

## Original Research Article

# Development of Security for the Poor in the Autonomous District of Abidjan: Sedentary Alternative or Political Instrument?

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**Abstract:** In a context of economic fragility and political crisis from 2002 to 2010, Côte d'Ivoire in general and the Autonomous District of Abidjan in particular constitute a booming market for private security. The objective of this study is to analyse the socio-political logic of the development of private security companies in the Autonomous District of Abidjan. The study uses a dual methodological approach (qualitative and quantitative) with appropriate survey tools, namely a documentary review and semi-directed interviews with a category of actors. This enabled us to arrive at the following results: On the one hand, the activities of security companies and their active roles contribute to the maintenance of social and political order. On the other hand, private security organisations fulfil dual functions. That is, a function of social security partners and a function of social security capital of political actors in the reproduction and maintenance of political power.

**Keywords:** Private security; security social capital; political competition; politicised market security.

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of private security is today perceived as a global social phenomenon that is difficult to ignore in security strategy issues. This is because of its social and economic contribution. It is a multidimensional phenomenon that is difficult to separate from its economic, social or cultural components (Warfman and Ocqueteau, 2011). In Côte d'Ivoire, the development of security subcontractors is unequivocal. From a dozen private security companies in the 1970s, it reached more than 400 in 2010 and to date there are more than 800 in 2016 (UPESPCI; Souhoué, 2016).

However, the development of private security activities in the context of the political and military crisis is being questioned in view of the precarious conditions in which they operate (Gbaton, 1995; Zodo, 2008; Prescott, Yedan, 2009; Ouattara, 2011). In order to address this situation, and to avoid the risk of the sector becoming permanently informal, the state of Côte d'Ivoire has created a framework for consultation between private and public security operators and has put in place a regulatory and legal framework to formalise the sector (Amani, 2013).

This consultation framework led to the creation in 2004 of the Comité de Régulation et de Contrôle (CRC), whose mission is to accompany and challenge illegal companies. In addition, it contributed to the creation of trade union bodies such as the Union Patronale des Entreprises de Sécurité Privée et de Transfert de Fond en Côte d'Ivoire (UPESPCI) and the Union Nationale du Patronat des Entreprises de Sécurité Privée de Côte d'Ivoire (UNAPESPCI) with a view to resolving the structural crisis observed in this security market (Zodo, op.cit.; Amani, op.cit.).

With regard to legal provisions, Decree No. 2005-75 of 3 February 2005 repealing the 1998 decree on the organisation and regulation of private security activities and the latest decree No. 150/MS/CAB of 2 February 2007 setting out the terms and conditions for the approval of staff of private security companies and the transfer of funds, as well as Decree No. 2013-791 of 20 November 2013 on the revaluation of the minimum interprofessional wage, have restructured the private security sector (CGCI, 2015). Despite these actions and the initiatives of the state to curb the phenomenon of the persistent anarchic development and maintenance of illegally established companies, the problem persists.

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This crisis in the governance of private security led the Directorate of Territorial Surveillance (DST) to take action in 2016 to encourage these two structures to comply with the provisions in force in the exercise of the function or risk having their licences withdrawn. These include the profiling of staff and equipment at their disposal, verification of the conformity of administrative documents and accounting statements, as well as the effective application of the guaranteed minimum wage in the function.

Despite the actions taken to reframe the sector, there are still shortcomings in the functioning of these structures. These include the complicity of certain agents in criminal acts and theft, the violation of privacy, the substitution of certain agents of these private security companies for the police in acts of questioning the population and patrols, and the illegal possession of firearms. Another striking fact is the almost constant appearance of new private security companies in the city of Abidjan. This leads us to wonder about the social foundations of the proliferation of private security companies in the Autonomous District of Abidjan? The purpose of this article is to analyse the social foundations of private security organisations in the Autonomous District of Abidjan. This article is structured around two (2) essential points, namely the organisation of the private security sector and the political implications of the development of private security companies in the city of Abidjan.

## **I-THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Based on Guy Rocher's and Talcott Parsons' (1988) theory of social action, the development of security for the poor is: "Social action, as understood by Talcott Parsons, is all human conduct that is motivated and guided by the meanings that the actor discovers in the external world, meanings that he or she takes into account and responds to. The essential features of social action therefore lie in the actor's sensitivity to the meanings of surrounding things and beings, his awareness of these meanings and his reaction to the messages they convey. Defined primarily by its significance, social action is interpreted on the basis of the actor's subjectivity, i.e. on the basis of his perception of his environment, the feelings and ideas that drive him, the motivations that make him act and the reactions he has to his own action" (P35). Let us emphasise in the context of this study that the actor in question is the security services of the poor. It is not a question of understanding by analysing each part of the security system of the poor, but rather of having a global vision of the sub-systems belonging to the security system of the poor to be considered and their recurrent interactions.

