

PART II



## BURKINA FASO

Gourmantches, during which 'weapons and machetes' were used.<sup>6</sup>

### OVERVIEW

Burkina Faso's post-independence history is filled with military coups. The most recent occurred in 1987 and resulted in the country's current president, Blaise Compaoré, seizing power. Compaoré has since returned the country to civilian rule and introduced multiparty elections, which he has won twice (in 1991 and again in 1998). The country has supported armed groups operating elsewhere on the continent, including Angola,<sup>1</sup> Côte d'Ivoire,<sup>2</sup> Liberia,<sup>3</sup> and Sierra Leone,<sup>4</sup> but no armed groups are active within Burkina Faso. Diplomatic relations with other neighbours are also strained. Mauritania has accused Burkina Faso of assisting two army officers in a 2003 coup attempt. Burkina Faso stridently denies involvement, but Mauritanian officials remain aggrieved.<sup>5</sup> Within Burkina Faso, tensions erupt periodically between the cattle-herders and agriculturalists who share the land east of the capital, Ouagadougou. In July 2004, eight people died during clashes between the cattle-herding Fulani and the land-owning

### OUTLOOK

Since 1991, the opposition has boycotted or otherwise protested presidential and parliamentary elections.<sup>7</sup> Many expect that Compaoré will run in 2005 for a third term (although this time for only five years) and emerge victorious. But the future looks less bright for the majority of Burkinabes. The Ivorian crisis has had profound ramifications for Burkina Faso. Several hundred thousand Burkinabe have ceased to send home much-needed remittances. To make matters worse, it is feared that more than 10 per cent of the almost 3 million Burkinabe working in Côte d'Ivoire have returned home,<sup>8</sup> placing unprecedented burdens on the family and the state.<sup>9</sup> Landlocked Burkina Faso no longer uses Côte d'Ivoire's ports for shipping or transport,<sup>10</sup> which creates additional strains on an already fragile economy. Given Compaoré's record of meddling in other countries' civil wars and insurgencies, the political opposition's feeling of marginalization, the country's economic struggles, and the ease with which

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small arms can be acquired in the region, armed groups could materialize in Burkina Faso.

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

MPCI	Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
UNITA	União Nacional Para a Independência Total de Angola

**ENDNOTES**

- 1 In March 2000, the Fowler Commission accused Burkina Faso of violating the UN Security Council arms embargo on Angola by diverting arms to Angola's União Nacional Para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA). See UNSC (2000a, paras. 21–22).
- 2 Campoaré is widely believed to have supported the Patriotic Movement of Ivory Coast (Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire, MPCI). See, for example, ICG (2003a, p. 17, fn. 123; 2003b, pp. 12–14); HRW (2003). See also 'Côte d'Ivoire' in Part II.
- 3 See, for example, Huband (1998, p. 92); Global Witness (2002, pp. 8–9); UNSC (2000b, paras. 203–204). See also 'Liberia' in Part II.
- 4 Burkina Faso provided weapons to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) (Berman, 2000, pp. 3–10; UNSC, 2000b,

- paras. 194–95, 203–11; BBC News, 2003).  
See also 'Sierra Leone' in Part II.
- 5 IRIN (2004c).
  - 6 IRIN (2004b).
  - 7 Szajkowski (2004, p. 49).
  - 8 Before the Ivorian crisis, there were 2.8 million Burkinabe working in Côte d'Ivoire (WANEP and FEWER, 2003). UNHCR (2003, p. 225) estimates that as many as 365,000 of these workers have returned home.
  - 9 IRIN (2005). In 2004, Burkina Faso also hosted 466 refugees, most of whom resided in Ouagadougou (UNOCHA, 2004, p. 9; USCR, 2001).
  - 10 IRIN (2004a).
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A soldier from Cape Verde participating in a French-led peacekeeping training exercise for West Africa in December 2004.