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Conflict and development policy in the Mano River region and Côte d'Ivoire: 'The regional stakes for stability and reconstruction', 'Identity and the negotiation of national belonging in West Africa: Reflections on the Côte d'Ivoire crisis'

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CONFERENCE REPORT

CONFLICT AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN THE MANO RIVER REGION AND CÔTE D'IVOIRE: 'THE REGIONAL STAKES FOR STABILITY AND RECONSTRUCTION',

*A conference organized by the Club du Sahel et de l'Afrique de l'ouest and the
Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, 13–14 May 2003*

'IDENTITY AND THE NEGOTIATION OF NATIONAL BELONGING IN WEST AFRICA: REFLECTIONS ON THE CÔTE D'IVOIRE CRISIS',

*A conference organized by CODESRIA and the Nordic Africa Institute, Dakar,
15–16 May 2003.*

STEPHEN ELLIS

These two conferences — one intended primarily for policy-makers, the other more academic in nature — were both timely responses to the outbreak of armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire in September 2002. Both also reflected new ambitions on the part of some of the organizers. The Club du Sahel, which maintains a secretariat in Paris, has in recent times been revitalized as a forum where policy-makers from donor countries and from West Africa itself can discuss matters of mutual interest with a view to improving and concerting donor policies. This particular meeting was notable for its directness. Whereas gatherings of government ministers and high officials often avoid any hint of diplomatic confrontation, and risk becoming anodyne, in this case names were named from the first session, with the government of Burkina Faso being clearly named as one of the main instigators of war in the region.

The Dakar conference on Côte d'Ivoire was also a co-production, this time by the African social science research consortium CODESRIA and the Nordic Africa Institute, based in Sweden. It also appeared to mark something of a new departure for CODESRIA, with the organization's

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executive secretary, Adebayo Olukoshi, announcing his intention to organize a series of similar meetings dealing with some of the more damaging armed conflicts in Africa today. This particular meeting included, as might be expected, some eminent researchers from Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso in particular, but also a sprinkling of researchers from North America and Europe. This proved to be a happy mixture, although the conference included some passionate arguments on the theme of *ivoirité*. Also notable was the fruitful interaction between the African researchers present and the smaller number of Africanists from Europe and North America.