

## **Biceps, Machetes and Kalashnikovs: Radioscopy of Violent Construction of Youth Dreamt Identities in Côte d'Ivoire**

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### **Abstract**

*For over two decades, Côte d'Ivoire is tormented by violent mutations that mark the decline of the Ivorian social model. Once a social category undermined in practice by seniors, young people are invited into the political arena and are now the master-piece of societal transformations in the country. To the symbolic violence of seniors who have long been, "eating" in the "collective bowl", they oppose, to position, brutal violence supported by physical force, machetes and more recently Kalashnikov. Given the absence of an inclusive and reassuring political engineering, the unfulfilled expectations and the significance of ostentation as a mode of expression of acquired identities, it is likely that for a long time, violence be for the Ivorian youth, the main resource in the construction of these dreamt identities.*

**Keywords:** Young, economic crisis, political violence, political and military crisis, instrumental violence, dreamt identities, Côte d'Ivoire.

### **Résumé**

*Depuis plus de deux décennies, la Côte d'Ivoire est en proie à des mutations violentes qui consacrent la déliquescence du modèle social ivoirien. Catégorie sociale jadis mise sous l'éteignoir par les aînés, les jeunes se sont invités dans l'arène politique et constituent aujourd'hui la pièce-maîtresse des transformations sociétales dans le pays. A la violence symbolique des aînés qui depuis longtemps, « mangent » dans le « bol collectif », ils opposent, pour se positionner, une violence brutale alimentée par la force physique, la machette et plus récemment la kalachnikov. Face à l'absence d'une ingénierie politique inclusive et rassurante, aux attentes déçues et à la prégnance de l'ostentation comme mode d'expression des identités acquises, il est probable que pour longtemps encore, la violence soit pour la jeunesse ivoirienne, la principale ressource dans la construction de ses identités rêvées.*

**Mots clés :** Jeunes, crise économique, violences politiques, crise politico-militaire, violence instrumentale, identités rêvées, Côte d'Ivoire

### **Introduction**

In the early 90s, the myth of Côte d'Ivoire haven of peace and economic prosperity crumbles under the weight of the private economy crisis and socio-political changes. So, one morning in April 1990 Abidjan –the economic capital and main center for decisions of the country - wakes up with high school and college students chanting for the first time, slogans against the "father of the nation" Houphouët, the thief! Houphouët, the thief! Houphouët, the thief! From Ivorian memory, this scene - which later on became general throughout the country -was unimaginable a few decades back. Infact, in primary schools, high schools and colleges, saluting the national flag and songs praising Nanan<sup>1</sup> Houphouët were common practices during the years of the Ivorian "economic miracle".

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<sup>1</sup>A name commonly used by some Akan groups (including Baoulé and Agni) in Côte d'Ivoire to point to the chief, the king, the grandfather or grandmother. Having also been a traditional chief, we may at first sight link the status of the first Ivorian President to the address form *nanan*. But placed in the Ivorian political context, it is more symbolical. Indeed, during his long reign, Houphouët Boigny symbolized the father of the nation. This political-symbolic construct benefited from the support of the masses, which largely worshiped Houphouët Boigny during his reign of over thirty years at the head of Côte d'Ivoire government.

At university, the situation is explosive. Combined with the deterioration of their living and study conditions, a power failure in the university halls of residence of Yopougon on the eve of exams in May 1991 triggered among students, the movements of violent protests. These events that occurred at the beginning of the 90s marked the end of an Ivorian era of pacifism; this pacifism maintained by the State Party, the PDCI<sup>2</sup>-RDA of Côte d'Ivoire which stifled all protest inclinations. They open the era of the outbreak of violence in the public space, with the main carrier, the social category of youth. In Côte d'Ivoire, the category "young" refers to persons whose age ranges from 18 to 35 years (INS, 2001). However, one must point out the elasticity of this concept and considers in its definition the variety of social contexts (Mbembe, 1991; Comaroff 2000). The purpose of this contribution is not to discuss the outlines of youth social category.