From a methodological point of view, the study took place in the companies of Flash Intervention, Moundo Body Guard and CISC Sécurité located in the

communes of Cocody and Treichville. The surveys also concerned the administrative authorities responsible for the control and enforcement of legal provisions and trade union organisations (UNAPESPCI, SYNPE, FENAVICI, UPESPCI), owners of private security structures as well as training centres (ASP, CFTS) in the private security sector. The qualitative approach made it possible to conduct 41 interviews using the simple random sampling technique. The interviews were conducted with the actors according to their social status and their expertise in public action in the field of security. Finally, the analysis of the data was carried out using a double approach, strategic analysis (Crozier and Friedberg, 1997) and the structuroconstructivist approach, which made it possible to identify the structural links and the mechanism of instrumentalisation of private security companies from the perspective of social control of political power.

## **II-RESULTS**

### **I- Development and organisation of private security**

#### **I-1- Beginnings of private security in Côte d'Ivoire**

Private security in Côte d'Ivoire does not date back to yesterday, and in its present institutional form, it dates back to the years 1963 and 1965. Before independence, it was the business of village community surveillance committees and settlers' farms as well as village community surveillance committees against all criminal acts. The forms of private security at work in this period were the internal or institutional forms and the citizen or societal form of private security. As regards the institutional or internal forms, they result from the creation of more or less specialised services in private institutions, whose actions are aimed at protecting the development of the activities of companies. As for the other form, it is the citizen or societal forms of private security that emanate from the organisation by citizens or local communities of their own security. The practice of the institutional or internal form has almost disappeared from the security habits of companies in favour of the more sophisticated commercial form and the citizen form because of the context of social and security crises with its share of delinquency and the multiform risks that Ivorian society is facing (Yebouet, 2015).

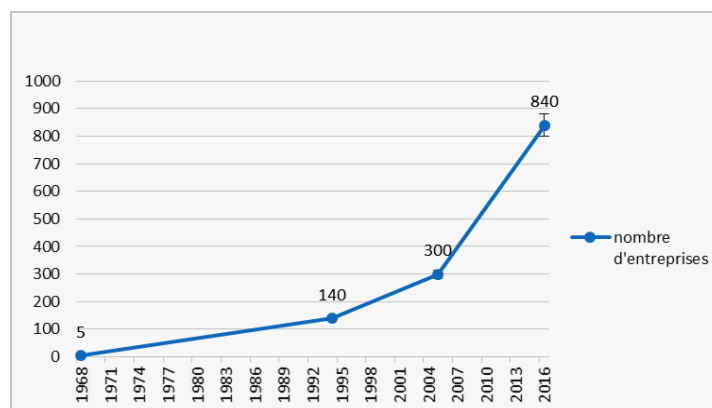
In the first period of independence, these surveillance committees were popularised with the aim of ensuring the security of goods and people. They ensured the protection of the bourgeois classes of the time. These defence and security committees were set up under the authority of prefects. They were essentially composed of homogeneous groups devoid of any formal organisation.

From 1965 onwards, several initiatives in the field could not succeed, in this case the first private security company called "Assistance et Sécurité", owned by Koin Daniel and Nadia. But this company was not successful and closed the same year. In 1969,

Koin Daniel repeated the initiative by creating the company *Omnium des Entreprises des Iles de France* (OMEIFRA), then the company *Surveillance Maintenance Organisation* (SMO). The majority of the staff were nationals of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Yébouet, 2015). These early companies were French-owned businesses. These security companies were only marginally successful due to the lack of training of agents and the relative management of these organisations. It should be remembered that Côte d'Ivoire was just entering this sector and had little experience. Despite the non-existence of texts governing the sector, a procedure for issuing authorisation to operate was applied. The

Ministry of the Interior required the creation of a file consisting of, among other things, a curriculum vitae of the applicant(s), an extract from the criminal record, a statement of financial and material resources and an entry in the trade register. In the normal process, this procedure led to the issuance of a receipt by way of attestation from the staff and a character investigation would subsequently be carried out on the applicants by the *Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire*. Applicants received favourable notices or refusals to grant approval. In practice, once the staff has been approved, the companies start operating in the sector.

