

“Liberal Peace” or “Second Independence”? The Ivorian Peace Process

Giulia Piccolino¹

¹Università di Firenze, Dipartimento di Studi sullo Stato, Firenze, Italy

giulia.piccolino@yahoo.it

While a doctrine of liberal interventionism in conflict affected countries seems to gain momentum, it finds a limit in the resilience of State sovereignty and in the resistance of internal elites to externally-driven prescriptions. African heads of State increasingly challenges the “liberal peace”, opposing their views on State sovereignty to the cosmopolitanism that the liberal peace doctrine implies. The peace process in Ivory Coast (2003 to now) exemplifies well this trend. Using political tactics and a vocal rhetoric of “second independence”, president Gbagbo has managed to reduce the margin of manoeuvre of international mediators and external donors. The Ouagadougou agreement of 2007 has been presented as an “internal solution” to the Ivorian crisis and external actors have been invited to accept the terms proposed by the Ivorian political élite and “accompany” financially and technically the peace process. If the agreement has succeeded in appeasing political tension in the short-term, it has left the interest of powerful actors untouched and its limits in securing sustainable peace have been dramatically highlighted by the recent presidential elections. The elections seem to be opening a new phase in the involvement of the international community in Cote d’Ivoire. The relationships between Gbagbo and external actors have become again antagonistic and the issue of national sovereignty and its limits are again at the centre of the stage.