We must note, however, that the definition of youth goes beyond fixed biological and legal senses and encompasses socio-economic and cultural factors. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, an individual is perceived as young as long as he/she does not assume some social responsibilities, or is not exercising an activity from which he can support himself. It is therefore possible to consider people aged 40 or more who are in this case as young actors (N'goran & Silué, 2012). This being said, since the opening of the political market until the recent political and military crisis, young people have been at the heart of violent episodes that Côte d'Ivoire is going through. This leads us to the next question. How can we account for this propensity of young people to adopt violence as a privileged mode of expression? In his study on the issues of political violence among "young patriots" in Côte d'Ivoire, the sociologist Babo (2011) points out that youth violence reflects a form of political participation located between political interests and opportunities for social integration. From this perspective, the political field is perceived as an annuity that offers opportunities young people want to get, facing the lack of secure employment prospects and the extension of their youth. According to Akindès (2007), violence is viewed as a strategy to affirm a young identity in crisis.

In fact, young people are competing with elders and violence appears as the privileged and legitimate way to renegotiate the redistribution of resources generated by the political arena, to the "prolonged failure of the social ladder" (Chauvel, 2006). From this point of view, youth violence is not only a consequence of the economic crisis. But it becomes the result of the entanglement of a bundle of factors among which social marginality. In fact, for a long time in Côte d'Ivoire, young people have been taken away from decision-making arenas as well as access to areas of power and resources they generate. The relegation of this social category to supporting roles and places (Babo, 2009) is an expression of the unequal construction of social relations based on gender, age and social status in many African societies. Furthermore, in connection with the commotions in the Ivorian political field, we note that youth violence has experienced significant changes.

The armed rebellion sounds, in this context, as the most brutal phase of the youth violence as the latter have massively been implicated in the political and military conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (N'goran & Silué, 2014; Fofana, 2011; Babo, 2008; Banégas, 2007). If we recognize that youth violence has undergone changes, what were the instruments of this violence? What can we read of this violence discharge in the social body within the social category of youth? Does it come in the framework of a new identity construction logic? If so, what type of identities do the instruments of violence allow them to build? Are there alternatives to get out of this spiral of violence and to allow the emergence of a less dangerous Ivorian society? The answer to these questions is organized around four points. The first three parts analyze developments relating to instruments of violence from the 80 decade to the years 2000 through the decade 90. The fourth and final part questions the implications of youth's systematic resort to instrumental violence in the manufacturing of their identities upon the construction of Ivorian society.

### ***Methodological and theoretical approach***

This reflection is primarily based on the critical reading of scientific articles related to the problem of youth violence, especially in Côte d'Ivoire. However, my questioning is less interested in the very actors of violence than in instruments they mobilize to produce this violence which generates a new identity. On the theoretical level, my analysis convenes the relative frustration theory (Gurr, 1970) and the theory of resource mobilization (Neveu, 2003) to clarify the use of instrumental violence among young people in Côte d'Ivoire.

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<sup>2</sup>The Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivorian section of the African Democratic Rally (RDA) established in 1946, and the oldest political party of Côte d'Ivoire.

The thesis supporting my analysis is stated as follows. In the post-Houphouët Ivorian society, the construction of identities correlates with the capacity of social violence. From this perspective, the mobilization of violence by young people participates in the construction of dreamt and individually legitimized identities in need for social recognition. On this basis, I assume that it is by reframing the overall building construction of social positions that a credible alternative for a lasting social balance in Côte d'Ivoire and the gestation of a less risky society might emerge.

### **1. In the beginning were the big guys or thugs**

In the reading of the changes faced by Côte d'Ivoire, the 1980s even if they do not account for everything, were a turning point. In fact, it was during this period that many social ills (dismissals, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, etc.) affected the Ivorian society due to the decline of the cash economy oriented towards the binomial coffee and cocoa. The 70decade, which had been that of the "economic miracle", had however given a great look to Côte d'Ivoire. The fascination generated by the economic progress and the realization of modern infrastructures in the early years of independence have fostered the emergence of a consumerist ethos of life more or less shared by Ivoirians. This has led some people to speak of a carefree Ivorian society whose members "were fully crunching life" without worrying about the next day. But when the economic crisis took place, Ivorian prosperity feeling was very quickly replaced by a sense of social and economic strangulation. Young graduates are now facing the experience of unemployment. The alternative "back to earth" advocated by the State does not please them.

