners. Consequently, foreigners secretly create their own defense groups to*
> *deter attacks against them . . . the fact that each community has the capacity to*
> *arm themselves raises the prospect of large-scale attacks.[43]*

Third, there are land-related conflicts between farmers and pastoralists of the same region. For example, in Bouna, the farmers (Lobi community) deliberately attacked the pastoralists (Fulani community) in March 2016, which resulted in more than 30 fatalities, mostly in the Fulani community.[44]

SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES

Socioeconomic inequalities between historically underprivileged ethnic groups from the northern regions and those from the more privileged central and southern regions contribute to the risk of group-targeted violence in Côte d'Ivoire. For example, major state institutions, schools, universities, hospitals, and industries are mostly located in the southern regions. Politicians can use these "horizontal inequalities" to stoke group grievances and thereby mobilize supporters, convincing them that electoral victories will secure economic resources for their groups.[45] The populations of the north, particularly the Dioula and the Malinké ethnic groups, are perceived to be economically favored by the regime of President Ouattara (see ideology of *rattrapage*), while populations in the South, particularly the Baoulé and other Akan ethnic groups, are perceived to be favored by the previous administrations of Houphouët-Boigny, Bédié, and Gbagbo. This situation contributes to a mutual resentment between northerners and southerners.

PRECIPITATING FACTORS OF ATROCITY CRIMES

In situations where multiple structural risk factors are present, atrocity crimes become more likely when political competition is perceived as zero-sum and even "existential," and when elites can mobilize armed groups to attack civilian populations with relative ease. We identify five specific factors, which have emerged since the 2010–11 crisis, that indicate the increasingly severe political competition and relative ease of violent mobilization: (1) the breakup of former political alliances, (2) divisions within the armed forces, (3) the political opposition parties' perception of abuse of power by the ruling party, (4) widespread access to arms, and (5) dangerous speech in political and public discourse.

While the structural factors detailed in the prior section exist in many countries and are slow to change, the precipitating factors described below are specific to Côte d'Ivoire, have developed more recently, and are more immediate precursors to potential atrocity crimes. A precipitating event "actualizes tensions and emotions that are already present in a particular setting and in turn funnels that tension and emotion in a particular direction."[46] In an early warning analysis, precipitating factors make the risk for atrocity crimes plausible.

THE BREAKUP OF FORMER POLITICAL ALLIANCES

The breakup of political alliances is heightening competition between ethnic and political groups, increasing the likelihood of the kind of severe political instability that usually precedes mass atrocities. An overwhelming majority of our interview respondents judged that competition between major political parties could lead to an escalation of risk for atrocity crimes in Côte d'Ivoire. Broad coalitions have dominated politics since the 2010–11 crisis, but as the 2020 national elections approach, this unusual level of unity is dissolving. The recent fracturing of the key coalition party is resulting in a multiplicity of possible presidential candidates, some of whose supporters have clashed before in contested elections. The zero-sum political environment in Côte d'Ivoire—in which the party in power controls virtually all aspects of government—creates incentives for some to resort to violence as a means of securing political power.

In September 2018, the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) withdrew from the Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP), a coalition of political parties that supported the candidacy of President Alassane Ouattara for reelection in 2015.[47] The RHDP was established in May 2005 and included President Ouattara's RDR, former President Henri Konan Bédié's PDCI, and small political parties, such as the Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire, the Movement of the Forces of the Future, and the Union for the Ivory Coast. However, in July 2018, the RDR transformed the coalition into a political party—the Unified RHDP—with Ouattara as its president. The PDCI ultimately withdrew from the Unified RHDP over a disagreement of whom the party would run for president in 2020. The PDCI had expected its candidate, Bédié, to have his turn as the RHDP coalition candidate, but the Unified RHDP is planning to run Ouattara again, despite the fact that he technically cannot run because of term limits.

Western Côte d'Ivoire, the road between Daoula and Man. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum/Mollie Zapata*

The withdrawal of the PDCI from the Unified RHDP has made the former allies primary competitors. The two parties faced off in the regional and municipal elections of October 13, 2018, making those elections tense and surprisingly violent in some cities: Grand-Bassam, Port-Bouët, and Plateau. Although violence was not large-scale, the fact that *any* violence occurred over local elections— which are significantly lower stakes than the upcoming presidential election—surprised many and exposed the fault lines and depth of animosity in Ivorian political competition. Both political parties accused the other of destruction of property, intimidation, and physical violence against voters; in fact, supporters of the PDCI suffered more.

Since the initial split, further divisions in the Unified RHDP have created additional potentially violent fault lines. Guillaume Soro, the former president of the Ivorian National Assembly, former secretary-general of the *Forces Nouvelles*, and—until recently—one of the Unified RHDP's key leaders, left the party in 2018 and has expressed presidential ambitions. In late 2018, Soro's supporters launched a movement called the Rally for Ivory Coast (RACI), which became a political party in February 2019. It supports Soro as a presidential candidate for the election in 2020.[48]

Already, the pro-Soro and pro-Unified RHDP youth committees have clashed in the northern city of Korhogo, resulting in one death. Similarly, one of the fatalities in the municipal elections of October 2018 was in a district in Abidjan where a relative of Soro was competing with another Unified RHDP candidate. As the former rebel leader, Soro has support within the armed forces and especially with the ex-rebels integrated into the army. Further, he may have direct ties with (or the indirect support of) the hundreds of demobilized ex-combatants, an overall disaffected category of people who have easy access to weapons and previous military experience.

DIVISIONS WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES

Côte d'Ivoire's armed forces are plagued by internal divisions and are prone to mutiny, indicating a risk that the military might fracture along partisan (and ethnic) lines during an electoral crisis. According to multiple interviewees, the lack of a republican (meaning apolitical) military is a major concern for national stability; across the country, we heard echoes of the sentiment that "everyone in the army is for someone [a politician]."[49] The army of Côte d'Ivoire, officially known as the *Forces Armées de Côte d'Ivoire* (FACI),[50] was created from rival loyalist and rebel factions known as New Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (or *Forces Nouvelles)* at the end of the 2011 postelection conflict.[51] The unification of the two armies remains superficial; continuing divisions feed tensions between the former enemies and make the army vulnerable to political manipulation as each section holds loyalties to different politicians. Another divisive issue is the West African CFA franc (XOF) 12 million (US$20,400) bonuses paid in 2017 to each of the 8,400 *Forces Nouvelles* veterans integrated into the army. The preexisting military members regard this as an unfair reward given to northerners for rebelling. Resentment is further fueled by the fact that *Forces Nouvelles* ex-combatants have been promoted to command positions despite their lack of proper military training.

The exact loyalties of the armed forces today are a critical uncertainty in our analysis and could tip the balance in either direction if violence occurs. Within the professional army developed under Gbagbo, some soldiers may remain loyal to their former president, whereas others may support the current regime. The former *Forces Nouvelles* contingent of the army may today be split between supporting their former leaders: Ouattara and Soro. In 2017, the former *Forces Nouvelles* soldiers mutinied over grievances about pay and living conditions, taking control of nine cities.[52] No civilians were killed, but the ease with which the former rebel forces mobilized, made, and attained their demands made apparent the capacity of this force (and its associated political parties or individuals) to play a role in any future conflicts.

PERCEPTION OF ABUSE OF POWER BY THE RULING PARTY

There is widespread consensus among political opposition parties and some civil society organizations that the ruling party is abusing the tools of power to secure its partisan interests, signaling to them that the 2020 elections are "winner-take-all." These perceptions contribute to the sense that the stakes of the 2020 presidential elections are extremely high. In addition, public perception that specific government actions are unjust could be the last straw that spurs escalation of conflict.

After the 2010–11 crisis, the domestic judicial process that intended to hold those responsible for civilian fatalities and other crimes[53] accountable was and continues to be seen by many as victor's

justice. Despite evidence that both sides committed serious crimes,[54] the justice sector focused prosecution on only former President Gbagbo and his supporters, effectively ignoring the crimes of the rebel forces and the current ruling party. This partial justice system in Côte d'Ivoire has been a huge source of discontent among the population.

