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GHANA

Musical chairs

A cabinet reshuffle has given President Kufuor the chance to expand his patronage, with 84 ministers of various kinds now on the state payroll. And revelations of past government misdeeds under President Rawlings keep the spotlight off Kufuor's government, for now.

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Who's next?

Amid talk of an endgame, President Mugabe is still determined to dictate how and when he will go – and he will hand-pick his successor. Hot Mugabe favourite is Emmerson Mnangagwa but can he beat the MDC and Pretoria's compromise candidate, John Nkomo, to the top job?

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Cotton tales

The previous government's financial misdeeds are a boon to President John Kufuor

Three former officials of ex-President **Jerry Rawlings's** National Democratic Congress (NDC) were gaoled on 28 April for their part in the Quality Grain scandal, involving a loan of US\$20 million for a rice-growing project that never materialised (AC Vol 43 No 13). Stung into action by the verdict, the NDC announced a 'March for Survival' through the streets of Accra on 6 May. But the previous evening state television screened pictures of the lavish wedding in the **United States** of Quality Grain boss **Juliet Cotton**, now in a US prison. Cotton was heard boasting to her Georgia church congregation of her influence with 'kings and men', and of how Ghana Finance Ministry officials gave her a loan on demand. She was shown arriving by helicopter, and presenting \$50,000 to the pastor who officiated at the wedding.

Such revelations of NDC misdeeds have helped shore up President **John Agyekum Kufuor's** popularity, despite steep energy price hikes that have pushed up inflation to 29 per cent from 16 per cent, while interest rates rose for the first time since the National Patriotic Party (NPP) came to power in January 2001. The Accra Fast Track High Court gaoled former Finance Minister **Kwame Peprah** for four years, for guaranteeing Cotton's \$20 mn. loan; former Food and Agriculture Minister **Ibrahim Adam** and former Finance Ministry official **George Sipa Yankey** were each gaoled for two years.

As the government's nominee on the board of Quality Grain Ghana, Yankey was said to have been acting under pressure from Rawlings's office to grant Cotton an additional \$2 mn. in 1999, when the rice venture had almost collapsed. The NDC flagbearer **John Evans Atta Mills**, in charge of the project at the time, denies ignoring warnings from Ghana's Washington Ambassador **Kobby Koomson**. Cotton admits she was receiving welfare payments and had just \$46 when she approached the government.

Colossal blunder

The American fraud investigation was triggered by complaints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation from Cotton's uncle **Oscar Hudson**. He also wrote to Mills via his Ghanaian lawyers, warning that the government had been talked into making a 'colossal blunder'. Trial Judge **Dixon Kwame Afreh** noted when delivering judgment of Cotton that 'somebody up there liked her'.

Peprah also faces charges in connection with the loss of £24.6 mn. (\$39.6 mn) from a £32 mn. loan facility, secured through **Britain's** Export Credits Guarantee Department by his predecessor, Dr. **Kwesi Botchwey**, in 1994. The money was used to re-develop two former state hotels, La Palm beach complex and Coco Palm. The Coco Palm site was developed not into a hotel but into a luxury apartment complex, whose units were reputedly sold to private individuals for \$300,000 each, the 'profits' being repatriated to International Generics, Coco Palm's mother company in the UK. Peprah is charged with ordering the Bank of Ghana to make good, with interest, the default on both loans.

Another scandal in the headlines has been the disappearance on 28 March of the **Nigerian-owned** motor tanker Asterias I, carrying \$2 mn.-worth of crude oil from the offshore Saltpond Field. This has revived interest in the deals signed by the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) during the 13-year tenure of former Chairman and Chief Executive **Tsatsu Tsikata**. Under a joint venture agreement made in January 2000 with GNPC, Houston-based Lushann International Energy Inc. acquired a 60 per cent stake in the new Saltpond Oil Production Company. GNPC's share of the equity consisted of the production platform Mr Louie, abandoned on the field in 1985 and valued at just \$500,000.

Nigerian-based Ocean and Oil Services Ltd., owners of the Asterias I, claim to have seized the cargo after Lushann had failed to settle accrued charter fees of \$1.9mn. Under the joint venture agreement, they were acting within their legal rights. Lushann, as technical manager, had been selling accumulated production from Saltpond to offset its costs. But the Asterias I had been chartered for \$9,000 a day – 50 per cent above current market prices in the region. After the sale of the crude the Ghana government stood to make just \$60,000 from three months of Saltpond production, indicating that the venture may end with a substantial financial loss to GNPC, as well as forfeiture of the production platform.

Tsikata has vehemently denied any wrongdoing, accusing the government of attempting to criminalise all the contracts he signed while running GNPC. He is currently on trial at the Fast Track High Court for causing financial loss to the state, by guaranteeing a six mn. franc loan from **France's** *Caisse Française*

Musical chairs

President **John Agyekum Kufuor**'s late March cabinet changes brought in some younger ministers and deputy ministers, but were dismissed by the opposition National Democratic Congress as 'more recycle than reshuffle'. The only minister dropped was **Edward Osei-Kwaku**, from Youth and Sports; the apparent losers had their demotions finessed by the addition of new responsibilities to their new portfolios. But the changes leave ample room for conflict between ministers with overlapping mandates, especially in economics, transport and education.

Kufuor resisted the temptation to set up new ministries, but expanded his patronage. Ministers, deputy ministers, ministers of state and regional ministers now total 83, plus 27 highly-paid Special Assistants. **Alan Kyerematen**, former Ambassador to the **United States**, replaced **Kofi Konadu Apraku** at Trade and Industry, with responsibility for Special Presidential Initiatives. If Kufuor is re-elected in December 2004, he is expected to pick Kyerematen as his successor in 2008; he can buy some popularity by using a new US\$100 million credit to revive Ghana's distressed small and medium businesses, to be disbursed ahead of the elections.

Apraku has been ousted from the cabinet to the Ministry for Regional Cooperation, responsible for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NePAD). Former Justice Minister **Nana Addo-Dankwa Akufo-Addo**, who challenged Kufuor for the New Patriotic Party (NPP) leadership in 1998, has moved to Foreign Affairs. With Ghana chairing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), deft diplomacy is demanded by the conflicts in **Côte d'Ivoire** and **Liberia**. Akufo-Addo's French, acquired during a long spell at Paris law firm Coudert Frères in the 1970s, will prove useful – and he will have to spend long periods abroad, preventing him from nurturing his Akyem power base in Eastern Region.