Meanwhile, in this context of economic recession, unemployment and precarious social strata, crime is experiencing a surge in urban centers, particularly in Abidjan, the country's economic heart and symbol of the Ivorian dream (Touré & Kouamé, 1994). Disoriented, young people invent, over time, new ways of life and expression. Music genres like *yanman-yanman* and *logobidance* appear. In their staging, they mobilize physically impressive men and looking like Rambo: the big guys. The main emblematic figure of the phenomenon of thugs or hooligans, John Pololo was shot dead in the town of Adjamé<sup>3</sup> during the military transition (1999-2000) by the FIRPAC<sup>4</sup>. In general, the big guys are street fighters operating in the working-class neighborhoods of Abidjan like Adjamé, Yopougon<sup>5</sup> and Abobo<sup>6</sup>. They are usually introduced to the practice of martial arts and their main resource remains their physical force. But the big guys claim a violence of defense and non-aggression, a "positive force" as stated by Babo (2011). Far from being rejected, these violent entrepreneurs have a certain tolerance on the part of rulers, so that as Babo explained (*idem*), they succeeded in professionalizing their skills by offering services related to violence: personalities' bodyguards, nightclub and maquisbouncer, security staff of significant events, master of centers for martial arts teaching, etc.

Thus, as the violence was limited to more or less private social spaces, it was less perceived and experienced as a social evil. Ironically, John Pololo was feared, but was also subject of fascination. Many young men in Abidjan adulated him and wanted to be like him. In the late 80s, the biceps of violence spreads in the social body. At the opening of the political market in 1990 and facing the challenges of increasingly virulent opposition, the tottering power of the PDCI-RDA, besides the legal security forces, subtly resorted to thugs to break up street protests. At the University, the intrusion of big guys is also effective to maintain order on the campus, in the context of the growing power of Côte d'Ivoire Student Federation (FESCI), very hostile to Houphouët Boigny regime. In June 1991, Thierry Zébié, a hoodlum student close the PDCI regime was killed by projectile hits to campus by a group of students claiming members of FESCI, which have become meanwhile hostess at the expense of the Movement of Students and Pupils of Côte d'Ivoire (MEECI), another student union affiliated to the PDCI. This physical act of killing people considered as opponents is new in the academic milieu of Côte d'Ivoire. It comes nevertheless in the framework of an increasing brutalization of political power relations (Vidal, 2003; Akindès, *op cit.*) characterized by a great number of socially correct infringements and the trivialization of violence.

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<sup>3</sup>A municipality located in center of the District of Abidjan. Important center of economic activity, it is reputed to be the nest of a great number of robbers.

<sup>4</sup>Para-Commando Rapid Intervention Force.

<sup>5</sup>A town located in the northwestern part of Abidjan. Reported to be the largest town in the country, it shelters many entertainment venues which attract the Abidjan city dwellers by day and night.

<sup>6</sup>Popular district located in the north-western part of Abidjan. In Côte d'Ivoire, Abobo is perceived as a high-crime area.

In the late 90s, the violence in the midst of the young of Côte d'Ivoire witnessed changes in its forms of expression. The brutal physical force or biceps gave way to bladed weapons, namely machetes.

## **2. Farewell reflection. Machetes and macheting on the campus and halls of residence of Côte d'Ivoire**

The machete is the great cutlass generally used in agricultural work in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1998, during the context of FESCI Congress that machete appeared in the academic space (Bi Goin, 2012). But we did not use to maintain the green areas virtually non-existent due to the privatization of spaces on campus by FESCI leaders and their supporters inside and outside the union. On the contrary, it is used as a resource in the exercise of violence, a weapon in the competition for control of the powerful student union tormented by strong internal dissension. From its use on university campuses to slash the real or supposed union opponents was born the phenomenon of macheting. After the December 1999 coup, the military junta led by General Robert Guéi attempts to pacify the university space by organizing meetings with the different opponents of what might be called the "FESCI crisis." However, no sustainable compromise could be obtained. The violence with machetes have even continued during and after the military transition; thus increasing the feeling of insecurity on the campuses. The battle for the recovery of FESCI between the main Ivorian political field opponents (FPI, RDR) partly explains the depth of the schism in the almighty student union. So there is a link between the positioning struggles within FESCI and the battles in the political field. When the armed rebellion occurred in September 2002, young "FESCI members" were at the heart of politics, with the same configuration as in late 90s. On the one hand, the Alliance of Young Patriots led by Charles Blé Goudé, an ally of the FPI regime and on the other hand, the Patriotic Movement of Ivory Coast (MPCI), led by Guillaume Soro, an ally of the opposition parties, mainly the RDR. The major fact in that other confrontation is the emergence of a new instrument of violence: the Kalashnikov.