Supporters of the PDCI and Soro are also dissatisfied with Ivorian justice. In the violence around the October 2018 municipal elections, the state's security forces were slow to intervene to protect the supporters of the PDCI, a situation that reinforced the perception[55] that the Unified RDHP is abusing the tools of power. Similarly, several people close to Soro are in the sights of Ivorian justice; a prominent example is Alain Lobognon, a member of the parliament and close associate of Soro, whom the state incarcerated and charged with spreading fake news and inciting hatred (*divulgation des fausses nouvelles et incitation à la haine*).[56] The timing of these prosecutions—and the fact that they target mostly potential opponents—further intensifies the already tenuous political situation, raising the prospect of protests and potential violence by supporters who feel their elected officials are not receiving fair treatment under the law.

In addition, most Ivorians occupying positions of responsibility are now forced to become members of the Unified RHDP or be dismissed from their positions. Ouattara's government is now prosecuting several prominent members of the PDCI, likely as retribution for leaving the Unified RHDP.[57] Soro was forced to resign from the presidency of the National Assembly once he left the Unified RHDP. Upon declaring the Unified RHDP as a political party, Ouattara's government threatened PDCI ministers (formerly part of the RHDP coalition) with audits and potential imprisonment unless they remained a part of the Unified RHDP.[58]

As with the justice system, many Ivorians consider the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to be biased and used by the ruling party to secure its electoral interests. Today, as in the past, the IEC is the place *par excellence* for the 2020 political battle. Civil society organizations and political opposition parties perceive the IEC as being in favor of Ouattara and his followers and as being dominated by members close to Ouattara's political party. The president chooses one third of IEC members, and the Electoral College, which the president controls, chooses the remaining two thirds. A decision of the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights in November 2016 required the IEC's reform, determining that is does not conform to international democracy and human rights standards.[59] However, despite President Ouattara's promise a year ago to reform the IEC, his party seems determined to retain its benefits. Given the zero-sum and high-stakes nature of the debate over the IEC, any changes or lack of action toward promised change could precipitate serious violence before the 2020 elections.

WIDESPREAD ACCESS TO ARMS

The common perception that large numbers of individuals and nonstate armed groups have access to arms increases fear throughout the country and suggests that it would be relatively easy and low-cost for political leaders to mobilize supporters to commit violence during a crisis. Since the September 2002 armed uprising that led to the first civil war, Côte d'Ivoire has had both a proliferation of weapons and a high number of people with access and ability to use arms, including ex-combatants, youth groups, communal militias, and private security companies.[60] Multiple

interviews suggested that arms that came into the country during the wars are still circulating and further, that there may be new arms caches stored in various high-risk locations. Although we cannot verify this information, even the suggestion of the presence of arms caches indicates heightened perception of risk, and therefore risk itself among the population.

A sticker, reading "For your security, drop your weapon!" posted on a hotel room door in Danane in far western Côte d'Ivoire.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum/Mollie Zapata

While the military integrated many combatants through the *Forces Nouvelles*, hundreds of ex-combatants kept their weapons.[61] Said an interviewee in Bouna, "disarmament failed, they all gave back one [gun] and kept two."[62] According to an interviewee working on refugee issues in Guiglo, "disarmament isn't a priority because people in power are all tied to militias and want them to stay armed in case they need to call on them."[63] Furthermore, recently interviewed security officers and civil society organizations in the east (Bouna) and in the west (Daname, Guiglo, etc.) attested that new arms are still entering the country and that bandits are using weapons clearly obtained after the civil wars (this information has not been verified).

In Côte d'Ivoire, youth groups have played a central role in past violence and remain a threat today. Following the 2010 elections, the International Criminal Court indicted Charles Blé Goudé, the leader of a youth group supporting President Gbagbo, as a key figure in the commission of mass atrocities.[64] The prevalence of firearms throughout the country makes them easy to procure, and youth are particularly interested in accessing these arms. Each political party has a strong youth wing, and interviewees noted that Côte d'Ivoire's large population of economically disenfranchised youth might join groups and act violently at the urging of politicians in exchange for t-shirts and motorcycles, or simply for something to do. Whereas we cannot determine exactly who has arms, where they came from, and what the parties condone or support, it is clear, on the basis of historical precedent and recent interviews, that political parties *can* mobilize individuals and youth groups who have access to firearms.

Moreover, in addition to former militants and youth groups, traditional hunters called "Dozos" are now using modern and sophisticated arms. The Dozo draw predominantly from northern ethnic groups, and therefore have ties to supporters of Ouattara and Soro who both come from northern Côte d'Ivoire. The Dozo are effectively communal militias and, as noted by an interviewee in the north, "people have more faith in the Dozo than in the government."[65] Since the wars, they have emerged as a significant armed group that could exacerbate or mitigate conflict depending on which side they take. In 2012, *Small Arms Survey* estimated that there were 42,000 Dozos holding arms, 32,000 of which were shotguns and 10,000 of which were handmade guns.[66]

DANGEROUS SPEECH IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Scholars of atrocity prevention agree that certain kinds of speech can be an early warning sign for the onset of violence. Today, increasingly aggressive political speech in Côte d'Ivoire[67] reflects the intensity of competition between parties and may be used to motivate supporters to commit crimes against their perceived opposition. Apocalyptic public rhetoric (*leaders claim they face a great danger and in doing so justify violence*) and labeling civilian groups as the "enemy" (*descriptions of a particular group as dangerous, homogenous, or worthless*) are two examples of how speech may be used to incite violence or reflect increasing willingness to commit atrocities.[68] While we do not yet see those specific types of dangerous speech[69] occurring in Côte d'Ivoire, the level of verbal violence is rising between politicians, as well as on both traditional and social media platforms.[70] Further, dangerous speech is not new to Côte d'Ivoire. In 2004, Juan Mendez, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, raised the alarm for risk of genocide, specifically noting hate speech—a more commonly used, but less precisely defined, term—as a factor. He recommended Ivorian authorities "condemn hate speech and media-induced violence and put an immediate end to their propagation through official media outlets."[71]

In Côte d'Ivoire, political leaders are spreading dangerous speech, which their followers may interpret as support for violence. Their messages spread through traditional and social media and messaging sites, most commonly Facebook and WhatsApp. Through dangerous speech, political party leadership does not need to orchestrate violence to stoke it—creating fear and hatred between their respective followers may be enough for people to take violent action if triggered. As politicians campaign, especially in the regions susceptible to land conflict, they draw on exclusionary rhetoric, leveraging local grievances to gain votes. Although the local conflict at its heart is around land tenure, rapidly spreading dangerous speech in the political environment creates a risk that this rhetoric will be acted upon to settle intercommunal scores.

Namizata Sangaré, the president of the National Council for Human Rights (CNDHCI), warned that hate speech could be prosecuted and stated, "The Council notes that this increase in verbal violence is likely to undermine social cohesion and peace and jeopardize the efforts for national reconciliation."[72] For instance, Justin Koua, National Youth Secretary of the Ivorian Popular Front (JFPI), said during a public meeting, "We will have Alassane Ouattara wear his mourning clothes and take him to his last home."[73] This public death threat against Ouattara shows the current degree of animosity between the FPI and the Unified RHDP.[74]

PLAUSIBLE ATROCITY CRIME SCENARIOS

Here we identify scenarios that could plausibly unfold in the next 12 to18 months and result in large-scale systematic attacks on civilian populations. These are worst-case scenarios, not forecasts of the most likely outcomes. The *most likely s*cenario in the coming two years is that there is some violence around the 2020 elections, but no atrocity crimes. Our goal in this analysis is to identify if, how, and when small-scale or unsystematic violence might evolve to become atrocity crimes.

Writing in summer 2019, we note that several factors remain uncertain, limiting our ability to describe plausible atrocity crime scenarios in detail. In particular, until the major fault lines in the presidential elections become clearer, it is difficult to anticipate the most likely potential perpetrator and target groups. This uncertainty should not, however, be taken as a reason to discount the risks for atrocity crimes. Below we outline a generalized scenario that could lead to atrocity crimes, followed by a table of the three plausible scenarios, and more detailed descriptions of potential perpetrators, target groups, and triggers.