## I-2-Emergence of private security in Côte d'Ivoire



**Graph 1: Dynamics of the private security sector in Côte d'Ivoire**

*Legend: Nombre d'entreprises: Number of companies*

**Source: our survey, 2017**

In 1976, the private security sector experienced an effervescence with the entry of Ivorians. This infatuation of Ivorians was reflected in the creation of companies that were entirely owned by nationals. Companies such as "Vigile Abidjanais" of BOA Victoire, "Ivoire Gardiennage" of Djè Yobouet and "Abidjan Gardiennage" of Diaby were created.

In 1980, after the first wave of nationals, others entered the sector in private security. Companies such as Kassi's "Lavgarde", Serikpa André's "ASG" and "BIG" were born out of this resurgence.

Faced with the emergence of these private companies in Côte d'Ivoire, the State successively initiated in 1975 and 1983 draft decrees on the regulation and organisation of private security. These decrees were never applied and remained at the stage of a simple bill.

From 1995 onwards, the introduction of another form of social control into the urban space exacerbated the structural crisis in the governance of security initiated by the state in Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, the irruption of the 'dozos' in the field of private security under the initiative of a political association (PDCI) to secure their meetings in regions that were unfavourable to them. Although short-lived, the

irruption of this singular category in the security field was followed by abuses. Indeed, it was a question of individuals armed with traditional rifles operating in a space where only the public force had a monopoly on weapons. The intrusion of this caste into the security field and its perverse effects led the state to make yet another attempt to assert its monopoly on violence by promulgating Decree No. 95-814 of 29 September 1995 on the regulation of guarding and rescue companies (Yébouet, 2015). This decree remains poorly enforced and distortions are made to the legal framework.

However, in 1998, the dysfunctions observed in the sector led to a new draft decree. This political will gave rise to Decree N°98-323 of 15 June 1998 on the regulation and organisation of private security in Côte d'Ivoire. This decree is experiencing difficulties in its application as it is considered divisive by the employers and operators of the private security sector. Indeed, the actors of the sector reproached the authority in charge of the application of the aforementioned decree for practising a preferential surveillance in order to withdraw approvals from companies judged unfit in the production of security by the authorities in charge of the regulation of the sector.

At that time, the private security sector was under the authority of the National Security Council

chaired by General TANNY Ehuéni. This state body ensured the control and monitoring of the sector. From less than 10 private security companies in the 1970s, the number of these companies grew to 331 over the period 1990-2000 and employed more than 40,000 people, the majority of whom were young people (Amani, 2014).

Given the upsurge of these informal companies without approval under the authority of the transitional regime, the operators set up an employers' association, the UPESPCI, on 20 January 1999. The aim of this initiative was to unite the voices of these operators in order to improve the organisation of the sector (UPESPCI, 2016).

In 1999, following the September coup d'état, the security sector was weakened by the repeal of the 1998 decree by the CNSP and the formalization of certain companies considered to be close to the deposed regime, including BIP, described as a "second headquarters" and owned by General TANNY Ehuéni. This abrogation created a regulatory vacuum in the sector at that time, which led to the creation of a number of security companies in Côte d'Ivoire.

Under the initiative of the UPESPCI and in concert with the State, a new regulation was created to reorganise a sector in search of a balance. In 2005, the decree N°2005-73 on the regulation and organisation of the sector was promulgated.

### **I-3- Search for an institutional balance: better control of the private security sector**

As previously mentioned, under the impetus of the actors of the sector, the State promulgated a legal framework in order to clean up a sector in search of a status as a security partner. This decree is now in force and is the result of the resolutions of the private security conference held in September 2004 at the IAO in Bassam.

The entry into force in February 2005 of the new law on private security was welcomed by the operators of the sector who are pleased with the positive impact it will have on the protection of the public and on the recognition of jobs in the security field. This sector currently represents more than 80,000 jobs.

This new provision repeals the decrees n°95-814 of 29 September 1995 and n°98-323 of 15 June 1998, which were considered obsolete.

Private security in its commercial form in Côte d'Ivoire is not a new phenomenon, it dates back to independence. It has undergone institutional changes as a result of internal crises and contingencies linked to the security environment. Thus, this range of decrees and orders are part of a perspective of formalising private security in Côte d'Ivoire as a viable activity. In concrete

terms, the government aimed at the following objectives.

- Strengthen public and private protection;
- Broaden the scope of the sector's stakeholders to be subject to the organic law;
- Supervise the current practice of private security while respecting the responsibilities and prerogatives of each party (State and operators);
- Contribute to the improvement of private security practices;
- To professionalise the security agent corporation.