## **3. Pursuing studies is too long: the Kalashnikov in the construction of dreamt identities**

The non-Marxist conception of instrumental violence stipulates that "power is at the end of the gun" (Mao Zedong). In December 1999, a military coup is perpetrated for the first time in Côte d'Ivoire. General Robert Guéi is said to be the instigator of the coup. He feels that he was asked by the "young people"<sup>7</sup> to lead the junta. But the military transition he leads is chaotic and studded with violence. In 2000, presidential elections are organized to recover constitutional order. They were won by Laurent Gbagbo's FPI, amidst violence. Nearly two years later, an armed rebellion broke out from the northern part of the country. Under the pretext of injustices endured by nationals of the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire, the authors of this insurrection ambition to establish a more inclusive "new political order" using weapons. In the background of this rebellion, stood a political competition between Laurent Gbagbo, described as a nationalist and Alassane Ouattara, perceived as a tool of Western powers and their African allies (Blé, 2011; Boga, 2010; Moya, 2006; Banégas, 2007; Coulibaly, 2003).

But beyond Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara and even identity claims, we must highlight the failure of the political engineering that has governed the country until then. From my point of view, the exhumation and recurrent evocation of Houphouëtism by many Ivorian political actors are symptomatic of the lack of an innovative engineering to rethink a Côte d'Ivoire in the middle of change and facing new national and international challenges. In its evolution, the Ivorian crisis will bring two blocks of young people who carry and maintain the antagonism between the two camps. They sometimes set themselves up as masters of the political game. On the one hand, the "Young Patriots" reappropriate the nationalist ideas of the FPI and its allies<sup>8</sup>. In contrast, other young people embraced the ideas of political groups gathered within the Houphouëtist Rally for Democracy and Peace (RHDP)<sup>9</sup> and those of rebellion driven by Guillaume Soro. The first camp sees itself as a movement counter-insurrection against the change of political order by the argument of force brandished by the second camp.

However, on the one side or the other side, the main leaders who lead the insurrection movement, and also the resistance movement, have the distinction of being the former Secretaries-General of FESCI and not having completed their studies. It is their activism in the political game that propelled them in front of the stage.

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<sup>7</sup>Reference is made to the young soldiers of the Ivorian army at odds with the regime of Konan Bédié, and who actually were the main actors of the December 1999 coup.

<sup>8</sup>During the presidential elections of October 2010, the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) and its allies have come together under the banner of the Presidential Majority (LMP).

<sup>9</sup>This rally includes the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), the Rally of Republicans (RDR), the Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI) and the Movement of Future Forces (MFA).

Their meteoric political rise, the media they had access to and many other social privileges and benefits helped them build a picture of important people within the Ivorian society. With them, we note other former student leaders like Damana Pickas, Blé Guirao, Eugène Djué, Konaté Navigué but also warlords.

Under their leadership, street discussions spaces (agoras and parliaments, grins, senate, etc.) will energize and transform into high places of political imaginary formatting. In the wee hours of the Ivorian conflict, these groups have also served as purveyors of violence entrepreneurs in order to carry out punitive expeditions against political opponents or fight them militarily. Generally, these are political motives that are put forward as the substrate of the youth involvement in the conflict. But the Ivorian crisis was also a market of opportunity for many of them, a set of gifts and counter-gifts between young people and the actors of the political field. As most of them were in search of jobs, they convert their activism into cash against the benefits and services offered by politicians (N'goran & Silué, 2012). In this game of exchanges, more young people will successfully entered the Ivorian administration and preferred political circles as well under the former regime of Laurent Gbagbo rather than under Alassane Ouattara. Besides, for some actors of the Ivorian civil society, *"The only ones who do not to feel the effects of the economic crisis are the politicians. They have access to all services. If you want to succeed, you have to get closer to them"*<sup>10</sup>.