SCENARIO OVERVIEW

Regardless of which parties are involved, the most plausible pathway to atrocity crimes would start with mass demonstrations. In this overarching scenario, parties' supporters, riled up by months of us-versus-them rhetoric and additionally motivated by personal economic and ethnic grievances, would be the instigators. If one side—likely the government, owing to its control over state resources, including the security forces—were to violently repress demonstrations, this could trigger the involvement of other armed groups or politically affiliated youth groups. Their involvement would lead to large-scale attacks on supporters of rival parties.

If this scenario unfolds, people in urban areas are at highest-risk because these areas are more politically diverse and densely populated than the countryside. However, political crisis at the national level could also result in localized land conflicts spreading to other communities, with actors calling on co-ethnics to rise and fight or defend themselves. Political leaders, who want be seen by Ivorians and the international community as peacemakers, would not publicly call for the *start* of violence and might even publicly call for peaceful resolution; however, in this scenario party leaders can portray themselves as peacemakers and simultaneously run a proxy war against their opponents through their supporters.

The precise timing of this scenario depends on the actors involved. Because the perceived stakes of the election outcomes are so high, fear of losing could motivate parties to use violence to protect their interests—preemptively, if they anticipate an electoral loss, or in retaliation for perceived abuses during the electoral period. Supporters and party leadership alike are motivated to win the election not only to gain political power, but also because to lose would expose them as targets for violence and other means of persecution. A long history of violence around political competition has taught Ivorians the lesson that during and after elections, supporters (or members of a common ethnic group perceived to be supporters) on the losing side will attack those who declared victory to attempt to retake power. Because of this, the winners expect to be attacked in opposition to their victory and may preemptively strike the losers. Furthermore, political leaders may believe that they can gain an

The wall outside the Ivorian military's Security Battalion for the East, "Our Mission: Security and Defense," Bouna.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum/Mollie Zapata

advantage at the polls by intimidating voters of opposing parties through violence and may encourage their followers (likely privately) to implement such a strategy. Multiple interviewees suggested that political leaders or wealthy party members are secretly providing financial support to potentially violent supporters.[75]

It is difficult to foresee more precisely than outlined above how demonstrations, riots, or small-scale violence would transform into widespread, systematic atrocities. These details will depend largely on which actors are involved and how their motivations and incentives shift as a crisis unfolds. We identify three scenarios in decreasing order of risk, with the first being the most probable and potentially highest impact and the last being the least probable and potentially lowest impact. The main conflict parties and target groups differ across the scenarios, which share common drivers. All scenarios, if they come to pass, would occur in the lead up to or aftermath of the 2020 elections. It should be noted that we assessed the potential for atrocity crimes directly related to land conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and did not identify a plausible scenario over the next 12 to 18 months. However, issues over land tenure are so intertwined with political competition that they could become a driver of violence against civilians in an election-related conflict.

Table 4. Plausible Mass Atrocity Scenarios

	Potential perpetrators	Target groups	Triggers	Additional comments
Scenario A Unified RHDP (Ouattara) supporters v. Soro's supporters	Youth groups Party-affiliated militia National military—split into forces loyal to Ouattara and Soro	Perceived supporters of Soro Perceived supporters of Ouattara	Designation of Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) members perceived to bias election process Politicized prosecution of Soro supporters Announcement of election results perceived to be illegitimate	Because it is unknown exactly what portion of the army would follow Soro, it is unclear whether one side would have the upper hand over the other; this worst-case scenario could lead to atrocity crimes committed by both sides. Furthermore, this scenario would be unique in that it would be the first major conflict among people from the northern regions.
Scenario B Unified RHDP (Ouattara) supporters v. PDCI (Bédié) supporters	Youth groups Party-affiliated militia National military	Perceived supporters of PDCI (generally of the Akan ethnolinguistic group, especially of the sub-group Baoulé, and from the southern, central, and eastern regions)	Designation of IEC members perceived to bias election process Politicized prosecution of PDCI supporters Announcement of election results perceived to be illegitimate	Recall that the PDCI recently split from the Unified RHDP because of a disagreement over who the party would run in 2020, positioning them now as rivals. In this scenario, the losers (if violence begins after the elections), or anticipated losers (if issues around IEC composition before the elections triggers conflict), would contest the results through demonstrations.
Scenario C Unified RHDP (Ouattara) supporters v. FPI (Gbagbo) supporters	Youth groups Party-affiliated militia National military	Perceived supporters of the FPI (ethnic groups from the western region— Bété, Guéré, Krou, Wê)	Gbagbo's return to Côte d'Ivoire Disallowing Gbagbo to run for presidency Prosecuting Gbagbo domestically	President Ouattara is perceived to be the source of all FPI woes. The anger and hatred between supporters of the FPI and those of the Unified RHDP is so high that it would take very little for violence to break out. This scenario is also plausible if Simone Gbagbo runs for president instead of her husband, as grievances about Laurent Gbagbo's exclusion would still be salient.

Potential Perpetrator Groups

Our analysis suggests that there are many groups in Côte d'Ivoire with the means to commit or orchestrate atrocities and who could develop the motives to use violence against civilians in cases of escalating conflict. All perpetrators groups would be involved in each scenario.

- **Youth groups affiliated with political parties:** The ruling party and opposition parties are actively empowering their affiliated youth groups,[76] thus giving them status and resources in a deeply polarized political context and making confrontation of their supporters very likely.

- **Nonstate armed groups close to some political parties:** Although none of the political parties in Côte d'Ivoire have publicly acknowledged any affiliated armed groups, the prevalence of nonstate armed groups (including ex-combatants, Dozos, and other communal militias), availability of arms, and history of mobilization at times of political conflict suggest that parties may have the ability and motive to mobilize armed supporters.

- **Côte d'Ivoire's military:** As explained earlier, the army is politically partisan—polarized between the former rebels (*Forces Nouvelles)* and the more professional longer-standing state army. Our analysis suggests that the army would not *start* a conflict, but, in the words of an interviewee in Yamoussoukro, "The army does not act first; they come in to play a role at the demand of politicians."[77] This observation was echoed by an interviewee in Danane, "The army is always there, it will emerge if there's a crisis."[78] If Scenario A occurs, the military would almost certainly split between Soro and Ouattara supporters. If Scenario B occurs, the military could still split, though the PDCI likely has fewer ties to military leaders than the Unified RHDP. Similarly, in Scenario C it is unclear who in the military would follow whom. Before the Crisis the professional military was under Gbagbo's leadership and may today retain allegiances to the FPI, especially as they have been generally marginalized under Ouattara's presidency. However, the precise divide of loyalty is opaque, making this a critical uncertainty (as explained below).

Potential Target Groups

Civilians perceived to support any political party could be the targets of coordinated attacks by armed groups associated with rival political parties. Because ethnicity drives party affiliation, even nonpolitical members of an ethnic group would be targeted as part of this type of violence. The following groups would be most vulnerable in each respective scenario:

- **Scenario A – Civilians of northern origins:** In the case of conflict between Soro's and Ouattara's supporters, it is unclear which side has more capacity to commit violence against the other. Thus, at this time, it is impossible to determine which group of civilians would be more likely to suffer more harm than the other. If there is a conflict, we can expect confrontation between the Malinké ethnic group (close to Ouattara) and the Senoufo ethnic group (close to Soro).

- **Scenario B – Supporters of the PDCI:** Perceived supporters of the PDCI, the main political opposition party (which we suspect has the least powerful military ties), may be the most vulnerable if violence erupts over the elections.

- **Scenario C – Supporters of the FPI:** The FPI and its supporters may also be targets of deliberate attacks if there is a confrontation with the Unified RHDP. If partisan violence erupts, the FPI lacks equal means to stand against the Unified RHDP, making its associated civilians more vulnerable to attacks.