New Energy Minister **Paa Kwesi Nduom** is the only non-NPP minister. He stood for Parliament on the Nkrumahist Convention People's Party ticket in 2000, but has drifted apart from old party colleagues. He will need all the contacts that he acquired as a partner at accountants Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu to revive stalled tariff negotiations for the Valco aluminium smelter, and to sort out the electricity generation problems that hamper the Ghanaian economy.

Former Energy Minister **Albert Kan-Dapaah**, who announced a swingeing 92 per cent petrol price increase in mid-January, plus big rises in electricity tariffs for the poorest consumers, moves to Communications and Technology. His predecessor **Felix Owusu-Agyepong** came under fire for

his handling of the abrogation of Telekom **Malaysia**'s management agreement with state-owned Ghana Telecom, and his choice of **Norway**'s Nortel has been greeted with scepticism.

More popular or visible ministers such as the President's brother **George Addo-Kufuor** (Defence and acting Minister of Interior) and **Kwamena Bartels** (Private Sector Development and acting Minister of Tourism), who supervised two portfolios for much of the past year, have gained new ministers to share the burden.

Others have had their responsibilities increased. Economic Planning has reverted to its old home at the Finance Ministry under **Yaw Osafo-Maafa**, and Senior Minister **J.H. Mensah**, Chairman of the Economic Management Team, now also has responsibility for public sector reform and the National Institutional Renewal Programme. How these two work together with new Civil Service head **Alex Glover-Quartey** will help to determine how fast the economy recovers from January's fuel price rises.

Christine Churcher, who stays in charge of Basic Primary and Girl-Child Education, is joined by former BBC African Service editor **Elizabeth Akua Ohene** as Minister of State for Tertiary Education. University places are to be halved, and the authorities are moving to recover the full cost of student fees. The students' union objects, pointing out that the constitution guarantees all Ghanaians equal access to education. Ohene will need to handle this tactfully during next year's election campaign.

Having held on to most of his old portfolio, Transport and Aviation Minister **Richard Winfred Anane** will be closely watched for his handling of Ghana Airways, where a recent forensic audit report details extensive corruption under former Chief Executive **Emmanuel L. Quartey** and his deputy, Captain **Paul Forjoe**, both now in exile. Anane dropped a planned joint venture with **South Africa**'s Nationwide Airlines in February after a campaign in the press and by a minority group on the airline's board.

Vice-President Alhaji **Aliu Mahama** finds himself in limbo amid rumours that Kufuor might drop him as running mate if no solution is found soon to the crisis in Yendi, his home town. The trial of suspects in the massacre of the Dagbon overlord, Ya-Na **Yakubu Andani II**, and 30 followers, began in early May, 13 months after the incident, which forced two senior officials to resign (AC Vol 43 No 8). Kufuor has avoided bringing Yendi MP and former Interior Minister Alhaji **Malik Alhassan Yakubu** back into cabinet, but named another Abudu, former National Security Adviser General **Joshua Hamidu**, as new Ambassador to **Nigeria**.

de Développement to Valley Farms, a cocoa buying company, in January 2000 while GNPC was diversifying outside hydrocarbon exploration and production. The owner of Valley Farms, **James Edward Wilson**, US-born and based in Ghana for the past four decades, is a close friend of senior figures in the previous NDC government, while Tsikata (described by Rawlings as a 'financial wizard'), was its unofficial legal guru.

The scale of local and international financial malpractice was indicated by an audit of payment claims presented by contractors to the Ministry of Finance between December 1996 and April 2001. False claims, overpayments and overstated claims in the road sector amounted to some \$30 mn. On taking office in January 2001, the NPP decided to bypass the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) and ordered, instead, independent forensic audits of allegations of fraud in the main state institutions. The SFO is not trusted by the public because it is controlled by the office of the Attorney General, who by law must be a minister of state. The SFO has not had a confirmed executive director since it was created, and all but two of the cases it has brought to court since 1998 are still pending.

The NPP government's problem is that, if it re-examines all suspected

cases of fraudulent procurement, it risks damaging the confidence of potential investors. The conclusions of the forensic audits over the last two years have been widely leaked, and it is feared that those charged may not get a fair trial. And the slow pace of the judiciary in bringing cases against former public officials is gradually eroding confidence in the NPP's commitment to its campaign slogan of 'Zero Tolerance for Corruption'.

Good news for the Ambassador

Brighter news on the investment front comes from the controversial **Saudi Prince Al Waleed bin Talal bin Abdul Aziz al Saud**, who visited from 28-29 April and promised to invest at least \$40 mn. in the Ambassador Hotel site, covering 17 acres of prime land in central Accra. The Ambassador has remained derelict since its sale in 1994 to a Palestinian-led consortium for \$3.5 mn. The NPP has revoked the agreement for non-performance, and reassigned the lease to the Saudis. The Prince heads the Kingdom Holding Company, whose banking interests include a stake of just under ten per cent in CitiGroup. CitiBank is to open a branch in Ghana, where it already has a 14 per cent stake in the highly regarded CAL Merchant Bank. Since CitiBank's

arrival in 2000, its presence had been limited to an office run by the Prince's local pointman **Jude Bucknor**. With entrepreneur **Ken Ofori-Atta** and lawyer **Ekow Awoonor**, Bucknor formed the 'gang of three' who in 1998 narrowly failed to oust Ashanti Goldfields Company boss **Sam Esson Jonah** after a much-publicised spat with Rawlings and a dramatic fall in AGC's share price.

Another plus for the NPP is the sorry state of the opposition. More defections are expected as the fallout spreads from December's acrimonious leadership battle between Professor John Atta-Mills (Vice-President under Rawlings, 1997-2001) and Kwesi Botchwey, Rawlings' much-admired Finance Minister from 1982 until his dramatic resignation in 1995. Mills won hands down in a contest in which he was tagged Rawlings' favourite. Botchwey was seen as supporting the faction of NDC party chairman **Obed Yao Asamoah**, who has further muddied the waters by calling for a 'redefinition' of Rawlings' role as NDC founder (code for taking a back seat). Rawlings, meanwhile, has been trying to keep his name in the public eye, and has recently given the Ghanaian press unprecedented access to his views.

