



COTE D'IVOIRE RESEARCH NOTE

## Implications of the PDCI's withdrawal from Ouattara's RHDP

*Despite the excited headlines it has generated, today's divorce announcement simply formalizes a separation that had become increasingly bitter in recent months. **The development will have little impact on the political landscape ahead of the 2020 elections.***

1) Although 2020 is too far away for serious prediction, the following but should be include in any list of potential RHDP candidates:

- Daniel Kablan Duncan – Vice President (former prime minister with several previous cabinet positions in his background);
- Richard Donwahi – minister for water and forest resources (former defence minister);
- Thierry Thanoh - Energy minister (former CEO of Ecobank).

This said, given the total disarray in both the FPI (split between the Gbagbo and Affi Nguessan tendencies) and the imploding PDCI, **the 2020 election would seem to be the RHDP's to lose.**

2) Our July 27<sup>th</sup> note, "[Tempest in a teapot](#)", explored the roots and implications of the PDCI crisis. Our position remains that the party's slow-motion implosion will have few if any systemic implications, particularly since the dissident wing has already been embraced by the government (in which it occupies no fewer than 13 ministerial posts).

It is also worth pointing out that, despite the leadership's aversion, **a large segment of the Bedie's party actually favours the idea of merging with the RHDP**<sup>1</sup>. So while no-one has yet resigned or been formally expelled from the party<sup>2</sup>, there seems little question as to which way the dissidents will vote in a national election.

3) Now for Guillaume Soro, *l'enfant terrible* ... As we know, the Speaker of the National Assembly has long had his eyes on the top job. While it was predictable that he would be the first person to throw his hat into the ring for 2020<sup>3</sup>, there is **absolutely no chance of him emerging as the RHDP nominee**. He will pay a price for missing the party's constituent general assembly - a colossal blunder for such a habitually canny operator. In addition, his **apparent complicity in the serial mutinies of 2016 and 2017** will weigh even more heavily against him<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it has been reported that during the fateful June meeting of the PDCI political bureau, the majority of members who intervened actually spoke in favour of ratification, but were overruled by the Bédié loyalist chairing the session. [As will be recalled, the RHDP coalition was originally launched by the PDCI – with the active support of France, incidentally - as an anti-Gbagbo coalition, back in 2003/04.]

<sup>2</sup> I.e. not even those serving in Ouattara's cabinet.

<sup>3</sup> The day after Soro's interview on RFI last month (when he coyly stated, "*Je vais sérieusement y réfléchir*"), Alain Lobognon one of his more vocal supporters posted the following on Facebook: "*J'ai décidé de soutenir la candidature de @GuillaumeSoro a l'élection présidentielle de 2020 ...*"

<sup>4</sup> Soro's direct implication in the abortive Burkina Faso coup of October 2016 would represent yet another political handicap.

4) Routinely used to describe the country's experience between 2002 and 2011, **the term 'civil war' is actually a misnomer** for the *de facto* partition created by the *Force Licorne* that France deployed to prevent the mutinous soldiers<sup>5</sup> who had been marching south from Cote d'Ivoire's northern region, from reaching the capital Yamoussoukro<sup>6</sup>. **A replay of this scenario is not even a remote possibility.**

5) However, investors should **anticipate a fresh round of mischief-making** – such as orchestrated disturbances by former *Forces Nouvelles* members - **when Soro is eventually disabused** of the notion that he has a shot at becoming the RHDP nominee.

Under this scenario, **he would have relatively few options.** To set up his own party from scratch, he would need to start almost immediately - i.e. today - which would mean giving up his high-visibility post as Speaker ... and the resources that come with the job. The alternative would be for him to try and cut a deal with one of the two FPI factions, which strikes me as mission impossible<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> I.e. the *Forces Nouvelles*.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth recalling that there were essentially no hostilities between October 2002 and the aftermath of the 2010 elections whose results Gbagbo refused to accept.

<sup>7</sup> While it is true that (in the ultimate marriage of convenience), he served as Gbagbo's prime minister between 2007 and 2010, neither faction is likely to forgive him for allying himself with Ouattara in late 2010 - and indeed placing at the latter's disposal the *Forces Nouvelles*, opportunistically rebranded the *Forces Republicaines*(!)

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