In Côte d'Ivoire, political elders have not stopped to "eat" in the collective bowl since the independence. It was under Houphouët Boigny that launched the joke that states "we do not look in the mouth of the peanut roaster." Symbolically, the relationship between the act of grilling and the mouth tasting holds in the roaster's privilege to belong to the inner circle of political clientele, beneficiary of the uneven distribution but socially legitimate because of its positioning (Akindès, 2004) in the political and economic elite. This parable dedicated to clientele and prevaricating practices around which the Ivorian agrarian bourgeoisie is built and reproduced. In Bourdieu's perspective, the primitive accumulation of economic resources by the political elite, can be read as a form of symbolic violence exerted on other social strata; and particularly young people, once actors on the periphery of national politics. Yet, despite the economic and political crises faced by Côte d'Ivoire, the political class seems to have kept its privileges on the whole. According to De Latour (2005), the Ivorian society is an ostentatious society. It is a society where social recognition of individual's remains fundamentally depends on the weight of their material possessions and the exhibition of these possessions. In Abidjan and in the major urban centers, this self-exhibition activity is commonly referred to as *prodada*, the *din*, etc. The *prodada* for example, refers to the self-exhibition activity in the course of which the social actors use their possessions outrageously. In sum, facing a political elite fundamentally prevaricating, social strangulation imposed by unemployment and job insecurity, youth retaliated by instrumental violence to benefit from the resources generated by the political rent. At this level, one can notice that in the process of building the Ivorian society, the political and military conflict ushered in the era of new successes mainly based on a more or less brutal use of violence.

#### **4. The implications of violent manufacturing of dreamt identities in the construction of Ivorian society**

Everywhere in the world, human societies are facing certainties shake. Promises of prosperity, abundance, security or stability give way to a lot of poverty, misery, insecurity and violence here and there. Violence, chaos and disorder are more than ever at the heart of the dynamics of societal transformations. This creates disruptions that affect not only the socio-political, economic and political modes of organization, but also the practices, values and moral codes. In their reflection on the new figures of success and power in sub-Saharan Africa, Banégas and Warnier (2001) show that the "protection by wages" "the new graduates who entered the administration take advantage of, and also their frequent ascent in the halls of power highlight the relationship between education, wage and social success. Formerly, one who succeeds certainly enjoyed "good" and sometimes even long studies. Because of his/her social position (s) he becomes a source of pride for her family or community. In Côte d'Ivoire, schooling has played a leading role in the manufacturing of figures of successor a long time. In fact, since the independence in 1960, the Ivorian government has always spent an average of more than 40% of its budget to education / training sector (Bih & al, 2003).

But the cash economy crisis, the structural adjustment programs, the endemic unemployment and the political violence of the past two decades have cost schooling its attractive force. Now, social success is no longer expressed in terms of a more or less long process of diplomas acquisition leading to employment in public administration or in the private sector.

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<sup>10</sup>Remarks of Constance Yai, former Minister and activist in the defense of women's rights in Côte d'Ivoire.

The successes in the economy of food products, in the fields of football, music and politics are illustrative of the mutations observed in the representations about routes of social climbing in Ivory Coast. The political field however, makes itself conspicuous by its actors' systematic use of illicit registries or violence and prevarication logic. In the economy of food products, the mostly illiterate entrepreneur's enrichment as Nanti Lou Rosalie, Boti Rosalie and many other sellers in an area yet qualified as a "refuge sector" has strongly eroded representations of social success. Indeed, with the economic crisis of the 80s and its social effects (poverty, unemployment, redundancies), many women have invested in the food market. Already disadvantaged by the market of salaried employment which has shrunk over the years, these entrepreneurs of the food industry have managed to turn the annuity economic crisis into opportunities to position themselves in the Ivorian economic field.