TRIGGERS

Most of the people we interviewed suspected that, were violence to occur, it would begin before Election Day. Although the exact trigger for a violent protest is difficult to anticipate, any protest could be a trigger for large-scale violence. Elections, in general, are times of heightened competition and therefore heightened risk. Disputed elections are recognized triggers for atrocity crimes and "In some circumstances, the announcement of an apparently fraudulent election may spark riots and protest, which in turn will prompt security forces to repress those movements." [79] Furthermore, "Where the opposition believes it should have won and where the opposition and citizens distrust the institutions that manage the electoral process, then they are more likely to turn to violence and street protest." [80] This unpredictability is a serious matter of concern and demonstrates the fragility of the sociopolitical situation in Côte d'Ivoire. That said, we can identify the following types of events as potential atrocity triggers:

- **The designation of the members of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC):** If the state designates IEC members in a way that does not guarantee its neutrality and independence in relation to the ruling party, this could trigger potentially violent demonstrations by opposition parties. According to an Ivorian intelligence official, "It isn't about who will win the elections, rather, it is about who will organize the elections." [81]

- **Politicized judicial prosecution:** Since both the PDCI and Soro split from the Unified RHDP, the ruling party has persecuted supporters of each, firing those in high-profile public office and targeting them for judicial prosecution. A particularly high-profile targeting could serve as a trigger for demonstrations that could lead to a mass atrocity event between supporters of the Unified RHDP and Soro's followers or between the Unified RHDP and PDCI.

- **Mishandling Gbagbo's return:** Violence could erupt if Gbagbo returns to Côte d'Ivoire and his political rights are limited (i.e., he is not allowed to run for office) or if he is brought before a domestic court. Indeed, although the ICC has released Gbagbo to Belgium on condition,[82] charges are pending against him for financial crimes in Côte d'Ivoire.[83] If the courts in Côte d'Ivoire decide to move forward with his prosecution, this action could trigger violent confrontations between his supporters and people opposed to Gbagbo, especially in Abidjan, Gagnoa, Guiglo, and other cities in which Gbagbo still has a strong base of supporters.

- **The election process and results:** The clearest potential trigger is the announcement of the 2020 election results. In the current political climate, there is no result the entire public would be satisfied with. In such a context, any real or perceived wrongdoing in the management of electoral operations could lead to a conflict over election results that could dangerously mirror the 2010–11 crisis.

CRITICAL UNCERTAINTIES

The following factors are uncertain at the time of writing but should be closely monitored because they would significantly affect atrocity risk and how any atrocity scenario would unfold:

- **The identity of the presidential candidates:** No candidate has officially announced that he or she is running, although both Soro and Ouattara have suggested they will.

- **The shape of political alliances:** If the opposition parties unite, it could either (a) increase the risk because the ruling party would feel more threatened, or (b) decrease the risk because a unified opposition might create a balance of power, reducing leaders' calculations of the benefits of using violence.

- **Whether Gbagbo will seek to return to Côte d'Ivoire:** If Gbagbo does not return to Côte d'Ivoire in advance of the elections, the likelihood of Scenario C—violence between his supporters and supporters of the ruling party—would be significantly lower. However, if Simone Gbagbo runs for the presidency instead of her husband, the risk level would depend on the messaging she uses. Grievances over her husband's exclusion could be used to rile up FPI supporters, potentially to the point of violence.

- **Whether, when, and how the Independent Electoral Commission will be reformed:** Discussions are underway between the government, political parties, and civil society organizations, but are at a standstill.[84]

- **Who in the army would support which politician:** The portion of army commanders taking each side in a conflict would significantly shift the balance of power and ultimately define which civilian group is at greatest risk. This information is virtually unknowable in advance of an acute crisis.[85]

RESILIENCE AND MITIGATING FACTORS

Resiliencies are "social relationships, structures or processes that are able to provide dispute resolution and meet basic needs through non-violent means."[86] The following section highlights some of the relevant resiliencies in Côte d'Ivoire, with a particular eye toward those that actors engaged in prevention could bolster to help reduce the risk for atrocity crimes.

POPULAR PRESSURE AGAINST THE RESUMPTION OF WAR AND ATROCITIES

Public memory of the atrocities of the 2011 postelection violence still haunts most Ivorians; within the population there is strong opposition to the resumption of violence. In the words of an interviewee in Abidjan, "The Ivorian people are willing to stay home for peace."[87] This social pressure against the use of violence may deter those who would consider using violence to achieve their goals. In addition to individuals, local organizations have involved themselves directly in peacemaking. For example, a women's group in Bouna knocks on the doors of people in the community whom they suspect might be tempted to use violence to settle scores. The women explained that as neighbors, they leverage social pressure and hold people accountable who might not be receptive to outside influence. The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding-Côte d'Ivoire (WANEP-CI) has an early warning system for

which it trains monitors in all the major towns to report violent incidents by phone or e-mail. Furthermore, social pressure against the use of violence could play a key role in constraining the scale of violence if it begins. The people of Côte d'Ivoire may ultimately prevent small-scale attacks from spiraling into mass violence across the country by delegitimizing armed conflict and limiting mobilization.

INTERNATIONAL DONOR SUPPORT TO IVORIAN PEACEBUILDING ORGANIZATIONS

The support of numerous foreign donors to Ivorian peacebuilding organizations helps mitigate risks of violence against civilians. Many peacebuilding organizations across the country are already involved in the prevention of violence through awareness-raising campaigns, conflict mediation and reconciliation activities, and numerous civic education programs focused on human rights, democracy promotion, electoral violence prevention, and so forth. These donor-sponsored activities strengthen the resilience of the population against large-scale attacks, not only by delegitimizing such attacks, but also by helping people use institutionalized frameworks to resolve their disputes. It is important to note, however, that civil society organizations in Côte d'Ivoire are also divided and polarized along partisan lines, because many of these organizations are close to political parties. This division undermines their legitimacy. Nonetheless, some civil society organizations still enjoy public credibility and can play a significant role in mitigating violence against civilians.

RELIGIOUS AND TRADITIONAL LEADERS CALLING FOR PEACE

Although part of civil society, religious and traditional leaders in Côte d'Ivoire need to be set apart as a specific category, having significant influence on political leaders and on the population. Communities often call on them to mediate both intercommunal and political conflicts. Religious leaders of all faiths are already working together through the *Forum national des confessions religieuses* and making joint statements[88] directed at political leaders and local community leaders to discourage violence against civilians. Chiefs administer their villages using customary laws, and they also wield influence outside their immediate villages. According to a chief interviewed in Bouake, "Everyone in Côte d'Ivoire, no matter where they live, comes from a village and has a connection to a village. . . . Even people living in Abidjan call their chief to solve problems."[89] Similarly, a local government official in the same city asserted, "If something happens, traditional power [to solve the crisis] will be more influential than political power."[90] However, both religious leaders and chiefs can be susceptible to political polarization. This endangers the traditional chieftaincy as a social institution and means that those working with chiefs or religious leaders should not assume they are all equally apolitical.

BUSINESS INTERESTS IN PEACE AND SECURITY

The business community constitutes a bulwark against the resumption of large-scale attacks on civilians. More than its neighboring West African countries, Côte d'Ivoire enjoys the existence of powerful national and international firms that would take significant steps to mitigate conflict that might be destructive to the economy. In 2017, Côte d'Ivoire's economy ranked 17th out of 48 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and third in West Africa behind Nigeria and Ghana,[91] and it is a primary exporter of cocoa and coffee for the world market. Additionally, it is a major transit point for commerce throughout the region. The port in Abidjan is the largest in West Africa and is owned by a French firm. The owners of these powerful firms can put pressure on political leaders to soften their

positions and rhetoric with an eye toward preventing violence. Indeed, because political leaders need the support of the business community, business leaders have significant leverage over politicians. Furthermore, according to one interviewee, "The state wants security for business."[92] Maintaining business relationships could be a factor on the side of peace in political leaders' calculations.

FRENCH TROOPS AND THE PRESENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The presence of an estimated 900 French troops in Abidjan[93] may lower the risk of large-scale violence. Although France's military presence in Côte d'Ivoire is not well perceived by some Ivorians, especially by the supporters of former President Gbagbo, many people still believe that in the case of large-scale attacks on civilians, French troops would intervene to prevent mass atrocities.