Looming in the background are revelations from the National Reconciliation Commission, set up to look into human rights abuses under past military regimes. Most of the cases so far relate to the Provisional National Defence Council between 1981 and 1993. A disturbing pattern is emerging from the often gruesome testimony, which is carried live on state television on the three days a week that the Commission sits. Many soldiers killed in questionable circumstances, such as during Operation Search and Destroy after the June 1983 coup attempt, were either former colleagues of Rawlings during his earlier coup in 1979, or had helped him take power again in 1981. Many expect Rawlings himself to be summoned to appear before the Reconciliation Commission sooner or later. So far, though, he has only been required to respond by letter to witness statements. He may be spared a humiliating public ordeal if the Commission agrees to hear his testimony in camera.

ZIMBABWE

Who's next?

The endgame may have begun in Harare but Mugabe is playing it his way

Three busy Presidents had a frustrating time when they visited their colleague **Robert Mugabe** in Harare on 5 May. **Thabo Mbeki** of South Africa, **Olusegun Obasanjo** of Nigeria and **Bakili Muluzi** of Malawi (who was late) failed to persuade Mugabe to say whether, or when, he intends to step down. This puts the responsibility back where it belongs, with Zimbabwe's own leaders. As the economic crisis deepens and political violence increases, people are scanning the potential successors.

Mugabe is more secure than many would like to admit. Still strong enough to dictate when and how he will go, Mugabe knows that to predict his own departure would weaken the position he has shrewdly secured over the past 23 years in office. The opposition threatens him with 'mass action' but he has nurtured the pillars of power, the army and police. A constable earns more than a medical doctor; court prosecutors earn a fraction of the pay of a low ranking police officer. The uniformed know that they will keep their privileges only as long as Mugabe is President – and they will not surrender them easily.

The real threat is the desperate state of the economy and its effect on

Zimbabwe's long-suffering people. That is why Mugabe has conditionally offered talks to the opposition, led by **Morgan Tsvangirai** of the Movement for Democratic Change. Mugabe sees no merit in the MDC's economic policies (which so far seem to consist mainly of demands for higher pay). What Mugabe wants is the end of *de facto* sanctions by the Western world, in particular the International Monetary Fund. If the MDC would acknowledge his legitimacy, the objections of the 'North Atlantic World' would start to fall away.

After the attempts by Obasanjo and Mbeki to promote dialogue, Tsvangirai said last August that the Presidents' efforts had allowed Mugabe to consolidate his power. 'They came in hoping to bring about dialogue and reconciliation between the parties – that was an attempt to legitimise Mugabe, without confronting the issue of Mugabe's legitimacy in the March 2002 election. They chose diplomacy rather than democracy and gave Mugabe space to consolidate his position.'

Mugabe's man for the job

Yet one day there will be a successor and Mugabe wants to name him. His favoured front-runner is parliamentary Speaker **Emmerson Mnangagwa**, who is seriously challenged only by the Chairman of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front, **John Nkomo**. Mnangagwa, a lawyer, is exceptionally calculating. He understands how power works, having spent many years as intelligence chief while Mugabe, consolidating his power as Prime Minister in 1980-85, broke down the powerful and adamant right-wing Rhodesians. He also participated in Mugabe's political manoeuvres to neutralise and ultimately cajole **Joshua Nkomo** and his Zimbabwe African Patriotic Union into a political merger to form ZANU-PF in 1987, spelling the death of ZAPU.

For the next 20 years, Mnangagwa served in cabinet, mostly as Justice Minister, learning the nuts and bolts of government machinery. When he lost his parliamentary seat to an MDC candidate in 2000, the President nominated him as a member, to preside as Speaker over the first parliament in which the ruling party no longer controlled a two-thirds majority. Mnangagwa's weakness is lack of support in ZANU's executive, which is riddled with tribal factions jostling for the future presidency. His strength is his known connection to 'big money'; he has travelled to all the capitals that matter to Zimbabwe: Pretoria, Luanda, Abuja and even Beijing, spreading the word that he is the next president.

In Western capitals, Mnangagwa presents himself as the man who 'gets things done', less a democrat than a man who understands business. His liberation struggle activism has translated into vivid anti-colonialist rhetoric and Mugabe sees him as the man who will perpetuate his philosophy – pick up where Mugabe leaves off. Above all, Mnangagwa is more at ease in the officers' mess than the golf club. Some think his reputation tainted: he was intelligence chief during the Matebeleland massacres of the 1980s, in which some 20,000 Ndebele civilians died. He is ready to take over tomorrow with a full cabinet, enough money to oil the sticky cogs and a (faded) blueprint for economic recovery.

The MDC has other ideas

Things may not go smoothly for Mnangagwa, though. Sources at last week's talks with African leaders say John Nkomo is now the compromise candidate preferred by both Pretoria and the opposition MDC. ZANU likes him, too; he became its national Chairman by beating Mnangagwa in a vote at the 1999 party congress. He is heir to his first cousin, Joshua Nkomo; when the veteran Ndebele leader died in 1999, John inherited the leadership of what remained of ZAPU. Elected Second Vice-President both of ZANU-PF and of the government, he has been in cabinet ever since, very much involved in the day-to-day running of

government, while Mnangagwa is out of that loop.

John Nkomo holds all his offices by election; Mnangagwa owes his job entirely to Mugabe. Mnangagwa was appointed Secretary of Administration after John Nkomo beat him in the ZANU party chairmanship election; Mnangagwa was nominated as an MP after the voters had rejected him. It is said that retired General **Solomon Mujuru**, seen as ZANU kingmaker, backs Nkomo and told Mugabe, at the last Politburo meeting in Bulawayo, that he would resist Mnangagwa's promotion.