Through their activity, many of them manage to support their family or to reinvest the profits generated by trade in real estate or in other sectors of activities both in town and in their home villages. Subtly, successes in informal will increase women's economic power and help erode the symbolism of the "hand that gives" and the "hand that receives." As a matter of fact, in Côte d'Ivoire, as in many sub-Saharan African countries, the "office work" (of the public servant) increases the prestigious position of the man because of the symbolic force it exerts in the imaginary. The "office work", is associated with social success and is maintained by symbols like the jacket, shoes, telephone, car (even when the concerned do not yet have one), etc. Now in the domestic sphere, it is generally admitted that it is the men who have to work and support the family. Women, meanwhile, have to take care of domestic tasks. In this relationship, men represent "the hand that gives" while women are "the hand that receives." Their "office work" increases their dominant position because they are the main donors. But when the economic recession happened; the wages of the "office worker" were no longer enough to meet a more and more increasing cost of life and social charges. The situation is often unbearable in Ivorian society where the extended concept of the family is still in order.

Thus, torn on both sides by social constraints, the official is often forced to borrow from malicious moneylenders (colloquially referred to as the "lizards") to survive (N'goran, 2010). However, with the success of the merchant foods, women could now give money to men without this coming against the local customs and habits. In the field of football, the brilliant career of Samuel Eto'o, Didier Drogba or Yaya Tourém make Ivorian youth dream more and more. Identifying with these new symbols of success, and obsessed with the astronomical salaries of their idols, many young people play truant or drop out of school just to play on the numerous football playing areas that abound in Abidjan and in the inner country. Everyone cannot be Drogba, Eto'o or Yaya. That's obvious. Nevertheless, the greatest dream of these young people is to definitely be out of anonymity. This means to leave one day the ordeal of the country to "land" in big clubs in Western Europe, as did some of their idols. In this game, children often benefit from their parents' tolerance who themselves no longer really trust a school system that each year, secretes many "social waste".

The young musicians of the *coupé-décalé* also emulate young people. This urban music appeared in 2003 in full political and military crisis and embodied by Stéphane Doukouré alias Douk Saga. The *coupé-décalé* very quickly spread through the Ivorian youth. The *coupé-décalé* inaugurates the era of the DJ, but especially that of an ostentatious style of dressing, from the practice of *travaillement*<sup>11</sup> during concerts or other times of rejoicing in Abidjan bars, and the promotion of a model of hedonist life. The human surge during the funeral of Douk Saga in 2006 is symptomatic of the attraction of the itinerary of this young artist on the imaginary success in Côte d'Ivoire. Finally, the politico-military field is one of the spheres which, in the last two decades has most contributed to the reformatting related to the representations of power and social ascent. One of the fundamental characteristics of the actors in this field is the speed with which they achieve wealth and social positions. Thus, apart from the student leaders mentioned above, successful figures in the military field have asserted themselves in the context of armed conflict, in particular that of the former Ivorian rebellion. Issiaka Ouattara also called Wattao is obviously one of the newest famous figures of success by the economy of plunder in Côte d'Ivoire. From the ranks in the regular army, Wattao found himself successively as commander of the Séguéla region (northern part of Côte d'Ivoire) and Deputy Chief of Staff in the rebellion before being propelled to the rank commanding Second of the Republican Guard and the Center of Coordination for Operational Decisions (CCDO)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup>In the *coupé-décalé* style, the *travaillement* is a practice consisting in distributing banknotes to spectators or musicians who are on stage.

<sup>12</sup>In July 2014, Wattao was dismissed from that position and sent, according to the official version, to Morocco for a training.

After Alassane Ouattara has seized the power in April 2011. If he is not the only one<sup>13</sup> who enriched in the interstices of the war, Wattao differs from others by its appeal to material goods and conspicuous consumption. He likes to enhance his social ease through outrageous exhibition of luxury cars and other material possessions.

Like Wattao, many former fighters of the rebellion were inserted after the war, in various sectors of the national economy (tax, police, military, water and forest) without, in most cases, a legible and known school or university route. Although having flourished in the interstices of political and military violence in Côte d'Ivoire, the path of these new figures of success induces deep changes in the legal procedures for reaching social positions. They disqualify school, work, painstaking effort, integrity and other values as mere social references for the construction of identities and only modalities for accumulating wealth and acquiring prestige. With them, success appears as the result of instrumental violence.