Foreign governments may also play a diplomatic role in preventing conflict and mass violations of human rights. Foreign stakeholders in Abidjan are the eyes of the international community in Côte d'Ivoire and most embassies sponsor programs aimed at peacebuilding and violence prevention. Through such commitments, foreign embassies are aware of potential spoilers of the electoral process as well as the potential perpetrators of attacks on civilians. Interviews at the US Embassy in Abidjan and the Representation of the European Union in Côte d'Ivoire revealed that there are already intensive diplomatic efforts underway to talk directly to all those who might have a stake in the prevention of atrocity crimes, whether they are politicians, military, or civil society leaders. Western countries still have some important leverage and means to pressure government authorities and other local actors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

- Publicly reinforce the government's commitment—and urge all political parties and candidates—to work toward a peaceful, credible, and free election and make clear that all Ivorians, including security forces, government officials, and journalists, will be held responsible under the legal code of Côte d'Ivoire for inciting, aiding, or perpetrating mass atrocity crimes.

- Develop a public plan and commit state resources to implementing civic education programs that explain the electoral process and the legal avenues available for contestation of disputed results.

- Accelerate and prioritize reform of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), in accordance with the September 2017 judgment from the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, to ensure that it is independent and impartial. The dispute over the composition of its members and the framework of the IEC should be defused before the end of 2019. The later this happens, the more likely the dispute is to trigger violence in the months leading to the elections of fall 2020. The IEC should include civil society and academic advisors, and it should make its budget public to ensure transparency and professionalism.

- Train security forces on electoral security issues and unity of purpose, reinforcing the importance of their mission to defend and protect the people of Côte d'Ivoire and their impartial role as a professional military. Such training could help the army, gendarmes, and police remain professional throughout the electoral process. Especially in areas prone to land conflict, such training measures would enable security forces to contain eventual eruption of deadly violence. If necessary, the government should request international support—financial and technical—for electoral security training.

- Foster a productive and transparent civil-military relationship. Ensure that Ivorian security forces are engaging in civilian outreach programs and information exchanges, and fostering relationships with local communities to build trust with civilian populations.

- Support and do not restrict credible and independent domestic observation and invite African Union (AU) or Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) observation of the electoral process, spanning the entire country and electoral period. The government has allowed domestic civil society observers in the past, but sidelined these actors in the 2018 elections. Peace and security depend on all those participating seeing a credible process and, further, knowing that any irregularities will be reported.

- Ensure freedom of speech and freedom of movement, as defined in the Ivorian constitution and legal code, for journalists and civil society actors. The government of Côte d'Ivoire should ensure that journalists are able to publish freely without threat of imprisonment and that civil society groups are able to operate without undue restrictions throughout the country.

TO POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS

- Communicate to supporters that violence is unacceptable and publicly commit to use the legal avenues available for contestation of disputed results.

- Engage in interparty dialogue to agree on codes of conduct, institute internal protocols and safeguards, and take appropriate legislative and parliamentary oversight actions to protect electoral integrity from disinformation efforts. Party leaders should come together for a high-profile public signing of a code of conduct, thereby publicly committing to and demonstrating to their supporters their dedication to reject violence and encourage credible and transparent elections.

TO CIVIL SOCIETY

- **Civil society organizations involved in peacebuilding** should begin atrocity prevention programs—including those focused on social cohesion, early warning tracking, violence mitigation, and youth engagement—at least a year before the elections to ensure impact in preventing atrocity crimes related to the elections.

- **Civil society organizations involved in peacebuilding and elections programming** should focus on civic education, explaining political actors' roles and responsibilities, and facilitating awareness-raising campaigns around the elections and electoral process. These programs could include voter education, monitoring, voter-registration drives, and conflict

mediation. Some programs should specifically focus on women as well as youth and ethnic-based associations at risk of being mobilized to engage in violent confrontation.

- **Civil society organizations involved in peacebuilding** should mobilize **local chiefs, religious leaders, and other community leaders** to condemn hate speech, spread messages of peace, hold political actors accountable for any support for or incitement of violence, raise awareness about the voting process, and create or expand mediation efforts around communal grievances. Resolution of local conflicts in advance of the elections could decrease the overall risk of violence against civilians.

- **Local chiefs, religious leaders, and other community leaders** should build on Côte d'Ivoire's long tradition of religious tolerance and diversity to spread messages of national and religious fraternity and advocate for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

- **Business leaders** should use their significant interest in ensuring Côte d'Ivoire's stability to emphasize to government officials the devastating economic implications of electoral conflict, to publicly call on political leaders to pledge nonviolence, and to provide support for local peacebuilding.

TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

- **Foreign governments and international organizations in Côte d'Ivoire** should organize a high-level forum with leaders of all political parties to help restore dialogue. Such a forum, organized by countries that Côte d'Ivoire's leaders would welcome and respect, would bring political leaders together to agree upon a road map for the upcoming elections of 2020, including a compromise on Gbagbo's future in Ivorian politics and more specifically in these elections. The United States has a history of this type of engagement in Côte d'Ivoire and is perceived as less biased than some other foreign governments or organizations.

- **Foreign governments and international organizations in Côte d'Ivoire** should draw on available funds for elections and political processes to begin electoral violence prevention programming at least a year in advance of the fall 2020 elections.

- **Foreign governments and international organizations in Côte d'Ivoire** should release a coordinated public statement calling for the Ivorian government to uphold its commitment to credible Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) reform and make funding available to the IEC contingent upon progress toward these commitments, emphasize the importance of protection of civilians, and call for a de-escalation of dangerous speech by political parties. The international community must make clear that it is paying attention and prioritizes a peaceful and credible electoral process.

- **Foreign governments that have security partnerships with Côte d'Ivoire** should conduct an assessment of the political allegiances, economic affiliations, and roles in past violence and incidents of unrest (i.e., military strikes) of military leadership to better understand potential partners and spoilers should violence break out.

- **Foreign governments that have security partnerships with Côte d'Ivoire** should continue to support efforts to ensure the military is professional and impartial.

- **Foreign governments and the United Nations** should prepare to threaten targeted sanctions to deter those who may seek to foment violence. Targeted sanctions will be more successful when external actors (1) work multilaterally and communicate their resolve to implement sanctions early, consistently, increasingly, and aggressively, thereby isolating targeted behaviors and (2) implement sanctions in coordination with sustained multilateral diplomacy and a broader coherent strategy.

- **Foreign governments, the United Nations, and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** should provide direct support, training, and expertise to the IEC and ensure the IEC has the resources needed to hold credible and free elections. The IEC should include civil society and academic advisors and make its budget public to ensure transparency and professionalism.

- **Foreign governments, the United Nations, and international NGOs** should train and fund civil society organizations, religious leaders, and local chiefs so they can participate effectively in peace and reconciliation activities that aim at mitigating violence and deliberate attacks on civilians. Civil society organizations tend to be located in urban areas, whereas traditional or community chiefs tend to be located in rural areas. It is therefore important to support both categories of actors to ensure a broad reach of messaging and programs.

- **Foreign governments, the United Nations, and international NGOs** should provide training in journalistic standards to media outlets in Abidjan to help stop the spread of misinformation and dangerous speech.

- **Foreign governments, the United Nations, and international NGOs** should increase monitoring of and regular reporting on human rights abuses and indicators of risks for violence in Côte d'Ivoire. International NGOs, such as the West African Peacebuilding Network (WANEP), are already in place and have violence-reporting systems that could be supported or drawn on to inform international actions.

- **Foreign governments, the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the African Union (AU)** should condemn—and consider options for deterring or punitive actions—at the first instance, any restrictions on freedom of speech, incitement of violence, hate speech, arming of youth, or other high-risk incidents, should they occur.

- **Foreign governments, the United Nations, ECOWAS, and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the AU** should develop contingency plans to rapidly halt mass atrocities, should preventive measures fail.

- **The United Nations, African Development Bank, Millennium Challenge Corporation, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund** should publicly state—and in private

meetings with political party leadership emphasize—the importance of a credible and peaceful electoral process. This includes the prioritization of protection of civilians, the urgent need for a voter-registration process, and the reform of the IEC.

- **ECOWAS member states** should publicly call on the Ivorian government to uphold the ECOWAS Vision 2020; the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace Keeping and Security; and other subregional commitments. These documents include commitments to uphold peace and security through democratic institutions that protect human and civil rights.

TO THE MEDIA

- **Traditional Media (print, radio, television)** should require and provide training on journalistic standards, misinformation, and dangerous speech for all staff members. Media outlets should work with international organizations to provide training in how responsible journalism can contribute to a peaceful electoral process.