In the party pecking order, John Nkomo ranks number four, after Mugabe and Vice-Presidents **Simon Muzenda** and **Joseph Wilfred Msika**; Mnangagwa ranks fifth. Muzenda and Msika are in their late 70s, of Mugabe's generation, and will stand down as and when the President does. However, the party constitution lays down no age limit and Mugabe's inner circle helps to keep up the uncertainty by letting it be known that Mbeki's delegation should not have overlooked the elderly pair who are legally next in line for the throne. It would have strengthened the Nkomo option if Muzenda and Msika had announced they were standing down.

Sources at the talks said Mbeki and Obasanjo discussed with both government and MDC the creation of an executive prime minister to appoint and run a government. Nkomo would be acceptable to ZANU members in this new post and to many MDC voters in the three Ndebele provinces, where it has majority support. The 15 per cent Ndebele minority, formerly loyal to Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU, turned to the MDC after ZAPU was swallowed by Mugabe's ZANU, still unforgiven for the Matebele massacres.

The visiting Presidents' transitional proposal is said to have involved a presidential election in two years' time at which John Nkomo would stand; if he won, former Finance Minister **Simba Makoni** would succeed him as executive prime minister. This plan would involve the MDC withdrawing its legal challenge to Mugabe's 2002 election, and accepting Nkomo as premier, with cabinet seats for its own leaders. An executive prime minister was proposed in the draft constitution that was rejected in 2000; to create such a post, the opposition would have to back a parliamentary motion to amend the constitution.

Other names in the frame

Three other, far less probable, presidential contenders are mentioned. Makoni, sacked as Finance Minister late last year, is admired in the West and speaks the IMF's language – but is entirely unfamiliar with Zimbabwe's generals and not at home with people less educated than himself. Mnangagwa could crush him with little effort. Defence Minister **Sydney Sekeremayi**, a medical doctor, has been in cabinet since Independence in 1980. He served as Security Minister and knows a lot of secrets but is unable to whip up emotion at a political rally; he is regarded as a Mugabe-loyalist who does what he's told. **Jonathan Moyo**, the ambitious Information Minister and government spokesperson, has neither military nor civilian support. Moreover, the former Wits professor is resented for his smartness. Moyo's talent is to take bullets for Mugabe; with Mugabe gone, Moyo is gone too.

Morgan Tsvangirai would very likely win a presidential poll, were it to be free and fair – and held now. However, Tsvangirai recently described Mbeki and Obasanjo as 'dishonest brokers' but when they arrived last week, he was keen to meet them and talk. He has publicly confronted **Namibian** President **Sam Nujoma** and condemned the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Tsvangirai's only chance of a working relationship with a regional leader for now is in **Botswana**, whose government is known to be disgusted with Harare's politics but has no leverage there.

Tsvangirai, a rising star in the late 1990s, blundered in 2000 when

he allowed international cameras to record white farmers standing in line to hand over cheques to him – the same farmers who had battled against Mugabe and his 'freedom-fighters'. The film made Tsvangirai appear either money-hungry or naïve. Mugabe's advisors used the incident in a propaganda war that identified the opposition as a puppet of the white minority, and of the former colonial power, **Britain**.

As long as Mugabe can convince other African leaders that he is a victim of former colonialists, human rights violations and disregard of the rule of law become secondary in their eyes, as was clear at April's meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Condemnation from London has played into Mugabe's hands. Last year, when cheated of victory in last year's presidential election, Tsvangirai might have prevailed by bringing his followers out on to the streets to demand what they had voted for. Some thousands might have died to make him president. Tsvangirai flinched at the prospect of bloodshed – and it is through bloodshed that Mugabe became, and remains, President of Zimbabwe.

LIBERIA

Horse-trading, arms-trading

The new UN resolution misses an opportunity to tackle the regional conflict from all sides

The planned United Nations Security Council mission to West Africa will find President **Charles Taylor** in a tight corner. Two armed groups on two fronts supported by **Guinea** and **Côte d'Ivoire** have overstretched his Armed Forces of Liberia militia units, such as the Navy Rangers, while the loyalty of elite squads such as the Anti-Terrorist Unit is questionable.

The deaths of key militia commanders such as '**Jack the Rebel**' in March and **Sam 'Mosquito' Bockarie** in early May were serious blows (AC Vol 44 No 9). The Special Court for **Sierra Leone** indicted Bockarie in March and Monrovia was under pressure to hand him over. Since November, Bockarie and his supporters had fought as mercenaries in western Côte d'Ivoire for the rebel *Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand-Ouest* (MPIGO) and *Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix*. Recently, the rebels had tried to end their ties with Bockarie, resulting in armed clashes; MPIGO leader **Felix Doh** was killed and Bockarie fled back to Liberia, where Liberian troops killed him, apparently after he rowed with Taylor.

The Freetown connection

Sponsoring Bockarie was Liberia's only remaining link with Sierra Leone; it became the basis of 1343 and subsequent UNSC resolutions. Heated debate and serious arm-twisting produced Resolution 1478 (2003) of 6 May; based on 1343, it maintains the arms, diamond and travel embargoes and threatens one on timber on 7 July. **Britain** led the process and the **United States** introduced the timber sanctions, which also fall under its Africa policy of protecting natural resources. The USA advocates 'regime change' in Monrovia and sanctions tighten the screw on Taylor.

In late April, the USA struck a deal with **France** over Liberian sanctions. Paris supports them in exchange for more support on Côte d'Ivoire, especially for a UN mission (see Pointer). In contrast to **Iraq**, Liberia became an Anglo-Franco-US joint initiative at the UN. The resolution increased pressure on Taylor but was not balanced by significant moves against the anti-Taylor fighters. British UN Ambassador **Jeremy Greenstock** said on 5 May, after a closed

More guns, please

President **Charles Taylor** in March 2003 told the press that Liberia had 'ordered arms'. Defence Minister **Daniel Chea** subsequently provided a 'comprehensive listing of military hardware and materials that were imported for self-defence purposes'. These weapons are almost identical to those documented by the United Nations Panel on Liberia. The recent UN Panel report documented six sanctions busting flights from June to August 2002 by **Moldovan** and **Equatorial Guinean** registered aircraft of weapons worth over US\$1.5 million from Belgrade to Monrovia using a **Nigerian** false end-user certificate. The Panel even photographed the weapons in Liberia – matching their serial numbers with the export batch numbers for the M70 automatic rifles from **Yugoslavia's** Zastava factory. The deal was brokered in Belgrade by **Slobodan Tesic** of Temex but was arranged by **Emmanuel Shaw**, one of Taylor's closest aides.