Today, the authorities in charge of private security count more than 840, 86 of which are licensed, but these figures must be taken with caution in view of the lack of legibility of the private security sector, which is still under construction (DST, 2016).

### **I-4- Institutional mechanism and circumvention strategy**

Decree No. 2005-75 of February 3, 2005, on the organisation and regulation of private security activities in Côte d'Ivoire governs the private security sector and shows that the State is the only regulator by natural right to exercise this function. In this provision, in its pivotal articles, inescapable for all operators wanting to invest in the sector, I quote: "The provisions of this decree apply to private activities of surveillance or guarding, protection of persons and property and transport of funds, objects and documents of value. The above-mentioned activities may only be carried out by persons constituted as a company, whatever its form. They must be registered in the Trade and Real Estate Credit Register' (RCI, 2005: Art 1).

Secondly, 'The activities of the above-mentioned companies are subject to obtaining an authorisation issued by order of the Minister of Internal Security after the opinion of the commission whose organisational procedures are determined by joint order of the Ministers of Security, Defence and Economy and Finance' (RCI, 2005: Art 4).

Thirdly, 'No company may be allowed to carry out the activities provided for in Article 1 of this decree if: it is not constituted as a company under Ivorian law, whatever its form, and its capital is not at least 51% owned by Ivorians' (RCI, 2005, Art 7).

Compliance with these three articles is a response to the State's desire to combine the control of the increase in the number of security companies with the control of their financial revenues in order to avoid tax evasion, and to facilitate the Ivorianisation of the private security sector, which is run by non-nationals following the failure of the 1995 and 1998 decrees.



Indeed, the sector was for a long time the preserve of non-nationals until 2008. According to statistics, after independence from 1968 to 1980, 93% of the management and executive staff were French, Burkinabe, Malian, Guinean, Togolese and Nigerien, compared to 7% of nationals. From 1980 to 1995, non-nationals represented 67% against 33% of nationals. In 2008, this policy of upgrading the sector continued to evolve significantly. At that time, from 33% in 1995, the presence of nationals had risen to 54% against 46% of non-nationals (DST, 2016). This reversal of Ivorianisation trends is in line with the nationalist movements that emerged in the 1980s. Indeed, at that time, the sense of ownership of sectors of activity that had long been left under the radar sparked an interest (Kipré, 2006).

In terms of financial revenue, the state had been able to mobilise more than 6 billion in annual taxes by 2008 (DST, 2016).

Although these figures show a positive advance in formalisation and financial control policies as well as in the Ivorianisation of the sector, there are limitations in view of the facts on the ground. These shortcomings essentially concern the question of the share of nationals in the social capital of private security companies and the strategies of tax evasion as well as the subcontracting of final approvals correlated with the administrative slowness in obtaining activity permits.

Concerning the circumvention of the ivoirisation policy, company directors do not hesitate to apply for naturalisation. But this naturalization is more visible among French and Lebanese nationals. Generally former legionnaires or having served in the French forces of the 43rd BIMA, these former soldiers invest in the private security sector in Côte d'Ivoire. For these operators, Côte d'Ivoire, in view of the presence of international institutions and the industrial potential, represents a market that has yet to be exploited.

Speaking about the origins of his boss, a C.S. security guard said:

Our boss is French. He is a former French soldier of the Bima, he has been living in Côte d'Ivoire for almost 30 years. He was in the French army, he is a specialist in security and intelligence.

In addition, when asked about non-payment of taxes, A.J., an accountant in a security company, said: Our company does not have a sign on our wall because we are tired of taxes and the town hall. So, to avoid them, this is what we do.

Still addressing the issue of companies that evade taxes, N.M., President of FENAVICI, lays bare the strategies of these companies in these terms:

You see these companies, they open and hire security guards who sometimes don't even know the company's headquarters. When they are discovered, they either move or change their name with a new manager.

These speeches reflect the inadequacies of control and regulation policies in the private security sector. Thus, these weaknesses of the sector explain this proliferation and the inability of the political authorities to provide statistical data and to control the financial flow generated by these private security activities qualified as economic intelligence. This inability to trace and control can be explained by the lack of equipment of the Directorate of Territorial Surveillance. In addition, one of the no less subtle strategies for circumventing Article 1 of the 2005 law is the strategy of subcontracting the final approval. According to this article, no individual or company can operate in the private security sector and have a market share if they do not have a definitive licence (RCI, *idem*). Thus, in order to circumvent this institutional mechanism, some companies do not hesitate to subcontract their final approval in exchange for shares in the applicant company's capital or for financial rents.