- **Social media companies**—Facebook and WhatsApp are the country's most-used platforms for social networking and messaging—should increase the number of French-speaking staff members and consider employing local staff to focus on Côte d'Ivoire to ensure that dangerous speech and misinformation do not exacerbate violence. Both companies should work in partnership with hate speech researchers and experts throughout the country to identify and combat dangerous speech patterns before, during, and after the elections.

ENDNOTES

[1] Atrocity crimes include genocide, crimes against humanity (including ethnic cleansing), and war crimes. See David Scheffer, "Genocide and Atrocity Crimes," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1, 3 (December 2006): 229–250.

[2] Presidential elections were held in 2015, but at that time a coalition party ruled—meaning that Ouattara ran relatively uncontested—and the opposition (former President Gbagbo's FPI party) was in disarray as Gbagbo awaited trial at the Hague.

[3] Previous Early Warning Project country reports include Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Mali.

[4] Scott Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention* (Washington, DC: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2016), 31, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Fundamentals-of-Genocide-and-Mass-Atrocity-Prevention.pdf.

[5] The Statistical Risk Assessment is currently designed to forecast the onset of state and nonstate-led mass killings, defined as deliberate actions of armed groups that result in the deaths of at least 1,000 noncombatant civilians in a year or less. A list view of the results is available here: https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/ranking-of-all-countries.

[6] Note that the Statistical Risk Assessment methodology changed between the 2016 assessment and the 2017–18 assessment. The current model increases the forecasting window to two years, includes both state- and nonstate-led mass killing, and revises some of the data inputs to benefit from newly available sources. As a result of this change, risk and rank from the assessments produced 2014 through 2016 should not be compared to results from 2017 onward. Learn more about the methodology changes here: https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/methodology-statistical-model.

[7] Early Warning Project, "Countries at Risk for Mass Killings 2018–19: Early Warning Project Statistical Risk Assessment Results," The United State Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, October 10, 2018, https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/reports/countries-at-risk-for-mass-killings-2018-19-early-warning-project-statistical-risk-assessment-results.

[8] Stability, however, is relative. While Côte d'Ivoire did not experience widespread violence during this time, there were incidents of herder-farmer violence in the country's northeast in 2015 and a series of army mutinies in 2017. On the economic side, while the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita has increased steadily since 2002 (see World Bank Open Data, "Côte d'Ivoire," https://data.worldbank.org/country/cote-divoire), the country ranks among the most unequal countries in the world, (see World Inequality Database, "New Income Inequality Series and Paper for Côte d'Ivoire," July 6, 2017, https://wid.world/news-article/new-income-inequality-series-paper-cote-divoire/).

[9] Key factors from the statistical model underlying Côte d'Ivoire's high-risk assessment include its history of mass killing, high infant mortality (which is a proxy for low economic development and lack of government resources), high ethnic fractionalization, lack of freedom of movement for men (as of 2017), and its anocratic regime type. Anocratic governance structures—anocracies—are those that feature some aspects of democracy and some aspects of autocracy, either intentionally or because of an ongoing transition in the form of government. Multiple studies have shown that anocracies are more prone to conflicts than full democracies or full autocracies.

[10] US Department of State and USAID, "Working Draft, Atrocity Assessment Framework: Supplemental Guidance on State/USAID Conflict Assessment Framework," https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/241399.pdf.

[11] These factors were identified through analysis of interview notes after field research across Côte d'Ivoire, as well as a desk review of literature on the drivers of the country's past conflicts.

[12] See Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*), 53–71.

[13] "Windows of atrocity risk may include: elections or other regime transitions, major legal reforms, presence of foreign enablers or other forms of regional destabilization; and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs that are poorly designed or implemented." US Department of State and USAID, "Working Draft, Atrocity Assessment Framework: Supplemental Guidance on State/USAID Conflict Assessment Framework."

[14] Human Rights Watch, "Trapped Between Two Wars: Violence Against Civilians in Western Côte d'Ivoire" (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2003), https://www.hrw.org/report/2003/08/05/trapped-between-two-wars/violence-against-civilians-western-cote-divoire.

[15] For example, more than 200 people were killed and hundreds more wounded around the 2000 elections that brought Gbagbo to power. See the massacres of October 26 and 27, 2000, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/afrique/chronologie-de-la-cote-d-ivoire-1958-2011_910836.html.

[16] During the crisis, Dozo militias allegedly targeted perceived Gbagbo supporters from the Guéré ethnic group. Amnesty International, *We Want to Go Home, But We Can't: Côte d'Ivoire's Continuing Crisis of Displacement and Insecurity*, (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2011), https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/24000/afr310072011en.pdf.

[17] Human Rights Watch, "Trapped Between Two Wars: Violence Against Civilians in Western Côte d'Ivoire" (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2003), https://www.hrw.org/report/2003/08/05/trapped-between-two-wars/violence-against-civilians-western-cote-divoire, 10.

[18] Human Rights Watch, *They Killed Them Like It Was Nothing: The Need for Justice for Côte d'Ivoire's Post-Election Crimes*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2011), https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/cdi1011webwcover_0.pdf, 20.

[19] *Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix* (MJP) and *Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest* (MPIGO). These groups, composed primarily of Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters, were likely already working in coordination with the MPCI, which could no longer officially fight because of an October 2002 ceasefire agreement. See J. Allouche and P. A. Zadi Zadi, "The Dynamics of Restraint in Côte d'Ivoire," *IDS Bulletin* 44, 1 (January 2013): 72–86.

[20] The frequently cited number of 3,000 fatalities in this period has not been credibly verified. According to local nongovernment organizations, the number was provided to the international community by Ouattara's government once he took power; investigations into its accuracy, or who exactly was responsible for the total fatalities, have not been allowed.

[21] Human Rights Watch, *They Killed Them Like It Was Nothing*, 4.

[22] Human Rights Watch, *They Killed Them Like It Was Nothing*, 61.

[23] Human Rights Watch, *They Killed Them Like It Was Nothing*, 76.

[24] Human Rights Watch, "Côte d'Ivoire: Ouattara Forces Kill, Rape Civilians During Offensive," April 9, 2011, https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/04/09/cote-divoire-ouattara-forces-kill-rape-civilians-during-offensive. International Committee of the Red Cross, "Côte d'Ivoire: hundreds of civilians killed in Duékoué," Press Release, February 4, 2011, https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/news-release/2011/cote-d-ivoire-news-2011-01-04.htm

[25] UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 1975 (2011) [on targeted sanctions against individuals meeting the criteria set out in resolution 1572 (2004) on arms embargo against Côte d'Ivoire], March 30, 2011, S/RES/1975(2011), https://www.refworld.org/docid/4d9ac4ea2.html.

[26] J. M. Toungara, "Ethnicity and Political Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire," *Journal of Democracy* 12, 3 (2001): 63–72.

[27] In Côte d'Ivoire's first multiparty election in 1990, Houphouët-Boigny beat Laurent Gbagbo to retain the presidency until his death in 1993 when Henri Konan Bédié, from his position as president of the National Assembly, claimed the presidency.

[28] D. Woods, "Elites, Ethnicity, and 'Home Town' Associations in the Côte d'Ivoire: An Historical Analysis of State-Society Links," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 64, 4 (1994): 465–483.

[29] Marcel Amondji, "Houphouëtisme, économie et société," chap. 6 in *Félix Houphouët et la Côte-d'Ivoire: l'envers d'une légende* (Paris: Karthala, 1984), 269–315.

[30] Baule is another spelling of Baoulé. In the literature, we may also find the following spellings: "Bawoulé" or "Bawulé."

[31] Toungara, 67.

[32] Simon-Pierre Ekanza, *Côte d'Ivoire: De l'ethnie à la nation, une histoire à bâtir* (Abidjan: Les Éditions du CERAP, 2007), 45.

[33] The government of Côte d'Ivoire has established both a Ministry of Solidarity, Social Cohesion and Fight against Poverty and a National Program of Social Cohesion.

[34] See Serge-Nicolas Nzi, "La Côte-d'Ivoire face aux 10 commandements du rattrapage ethnique des 'nordistes' de Ouattara," *La Dépêche d'Abidjan*, October 15, 2015, https://www.ladepechedabidjan.info/La-Cote-d-Ivoire-face-aux-10-commandements-du-rattrapage-ethnique-des-nordistes-de-Ouattara_a21947.html.