The panel also obtained a second end-user certificate from the Ministry of Defence of **Congo-Kinshasa** dated 27 February 2003 for two flights of 50 tons of Serbian weapons brokered by the Jeff Corporation Ltd of the **British Virgin Islands**. The Panel found that the Jeff Corporation was linked to Temex and that in 2003 there had been a series of suspicious flights to Liberia from Kinshasa. The Serbian authorities have stopped the proposed shipments, probably a rare example of the UN successfully foiling a sanctions busting operation before it occurred.

Security Council consultation, that Guinea had received a 'mild warning' for supporting the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy.

Angola's, **Cameroon's**, and **Mexico's** efforts to make the sanctions more regional were countered by a hardline Conakry. Named and shamed by the latest UN Panel of Experts report, which included a photograph of an individual in Guinean military uniform with LURD rebels inside Liberia, Conakry countered efforts for a text about meddling neighbours by trading in credits gained over Iraq and other Council debates.

Conakry nearly managed to escape the UNSC mission's itinerary. Led by Greenstock, it was due to visit **Nigeria**, **Ghana**, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, **Guinea-Bissau** – and Guinea although it wasn't mentioned in the terms of reference circulated by the current Council President and head of the Liberia Sanctions Committee, **Pakistan's** **Munir Akram**. The 15-23 May visit was postponed *sine die* at the last minute 'because of Iraq'.

Engaging with Guinea is not easy. President **Lansana Conté** is ill, with no obvious successor, and rumours of conspiracy are rife (AC Vol 44 No 7). Conté warned senior army officers on 6 May that the army must remain united and avoid alliances with civilian politicians. Taylor's support for Guinean dissidents is another unpromising ingredient in the regional mix.

Taylor's not the only problem

The watered down resolution was a missed opportunity. The Panel of Experts' report of 5 May challenged the view that Taylor is the chief cause of regional instability and that the prime objective is containment or preferably a new government. The Panel documented Liberia's sanctions-busting but also illustrated Guinean support for the LURD and Ivorian sponsorship of a Liberian militia called Lima and a new rebel group, the Movement for Democracy and Elections in Liberia (Model). It concluded that a comprehensive new UNSC approach was required. Liberia is also a good example of how the effectiveness of sanctions deteriorates over time.

The call for a comprehensive new regional approach also came from the International Crisis Group (ICG) and Human Rights Watch. Both

have conducted detailed fieldwork across the region and warned that unless armed groups such as LURD and Model were also made accountable, violence would continue. The ICG said sanctions were not enough and greater support was needed for the International Contact Group's work on Liberia, launched in late 2002. It comprises Ghana (replacing **Senegal**), **Morocco**, Nigeria, Britain, France, the USA, African Union, Economic Community of West African States, European Union and UN. It has since appointed a Nigerian former leader, General **Abdulsalami Abubakar**, to facilitate peace talks, and met in **Belgium** on 12 May to prepare for negotiations, provisionally planned for Accra later this month. It is unclear how keen LURD and Model will be to negotiate as they make battlefield gains, emboldened by a UN resolution they see as a green light to topple Taylor.

Yet the Contact Group is critical as Liberia's conflict continues to grow. In February, a regrouped and rearmed LURD launched new attacks and captured key towns such as Bopulu, Tubmanburg, Bo-Waterside, Robertsport and Klay Junction. On 25 March, LURD reached Brewerville, outside Monrovia. Government troops have since driven it back but the situation remains volatile. The government has also been fighting the LURD along the strategic Monrovia-Nimba corridor since March. LURD captured Gbarnga on 21 March but the government recaptured it after fierce fighting and pushed back the rebels to Ganta on the Guinean border, where intense fighting continues.

More worrying for Monrovia is a second front opened in the south-east. Since mid-March, an armed group from Côte d'Ivoire attacked Zle Town, Toe Town and Zwedru, then in early April, Greenville port fell to Model. Refugees from Zwedru say hundreds of uniformed, well armed men astonished residents by fixing the street lighting for the first time in living memory. Model concerns Monrovia more than the LURD from which it splintered. It has two aims: removing Taylor while preventing **Sekou Conneh's** largely Mandingo LURD faction in Guinea from taking power in Monrovia. Model is largely Krahn and there were talks in Conakry in April on coordinating military action with the LURD, but this hasn't happened. Key Model fighters include:

- Gen. **Arthur Baybor**: once deputy commander, United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy-J (**Roosevelt Johnson's** Krahn wing of Ulimo).
- Gen. **Amos Chayee**: ex-Ulimo-J Chief of Staff.
- **George Dweh**: ex-Ulimo-J representative, Transitional Legislative Assembly.
- **Chayee Doe**: late President **Samuel Doe's** younger brother.
- **Edward Slanger**: ex-Major, Armed Forces of Liberia.

Model enjoys Ivorian support, including recruitment through the Lima militia. The UN Panel published a hotel bill from the Abidjan Sofitel for 27 December-7 January for **Glav William**, a known Liberian Krahn activist: the Ivorian presidency paid.

These are worrying developments, not just for Taylor. Fighting has spread across Liberia and insecurity has prompted the EU, USA and UN to suspend humanitarian assistance to eleven of Liberia's 15 counties. An estimated 180,000 people are internally displaced and this number grows daily. Violence has halted logging nationwide. As jobs vanish, more Liberians feel forced to fight for their survival. Liberia seems to be returning to the early 1990s, when rival, ethnically defined groups fought for control of Monrovia.

France, the UK and USA may be inclined towards a change of regime but seem to have no clear road map of what should follow. France is committed in Côte d'Ivoire, Britain in Sierra Leone. The USA is reluctant to involve itself further in Liberia, despite its historical ties. And past experience shows a West African stabilisation force may not work on its own without serious international logistical and moral support.