It's at gunpoint. To paraphrase the idea of Banégas and Warnier (op. cit.), one could say that the Ivorian conflict has made the armed man (ex-fighter, policeman, etc.) a social "attractor". In his analytical model of frustration, Gurr (1970) feels that the gap between the legitimate aspirations of social groups and their satisfaction increases the probability of their use of violence. In other words, the more the gap between social expectations and actual achievement widens, the more the occurrence of violence increases. Violence appears, from this point of view, as the main resource to repair a social wrong. From the perspective of the paradigm of resource mobilization, one may think like Neveu (2002) that violence is a rational means for the social category of youth to gain power or recognition. Faced with the growing impoverishment of social classes since the 80s, unemployment and the uncertainty of get decent job after schooling, youth seems more ready to rush to of other gaps and to resort to other ways to be heard. However, if the use of violence has so far been based on economic or political motives, it seems very unlikely to me that the ideal repeatedly raised of socio-political transformation in Côte d'Ivoire, actually structure the meaning of the use of violence among youth. In their reading on violence, Sartre and Fanon (1968) advocate the use of force to break a social or political system of domination.

In the Ivorian case, this rhetoric was used to account for former Ivorian rebellion's taking up of arms. But, human societies are often built and maintained over artifice. From the elders of yesterday to juniors today, only the instrumental violence seems to have replaced the symbolic violence. One must therefore qualify hopes built by the actors of Ivorian army insurrection because of the scope of corruption, prevarication, predation and the celebration of a life ostentatious ethos within the new political, social and administrative elite. Ultimately, young people invent or reinvent themselves through violence, not to build a more inclusive and fair society, but to reach the identities or positions which they dreamt of. But despite the forms of mutations they can cross, human societies cannot be sustainably built without regulatory frameworks. It seems that without regulatory barriers for the acquisition of social positions, Ivorian society runs the risk of being part of a logic violence distribution through social actors 'free access to socially non-legitimized instruments for achieving their identity construction projects'<sup>14</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

Without being exhaustive, this article has endeavored to read the evolution of the instruments of violence mobilized by the social category of youth in connection with the construction of identities in Côte d'Ivoire. This diachronic reading lets us notice that there is a correlation between mutations in the instruments of violence and the intensification of violence itself. Thus, from physical force (late 80s, mid-90s), to machetes (late 90s), the 2000s ushered in the sealed entry of the Kalashnikov. This evolution of the instruments of violence is associated with the failure of Ivorian social model and the brutalization of politics. For young people, key actors of socio-political transformations in Côte d'Ivoire, those instruments of violence were the main resource to build paths of social ascent. Facing a blocked horizon and the elders who are constantly putting them on the outskirts of the political rent and eating in the "collective bowl", young operate in another area, that of instrumental violence, to survive in a society more and more violent and intolerant.

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<sup>13</sup>Besides Wattao, some international NGOs and United Nations reports regularly point out other former war heads such as Koné Zakaria, Morou Ouattara, Cherif Ousmane, etc. in the illegal exploitation of diamonds, gold and the Ivorian cocoa.

<sup>14</sup>In the theory of the "tragedy of the commons", Hardin (1968) explains that without any regulatory barriers in the management of resources within which they live, human societies are at risk to disappear by the free and individual access to natural goods they have.

With the political and military violence that sustains the life of Ivorian society since 1999, the building of successful figures generally goes hand in hand with the warlike capital: the possession of Kalashnikov. This systematic resort to actors, including youth violence, reflects the deep weakening of the symbolic value of education as part of social reference. It also reflects a collapse of morality landmarks in an Ivorian society which is, since the end of the Houphouët, subject to uncertainties and experiencing difficulty in re-thinking to find a sustainable balance. But the fact that instrumental violence is taking root in the Ivorian society in the long run calls for reflections as propeller off the beaten tracks.

Is it just a reinvention of the society that borrows this route or the expression of a deep societal involution? In the current thinking, the answer is not assured. The history of human society is not linear.

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