[35] Serge-Nicolas Nzi, "La Côte-d'Ivoire face aux 10 commandements."

[36] A. Babo, "L'étranger à travers le prisme de l'ivoirité en Côte d'Ivoire: retour sur des regards nouveaux," *Migrations Société* 144, 6 (2012): 99–120.

[37] See OFPRA, "Conflits fonciers, ethnicité politique et guerre en Côte d'Ivoire," August 18, 2017; see also Jean-Pierre Chauveau and Paul Richards, "Les racines agraires des insurrections ouest-africaines: Une comparaison Côte d'Ivoire-Sierra Leone," *Politique africaine* 111, 3 (2008): 131–167.

[38] OFPRA, 30–37.

[39] According to Haby Niakaté, their organization, the Wê Youth Alliance, was created in April 2017, and its land reclamation operation was launched three months later. Haby Niakaté, "Dans l'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire, une terre trop convoitée," *Le Monde,* December 7, 2017, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/12/07/dans-l-ouest-de-la-cote-d-ivoire-une-terre-trop-convoitee_5226378_3212.html.

[40] Land conflict between native Ivorian people within the same region is often linked to disputes over the delimitation of land, especially when land is being sold. This type of conflict does not pose a risk of atrocity crimes. These conflicts can also manifest as intergenerational conflicts within native Ivorian families, wherein the younger generations who have no land engage in open conflict with their parents who sold or gave the land away without regard to them. See Jean-Pierre Chauveau, "Les rapports entre générations ont une histoire. Accès à la terre et gouvernementalité locale en pays Gban (Centre-Ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire)," *Afrique Contemporaine* 2, 214 (2005): 59–83.

[41] Conflicts between several Ivorian ethnic groups mar the towns of the western regions of Côte d'Ivoire, such as Guiglo, Danané, Toulepleu, etc., including Ivorian returnees from neighboring countries who went into exile following the 2010–11 crisis. See Bi Anicet Patrice Gaouli, "Tutorat et conflits fonciers ruraux dans l'Ouest ivorian: le cas de Fengolo dans la Sous-préfecture de Duékoué," *Rapport de recherche du CODESRIA* no. 16, p. 13. An interviewee in Guiglo noted that neighboring countries are now issuing cessation clauses to end refugee status for Ivorians who fled during the civil wars, forcing them to return to their home country, where they may not be able to get identity cards. The returnees are not that numerous—enough to cause tensions and be used as a political pawn, but their participation in the election is not a significant factor. According to him, the dual challenges faced abroad and at home by these people will lead 20 to 30 percent of them to cross the Sahara, heading north toward Europe. Another interviewee in the same town stated "they [refugees abroad] are waiting for the liberation of Gbagbo as an opportunity to return." Authors' interview, Guiglo, November 5, 2018.

[42] For instance, in October 2017, a violent land conflict erupted in Blolequin between the Wê and the ethnic communities from Burkina Faso. According to the government, this resulted in two deaths recorded, and 5,483 displaced persons in western Côte d'Ivoire—specifically, the subprefectures of Zéagbo in the department of Bloléquin and Taably in the department of Guiglo. See Wassimagnon, "Côte d'Ivoire: Conflit foncier à l'Ouest entre Baoulé, Wê et Burkinabè, 4000 élèves déplacés privés de cours," KOACI.com, October 11, 2017, http://www.koaci.com/cote-divoire-conflit-foncier-louest-entre-baoule-burkinabe-4000-eleves-deplaces-prives-cours-113851.html.

[43] Interview in Bondoukou on October 31, 2018. Further, foreign nationals allegedly illegally live and farm in protected national forests. When government officials—sometimes at the request of Ivorians—evict them, this can contribute to foreigners' perceived need for self-defense groups and spur intercommunal conflict between foreigners and Ivorians.

[44] RFI (Radio France Internationale), "Côte d'Ivoire: au moins 20 morts dans des affrontements à Bouna," March, 25, 2016, http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20160325-cote-ivoire-personnes-mortes-affrontements-bouna-agriculteurs-eleveurs-securite.

[45] Lars-Erik Cederman, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison," *American Political Science Review* 105, 3 (2011): 478–495; see also Jonas Claes, "Atrocity Prevention at the State Level: Security Sector Reform and Horizontal Equality," *Peace Brief* no. 144, April 23, 2013, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, https://www.usip.org/publications/2013/04/atrocity-prevention-state-level.

[46] Scott Straus, "Triggers of Mass Atrocities," *Politics and Governance* 3, 3 (2015): 5–15.

[47] The 2015 elections went smoothly, likely because Ouattara's leadership went largely uncontested. At the time, the country was governed by a ruling coalition (the RHDP), and Gbagbo was at The Hague with his party, the FPI, in disarray and unable to meaningfully contest the presidency.

[48] Vincent Duhem, "Côte d'Ivoire: le Raci appelle Guillaume Soro à se présenter en 2020," *Jeune Afrique*, November 19, 2018.

[49] Authors' interview with excombatant, Bouake, November 2, 2018.

[50] The name of the army was changed in 2016, it was previously called the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (*Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire*, or FRCI).

[51] Ange Aboa and Joe Bavier, "Ivory Coast Offering $26,000 Buy-Outs to Reduce Army Size: Documents," *Reuters World News*, December 11, 2017; https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ivorycoast-army/ivory-coast-offering-26000-buy-outs-to-reduce-army-size-documents-idUSKBN1E513N.

[52] Jeremy Allouche and Oswald Padonou, "Côte d'Ivoire: The Mutiny May Be Over, but the Army's Problems Are Not," *African Argument*, May 17, 2017, https://africanarguments.org/2017/05/17/cote-divoire-the-mutiny-may-be-over-but-the-armys-problems-are-not/.

[53] Lazare Koffi Koffi, "Comment la France et l'Onu ont dissimulent les morts de la crise postélectorale," *Le Journal de Connection Ivorienne*, February 10, 2016, https://www.connectionivoirienne.net/2016/02/10/cote-divoire-ce-faux-chiffre-des-3000-morts-que-la-france-et-lonu-veulent-nous-imposer/.

[54] Human Rights Watch, "Côte d'Ivoire: Impartial Justice Poses Test for Ouattara. Serious Crimes by Both Sides Demand Swift Response," October 6, 2011, https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/10/06/cote-divoire-impartial-justice-poses-test-ouattara.

[55] Partisans of the PDCI claim that security forces are biased toward the RHDP. We do not know for certain if, in the case of the October 2018 unrest, the police could have intervened earlier. There is no investigation to establish the facts.

[56] Vincent Duhem, "Côte d'Ivoire: le député Alain Lobognon, proche de Guillaume Soro, placé sous mandat de dépôt," *Jeune Afrique*, January 15, 2019, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/706525/societe/cote-divoire-le-depute-alain-lobognon-proche-de-guillaume-soro-place-sous-mandat-de-depot/.

[57] The timing of legal proceedings against PDCI mayors, Jacques Ehouo and Noël Akossi Benjo, can only raise suspicions that the state is using the justice system to settle political scores between Ouattara supporters and their past and future rivals. See "Côte d'Ivoire: Noël Akossi-Bendjo 'révoqué' de son poste de maire du Plateau," *Jeune Afrique*, August 1, 2018, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/609429/politique/cote-divoire-noel-akossi-bendjo-revoque-de-son-poste-de-maire-du-plateau/.

[58] To maintain their positions, several, except for Thierry Tano and Jean-Louis Billon who resigned, decided to create a parallel PDCI (PDCI Renaissance, or the movement "On the footsteps of Houphouët") that would remain part of the RHDP.

[59] See the court's decision at http://fr.african-court.org/images/Cases/Judgment/ARRET%20_%20REQUETE%20No%200012014%20_%20APDH%20C.%20LA%20REPUBLIQUE%20DE%20COTE%20DIVOIRE.pdf.

[60] Amnesty International, "Communities Shattered by Arms Proliferation and Abuse in Côte d'Ivoire," research report AFR 31/002/2013, March 20, 2013, Amnesty International, London, https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/8000/afr310022013en.pdf.