NORTH AFRICA

Hands across the water

After the Iraq war, the European Union looks south once again

There was plenty of shock and awe in the Maghreb and other corners of the Arab world at the speedy collapse of President **Saddam Hussein**'s regime. No North African government supported the war. **Algerian** President **Abdelaziz Bouteflika** was still basking in the reflected glow of **French** President **Jacques Chirac**'s anti-war stance as **United States**' and **British** forces crossed into **Iraq** (AC Vol 44 No 6). Yet post-war trauma has widened the gap between North African governments and those citizens outraged by 'US aggression'.

Anti-American feeling is still running high. Maghrebis have got used to watching Arab satellite channels, notably **Qatar**-based *Al Jazeera* and the **United Arab Emirates**' Abu Dhabi TV, neither of them keen on US President **George W. Bush**'s liberating mission. Governments are now squeezed between their US alliances and popular resentment.

This might allow the European Union to indulge in its own hearts-and-minds operations in North Africa, where the much vaunted Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) has been stalling over government and business scepticism. A vacuum has formed in a relationship that, in the mid-1990s, seemed to offer so much. Meanwhile, the US government offers a rival programme of bilateral free trade zone (FTZ) agreements.

Whose sea?

European Commission President **Romano Prodi** chose what he calls the EMP's 'model' economy, **Tunisia**, to launch a 'good neighbour' relationship between the EU and North Africa. This, he said, would cover the economic, political, security, cultural, environmental and other spheres, sounding remarkably like the EMP as launched at the grandiose 1995 Barcelona conference, though Prodi's project was baptised 'everything but the institutions': putting far more emphasis on the southern partners to create a framework of interdependent relations to reduce trans-Mediterranean tensions.

In **Morocco**, the Vice-President of the *Confédération Générale des Entreprises Marocaines*, **Adnan Debbagh**, was among those who welcomed Prodi's Tunis statement as a trajectory for the Maghreb to come towards Europe in the next 20 years and resist the lure of an imperial America. The Prodi initiative was also seen as a way for three key southern European governments that backed the invasion of Iraq – **Italy**, **Portugal** and **Spain** – to re-ingratiate themselves down south.

Washington is well aware that what its Defence Secretary **Donald Rumsfeld** memorably called 'old Europe' is looking to make up lost ground in the Arab world. As US troops pushed into Iraq, Washington insisted on finalising a bilateral free trade agreement with Morocco. Rabat reluctantly agreed but insisted negotiations be held in neutral Geneva as anti-war demonstrations gathered pace at home.

While anti-war sentiment boiled in Algeria, Bouteflika played down his good relationship with Bush, whom he met three times in 2002 to discuss cooperation in the 'war on terrorism'. Some sources suggested that Algerians who left to fight for Saddam were far more than the 600 reported. Over 100 may have died. Since Saddam's fall in April, Algeria has focused solidly on domestic politics, culminating in Bouteflika's 5 May sacking of Prime Minister **Ali Benflis** (see Box).

Algeria: Domestic politics again at last

President **Abdelaziz Bouteflika**'s 5 May decision to end months of political sniping by sacking his former campaign manager turned political rival, **Ali Benflis**, has allowed Algerians to refocus on domestic politics in the run-up to the presidential election, due by April 2004. Benflis is a capable, committed organiser who played a lead role in rebuilding the formerly ruling *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) into a major political force. With success has come ambition – clearly reflected at the FLN's eighth congress in mid-March, when Bouteflika's portrait was not exhibited in the hall, even though the FLN was expected to back his presidential campaign. Boutef's FLN allies, led by Agriculture Minister **Saïd Barakat**, heavily criticised Benflis' domination of the party. FLN officials were unusually bullish following his sacking and the ex-Premier himself was anxious to emphasise that he hadn't resigned. Like Bouteflika, Benflis is already campaigning for 2004, though neither have said so publicly.

Benflis is up against a powerful opponent: Bouteflika is not hugely popular but the late President **Houari Boumedienne**'s close collaborator is a historic figure with an international reputation that Algerians appreciate. A rare, recent opinion poll in the daily *El Watan* suggested he would win 66 per cent of the ballot, and nearly three-quarters of those polled said they would vote. Benflis' removal from the premiership was advocated by a key kingmaker, Presidency Secretary General **Larbi Belkheir** (AC Vol 44 No 7), pointing to an important source of opposition to a future Benflis campaign.

Benflis went because of his increasingly public clashes with Bouteflika over local issues, but the Baghdad factor might have influenced Boutef's choice for premier. Some thought he would choose Foreign Minister

Abdelaziz Belkhadem from the FLN's Arab nationalist wing, a vocal critic of the Iraq war. Instead, he opted for a trusted *apparatchik* close to the army, **Ahmed Ouyahia**, leader of the *Rassemblement National Démocratique* (RND), which flourished in the late 1990s with the backing of 'eradicationist' officers. He may be more sympathetic than Benflis to economic liberalisation (including Bouteflika ally Energy and Mines Minister **Chakib Khelil**'s new hydrocarbons law, dropped by Benflis from the government agenda). Ouyahia has presidential pretensions himself, probably for 2008, and powerful allies but no popular support.

Benflis is more popular than Ouyahia. His resignation opens the way for a fight for the presidency, provided senior officers – who have pulled the political strings at least since Boumedienne's 1965 coup – agree. If Bouteflika and Benflis run next year, then the elite may finally be moving towards genuine electoral politics. Meanwhile, Ouyahia will seek to impose his not inconsiderable will and ego on the government. A reshuffle bringing in some of his old allies will follow. Stalled economic reforms must be revived, and he must work out whether to launch a new initiative to bring peace to his native Kabylie, now in the second year of its latest revolt. This might see Interior Minister **Nourredine 'Yazid' Zerhouni** go, though don't bet on it.

Also on the agenda is how to cope with the release of two more of Algeria's historic chiefs when they complete their gaol sentences on 12 June: the banned *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) leaders, **Abbasi Madani** and **Ali Belhadj**. Madani, elderly and ailing, may join his family in **Germany** or be offered refuge in **Saudi Arabia**. Belhadj is still seen as young and dangerous and there is debate over whether to keep him imprisoned, release and rearrest him, or deal with him in some other way.

Tunisians have long reacted strongly to Middle East events and President **Zine el Abidine Ben Ali**'s regime has allowed public outpourings of anger and frustration where scope for genuine popular expression is otherwise highly constrained. Intellectuals and civil society leaders lined up to attack the USA. The Deputy Secretary General of the Tunis-based *Union Syndicale des Travailleurs du Maghreb Arabe*, **Abdelmajid Sahraoui**, denounced in the press a 'large-scale hold-up based on a pretend liberation'. For one established civil rights movement, the *Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme*, Iraq and not a busy domestic agenda dominated meetings after Baghdad fell. The LTDH seemed happy to protest beside the *Union Générale Tunisienne de Travail*, though it usually argues that under **Ismail Sahbani**, the union has become an arm of the regime.

In Algeria, radical leftist icon **Louisa Hanoune** and her *Parti des Travailleurs* protested alongside Islamist rivals in Sheikh **Mahfoud Nahnah**'s *Mouvement pour une Société de Paix* and Arabist/Islamist hardliners in the *Front de Libération Nationale*.

Next on the list?

'During the war, we had a holy union against the "American aggression",' commented one LTDH activist. Emphasising the ambiguity behind Arab 'support' for Baathist Iraq, he added: 'Arab governments must understand the need for a greater democratic opening, to avoid giving credibility to a pretext of liberation which could one day be seized on by the Americans to impose their law.'

Maghrebi regimes have understood this. In **Libya**, Colonel **Moammer el Gadaffi**'s offers of compensation to end the Lockerbie affair and efforts to bring in monitors to search for weapons of mass destruction have been rebuffed by some in Washington. This bodes ill for the leadership's efforts to broker a rapprochement (AC Vol 44 No 8). They are driven in part by the leader's urbane but inexperienced son, **Seif el Islam el Gadaffi**, now studying at the London School of Economics but with his eyes set on the USA.

US 'neo-conservatives' are again asking ominous questions about the decade-old issue of Algeria's **Argentinean**-built 1 megawatt *Nour* (Light) nuclear research reactor at Draria, the **Chinese**-built 15mw *Essalam* (Peace) reactor at Ain Oussera and longstanding rumours of illicit nuclear activity in the south-western Reggane region. International Atomic Energy Agency Secretary General **Mohammed el Baradai** visited Algeria in 2002 and found nothing untoward but this may not be enough to assuage some neo-cons, seeking targets after Saddam and with tough bargaining ahead over the **Israeli**-Palestinian peace process.

The USA is trying to win Arab hearts and minds. Its influential Rabat Ambassador, Republican stalwart **Margaret Tutwiler**, was reassigned to be General **Jay Garner**'s Communications Director. Then, as DUBYA's new appointee to 'run Iraq', **L. Paul Bremner**, moved in, she was expected to be removed, along with other members of Garner's team, including **John Limbert**, Ambassador to **Mauritania**. Meanwhile, Washington will offer friendly states FTZ arrangements, like that Morocco is negotiating. Rabat's top diplomatic operator, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs **Tayeb Fassi-Fihri**, heads the talks.

Trans-Atlantic competition

Officially, the US policy is not meant as a counterweight to the EU's plans. In practice, the USA has been competing with the EU for market share and advantage in negotiating oil, gas and other agreements since the Barcelona conference launched the EMP and then President **Bill Clinton**'s government countered with the offer of FTZs.

Even Moroccan and Tunisian enthusiasm has waned as expected

EU support and foreign investment have failed to materialise. Talks with **Egypt** have dragged on, with Cairo (rightly, other Arab officials now say) holding out for better terms than those secured by Tunis and Rabat. Algeria's lack of microeconomic reform – and lack of will – holds up its entry. Libya has not bothered to consolidate its growing rapprochement with the West by joining. Officially, this is due to Gadaffi's refusal to join any body that includes Israel but it also reflects the huge changes to Libya's trade regime required to meet EMP terms. But the view from Brussels is that US pressure for countries to sign up to free trade and a bigger presence of USA Inc. is not enough to outweigh Arab suspicion. Now may be the time for the EU to give its EMP a new push. Those European states that opposed the Iraq war – **Belgium**, France and **Germany** – speak of a 'new rapprochement'.

German Interior Minister **Otto Schily** was particularly warmly welcomed in Tunis on 8 April, one year after the Djerba synagogue bombings. Every German, he said, again had 'full scope to visit Tunisia and to perceive the security and calm that prevails in this splendid country.' This is the sort of language Ben Ali likes to hear. One day later, though, Saddam's statue fell in Baghdad and amid reports of an Arab world in ferment, tourist numbers remain drastically down. Analysts suggest that Morocco and Tunisia inflate arrivals to deflect the perception of a looming payments crisis.

The Prodi initiative

As Europe prepared to welcome its new members at April's Athens summit, Prodi took pains to reassure Maghreb states that Europe was open to them, too. This is critical to governments that have bet big on the EMP. By 2008, the transition period for Tunisia's FTZ ends, four years before Morocco's, and companies will have to compete without protection with bigger European-based rivals.

Publicly less vocal in criticising the EMP than other governments, Tunisian officials are well aware their efforts could have received greater reward and that unemployment could rise in the last stage of transition. This is especially true when growth averaging 5 per cent in 1998-2002 is under attack from drought, the tourist slump and recession in EU markets.

The EC has placed senior official **Marc Pierini** in Tunis to oversee this transition. He agrees the final stages could be the toughest. Some 2,500 Tunisian companies have followed an upgrading programme to prepare for free trade, but the 1,500 million euros of investment is much less than expected. The EU must show that its partnership can work (just as the USA and Britain must make Iraq work) to win over Arab opinion. Sceptical North African populations, businesses and governments are still to be persuaded.

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Pointers

RWANDA/UGANDA

High dudgeon summit

None of the three main players brimmed with confidence about better Rwandan-Ugandan relations after their mini-summit at Britain's Lancaster House on 8 May. No new measures were agreed to verify claims that each neighbour is training rebel militias to fight the other, or whether they continue to arm militias in eastern Congo-Kinshasa, and neither government would face sanctions whatever was said or found.