[61] Magali Chelpi-den Hamer, "Les tribulations du dispositif Désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion des miliciens en Côte d'Ivoire (2003–2015)," *Hérodote* 158, no. 3 (2015): 200–218.

[62] Authors' interview, Bouna, November 1, 2018.

[63] Authors' interview, Guiglo, November 5, 2018.

[64] Human Rights Watch, "CPI: Audition d'une figure clé de la Côte d'Ivoire," September 24, 2014, https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2014/09/24/cpi-audition-dune-figure-cle-de-la-cote-divoire.

[65] Authors' interview, Korhogo, November 3, 2018.

[66] Savannah de Tessières, "A National Survey of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Côte d'Ivoire," *Small Arms Survey*, Special Report 14, April 2012, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/142357/SAS-SR14-CoteIvoire-Summary-EN.pdf.

[67] André Silver Konan, "Côte d'Ivoire : la recrudescence de la violence verbale entre politiques indigne la société civile," *Jeune Afrique*, February 5, 2019, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/730599/politique/cote-divoire-la-recrudescence-de-la-violence-verbale-entre-politiques-indigne-la-societe-civile/; André Silver Konan, "En Côte d'Ivoire, les vieux démons de la violence verbale refont surface," *Jeune Afrique*, September 18, 2018, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/631276/politique/tribune-en-cote-divoire-les-vieux-demons-de-la-violence-verbale-refont-surface/; Armand B. Depeyla, "Guerre ouverte avec Gbagbo: Affi met Bédié dans l'embarras," *L'Infodrome*, March 26, 2019, http://www.linfodrome.com/vie-politique/46960-guerre-ouverte-avec-gbagbo-affi-met-Bédié-dans-l-embarras.

[68] Straus, "Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention," 76.

[69] "Dangerous Speech is any form of expression (speech, text, or images) that can increase the risk that its audience will condone or participate in violence against members of another group. We focus [on Dangerous Speech instead of hate speech] since it is a narrower, more specific category, defined not by a subjective emotion such as hatred, but by its capacity to inspire a harm that is all too easy to identify—mass violence—and that almost everyone can agree on wanting to prevent." Susan Benesch, Cathy Buerger, Tonei Glavinic, and Sean Manion, "Dangerous Speech: A Practical Guide," Dangerous Speech Project, December 31, 2018, https://dangerousspeech.org/guide/.

[70] Konan, "Côte d'Ivoire : la recrudescence de la violence verbale entre politiques indigne la société civile."

[71] "Statement by the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide," Juan Mendez, November 15, 2004, https://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/westafrica/mendez-15nov2004.htm.

[72] AIP, "Côte d'Ivoire: La CNDHCI condamne les violences verbales et prévient que leurs auteurs sont passibles de poursuites judiciaires," Ivoirebusiness.net, February 7, 2019, https://www.ivoirebusiness.net/articles/cote-divoire-la-cndhci-condamne-les-violences-verbales-et-previent-que-leurs-auteurs-sont.

[73] Konan, "En Côte d'Ivoire, les vieux démons de la violence verbale refont surface."

[74] Other examples of dangerous speech include former president Henri Konan Bédié describing President Ouattara and his Unified RHDP supporters as "illegitimate sons" of Houphouët-Boigny. See Konan, "Côte d'Ivoire : la recrudescence de la violence verbale entre politiques indigne la société civile." Likewise, Mariam Traore, Unified RHDP (former RDR) deputy of Tengrela, has insulted the private parts of the women of the PDCI. See Dreyfus Polichinelle, "Côte d'Ivoire: Quelles sanctions pour les propos injurieux de Mariam Traoré?" *Afrique sur 7*, February 4, 2019, https://www.afrique-sur7.fr/415482-sanctions-propos-injurieux-mariam-traore. Accessed March 30, 2019.

[75] For example, when Gbagbo's acquittal was announced, someone paid for buses, food, and possibly remuneration to bring people to a rally to demonstrate. In other areas, low-income youth can drink at certain bars for free, calling into question who pays for the drinks and with what motives.

[76] Political parties organize several meetings and events with the youth. In several towns, political parties tend to organize their young supporters into committees. For the municipal and regional elections of October 2018, youth leaders received donations, including motorbikes, money, and so forth.

[77] Authors' interview, Yamoussoukro, November 6, 2018.

[78] Authors' interview, Danane, November 4, 2018.

[79] Straus, "Triggers of Mass Atrocities," 7, 13.

[80] Straus, "Triggers of Mass Atrocities," 7, 13.

[81] Authors' interview, Abidjan, November 7, 2018.

[82] Among the conditions set by the ICC is the obligation for Gbagbo to reside in an ICC-member state, other than Côte d'Ivoire, pending a possible appeal trial. See International Criminal Court (ICC), "ICC Appeals Chamber to Impose Conditions on Laurent Gbagbo and Charles Blé Goudé upon Their Release Following Their Acquittal," press release, February 1, 2019, Ref: ICC-CPI-20190201-PR1436, ICC, The Hague.

[83] Eddy Pehe, "Laurent Gbagbo: Voici ses crimes économiques. Le document qui le condamne," Koacinaute, January 27, 2011, https://www.koaci.com/m/tribune-laurent-gbagbo-voici-crimes-economiques-document-condamne-70081-i.html.

[84] Nelson Zimin, "Côte d'Ivoire: Réforme de la CEI, l'opposition divisée, mais mobilisée," *Afrique sur 7*, March 2, 2019, https://www.afrique-sur7.fr/418040-cote-divoire-reforme-cei-opposition.

[85] An intelligence officer, explaining how politicians pull the strings of the military, noted that the first army mutiny in 2017 occurred the day after Soro took office as president of the National Assembly. According to him, "it was a show of force." Authors' interview, Abidjan, November 7, 2018.

[86] US Department of State and USAID, "Working Draft, Atrocity Assessment Framework: Supplemental Guidance on State/USAID Conflict Assessment Framework," https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/241399.pdf.

[87] Authors' interview, Abidjan, November 7, 2018.

[88] See Mamadou Konaté, "Cohésion, prévention des conflits: Le forum des religieux milite pour une paix positive sur l'Afrique," on Fratmat.info, February 28, 2019, https://www.fratmat.info/index.php/politique/cohesion-prevention-des-conflits-le-forum-des-religieux-milite-pour-une-paix-positive-sur-l-afrique.

[89] Authors' interview, Bouake, November 3, 2018.

[90] Authors' interview, Bouake, November 3, 2018.

[91] Measured by GDP per capita. World Bank Open Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=ZG&year_high_desc=true.

[92] Authors' interview, Abidjan, November 9, 2018.

[93] See Agence France-Presse (AFP), "Côte d'Ivoire : la France annonce l'augmentation de sa présence militaire," April 29, 2016, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/depeches/322042/politique/cote-divoire-france-annonce-laugmentation-de-presence-militaire/.

APPENDIX: RESEARCH PROCESS

The research team for this project, consisting of a Simon-Skjodt Center staff member and an Early Warning Fellow who is an expert on Côte d'Ivoire, conducted interviews and desk research starting in fall 2018, including several weeks of fieldwork in Côte d'Ivoire in November 2018. The interviews were conducted in all the major regions of the country: in the South (Abidjan, Grand-Bassam, Lakota, San Pedro), in the East (Bondoukou and Bouna), in the North (Korhogo, Ferkessedougou, Bondiali), in the West (Danané, Guiglo, Man, Duékoué), and in the Central region (Yamoussoukro, Daloa, Bouaké). Interviews were conducted by telephone in Ferkessedougou, Bondiali, and Lakota, while in-person interviews were conducted in the rest of the locations.

Figure 2. Map of Research Locations

Findings are based primarily on interviews with 93 interlocutors: 24 in Abidjan, 7 in Grand-Bassam, 7 in Bondoukou, 13 in Bouna, 4 in Korhogo, 11 in Bouaké, 2 in Danane, 3 in Guiglo, 4 in Yamoussoukro, and 18 by telephone. These interviews represented views from the Ivorian government, political opposition, religious and traditional leaders, local government representatives, civil society and domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), ex-combatants, and business leaders in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as country experts working in governments and NGOs internationally. The researchers sought to interview stakeholders representing a wide spectrum of views.

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