Congo would bear the brunt of any new Rwandan-Ugandan flare-up. Worsening clashes between Hema and Lendu militias around Bunia in Congo's north-eastern Ituri region could spark a genocide, United Nations officials told the Security Council on 12 May. Well over 100 people have been killed in the past week alone. Just 700 lightly-armed UN peacekeepers at Bunia airport are protecting 7,000 fleeing civilians. President **Yoweri Museveni**, who started withdrawing Ugandan troops from Ituri last month (AC Vol 44 No 9), called the peacekeepers 'dangerous tourists'; his long-disputed claim that Uganda's intervention in Ituri had kept a balance of forces now looks increasingly accurate.

The London summiters may have been preoccupied by domestic affairs. Rwanda's President **Paul Kagame**, who looked grave and described the talks as 'serious', faces growing scepticism about elections this year. Museveni, who seemed tired and was uncharacteristically monosyllabic, is accused of trying to secure an extra-constitutional term in power.

The host, the then International Development Secretary **Clare Short**, was presumably planning her resignation from Prime Minister **Tony Blair**'s government. One of the few points on which Rwandan and Ugandan officials agreed was that Short was a 'good fighter' for Africa.

A conventional war across the Uganda-Rwanda border is improbable. It would be a landmark failure for Whitehall's Africa policy if these two states started fighting each other directly with British weapons and treasuries stocked with British aid. This is scant comfort for eastern Congo, the battleground for their proxy four-year war.

● Baroness **Valerie Amos** was named as new International Development Secretary. Formerly Minister of State for Africa and the Commonwealth, Amos becomes Britain's first black female cabinet minister. Well-known and liked in Africa, she was asked by Blair to persuade Security Council members **Angola**, **Cameroon** and **Guinea** to back Britain's line on **Iraq**.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Tout sauf Gbagbo?

Despite a new ceasefire signed by the government and rebels on 3 May, tension has scarcely abated. The latest flashpoint for violence is the students' union congress, where at least two people were hacked to death with machetes in fighting between two rival factions of President **Laurent Gbagbo**'s *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) on 10-11 May. Always highly political, the *Fédération Etudiante et Scolaire de la Côte d'Ivoire* (FESCI) has been given new significance by the elevation of its former leader **Guillaume Soro** to rebel chief, Communications Minister, and de facto ruler of northern Côte d'Ivoire.

In such a climate, it's hardly surprising that Ivorian exiles in London interpreted an attack on another former FESCI leader, **Martial Ahipeaud**, as political, though his family told *Africa Confidential* the motive was robbery. Ahipeaud, a former FPI activist, shifted his support to former military leader General **Robert Guéi** at the time of the 2000 presidential election.

Front-line fighting has died down and the curfew was lifted on 10 May, but ethnic killings continue in the lawless west. The United Nations agreed on 13 May to send 26 military observers to join 4,000 French troops and a 1,200-strong West African force, which the Economic Community of West African States hopes to increase to more than 3,000. Gbagbo's opponents on both sides of the ceasefire line have given him an ultimatum of 22 May to name permanent defence and interior ministers, or face nationwide protests.

The row sets the FPI against the country's other political parties in an interesting realignment: only weeks ago everyone was united against **Alassane Ouattara**'s main opposition *Rassemblement des Républicains*.

SUDAN

Voiceless

The banning of the *Khartoum Monitor* deprives southerners of a voice in the north at a crucial period in the Machakos talks. On 10 May, the newspaper, run by veteran journalists **Nhial Bol Aken** (who was gaoled) and Reuters and BBC correspondent **Alfred Logune Taban**, was suspended for two months. This would miss the June deadline set by mediators for agreement between the National Islamic Front government and Sudan People's Liberation Army. On 22 April, **United States** President **George W. Bush** confidently spoke of 'a comprehensive agreement when it is finalised this June'.

The banning of Sudan's only English-language

daily bodes ill for the six and a half year transition under Machakos, to prepare for a southern referendum on autonomy and for democracy and elections in the north. If these were free and fair, they would bring down the NIF and, almost certainly, bring southern independence.

The NIF rejects 'the break up of an Arab country' and is running an Arab campaign for funds and political support. On 30 April, President **Hosni Mubarek** made his first visit to Khartoum since accusing the NIF of 1995's assassination attempt; he said Egypt wouldn't countenance southern separation. Sudanese believe Mubarek was one of the Egyptian pilots who bombed Umma militants fighting President **Ja'afar Nimeiri** in 1970.

The NIF has gained ground abroad by loosening its leash on the press. One financially crippling tactic is to ban issues after printing. One Western diplomat recently declared Sudan had 'the freest press in the Arab world'.

Managing Editor Nhial Bol was imprisoned for four months pending payment of a fine of £Sud1 million (US\$400) for an earlier article saying slavery was practised in Sudan. Human rights monitors, including the US-backed Eminent Persons' Group on slavery, found it is.

SOMALILAND

Count and discount

Mediation continues in a bid to calm the controversy following the 14 April presidential election. This saw **Dahir Riyal Kahin**, one of the late dictator **Mohamed Siad Barre**'s political police chiefs, win by a margin that would have been familiar to his old boss. On 8 May, the Constitutional Court ruled that his 80-vote victory over his nearest rival, **Ahmed Mohamed Silanyo** of the *Kulmiye* (Solidarity) party, should be converted to 217 votes.

Silanyo and the third place contender, **Faisal Ali Warabe** of *Ucid* (the Justice and Welfare Party), reject this judgment. Faisal said Somaliland could expect little of Siad's old henchmen. National Election Commission chief **Ahmed Haji Ahmed Adami** had memorably declared the polls 'fairer than the **Nigerian** ones'.

Mediation will not change the result for Dahir Riyal, head of *Udub* (Pillar), who had the advantage of incumbency. But it will matter for the country. Promptly to the rescue came the *Guurti* (Council of Elders), led by its President, **Ibrahim Yusuf Sheikh Madar** and Vice-President, **Abdiqader Jirdeh Hussein**; and the parliament, led by **Ahmed Mahomed Adan Qaybe**. Somaliland needs a quick resolution, since while the crisis lasts there will be little of the international aid that helps keep the country going. Nor will the poll help its bid for international recognition, though on the plus side, it was at least not dominated by clan struggles.