To this end, a security operator based in Cocody and member of UNAPESPCI states that:

"The former Ivorian companies that had approvals are selling their approvals because today it is really difficult to get a definitive approval. I can cite the name of a union president who is well known in the sector who has his approval subcontracted. It seems that he doesn't even have a security company anymore. But he sells his licence to make money and remains a key player in the business. He is a pioneer in the business. However, this is the reality, this is what is unfortunately done today.

One reality that emerges from these remarks is the corruption that undermines the private security sector. In fact, to buy the silence of tax officials and authorities in charge of enforcing the law, these companies use *baksich*. This term refers to a sum of money that these companies mobilise for the administrative authorities so that the latter turn a blind eye to their actions. In addition, this *baksich* is also used in some cases to facilitate obtaining final approval.

In fact, the period for obtaining final approval is not clearly specified, which gives rise to such practices. Most of the managers of private security companies interviewed on the issue of *Baksich* confirm these practices, which are carried out by the agents of the territorial surveillance and those of the tax authorities.

For example, the former accountant of the MBG security company confirms this position by stating that.

Obtaining approval is difficult. My boss told me that he had to pay 26 million to obtain our approval. There are companies that have barely opened their doors and obtained approval, whereas there are companies that have been operating for more than ten years. They are struggling to get a definitive approval.

From the sum of the above-mentioned speeches, we note an insufficiency in the control of the dynamics of private security companies. These limits of the system are used by operators as opportunities to exploit to invest in the sector. This situation of violation of these three key provisions of the 2005 decree is indicative of the permeability of our security and financial system. But it also shows a lack of professional ethics that affects most public administrations in Côte d'Ivoire. Thus, this variety of circumvention strategies is rooted in the practices of operators and persists in the sector due to corruption. However, these various mobilisations alone are not sufficient for full investment. Indeed, you need to have an external base that gives you protection. Operators, although acting legally, enter the sector through political co-option. Political sponsorship is essential for operators who would like to have a long experience in the activity. This political sponsorship is a dynamic factor in the sector. Indeed, the proliferation of private security organisations in the Autonomous District of Abidjan is one of the consequences of the politicisation of the private security sector. In this period of economic uncertainty and political fragility, the search for security capital is essential for the mobilisation of funds for political parties in a context where there is no moratorium on the financing of political parties.

#### **I-5-Nature and type of training of agents: socialisation to military discipline**

Surveillance, guarding and fund transfer companies are governed by Decree N°2005-73 of 3 February 2005 on the organisation and regulation of private security activities. It should be recalled that this law was preceded by two other laws, namely the 1995 law and the 1998 law. The main objective of the political authorities was certainly to formalise a sector that had become very dynamic in the 1980s, but above all to create a professional framework for the exercise of the activity.

Thus, one of the provisions that is reflected in this institutional framework is the quality of the agents and the services offered. In view of this requirement, the training of agents is essential to achieve this objective.

In Côte d'Ivoire, as mentioned above, the vast majority of private security companies train their operatives.

The nature and types of training are essentially the usual military training. In practical terms, they consist of physical tests, mastery of techniques for detecting potential sources of risk, techniques for the physical immobilisation of individuals likely to cause harm, combat techniques (self-defence), communication techniques, human rights, first aid and legal notions.

In terms of equipment, the training focuses on the handling of radio and warning equipment as well as weapons governed by the convention. Specifically, officers are provided with the following equipment: signalling devices (during the night), radio, baton, torch, metal detection scanner, telephones, whistles, military boots, belts.

These practices of reinforcing the professional capacities of the agents are provided by the private security structures. This is made possible by the presence of former military and police officers in the workforce. Because "the workers hired are often poorly qualified (...). Largely open to non-graduates and short courses of technical education' (Valtese et al, 2003: 2). In addition, the proportion of retired former military and police officers has contributed to the professionalisation of the sector (Ayorro, 2005). This reality is reflected by M.A.J., the administrative and financial manager of Moundo Body Guard, when he says this about the composition of the company's workforce.

In the staff of Moundo Body Guard, we have a retired ex-military man and ex-members of the Defence and Security Forces who were discharged from the army following the events of the crisis. They help us in the training of agents.

Other sources confirm this information, as evidenced by the staffing situation at Flash Intervention. For example, A.K.G., Flash Intervention's Human Resources Manager, describes the profile of the expatriates who make up the workforce:

We are security professionals. Amongst them, the operations and training men, and the bosses are former French military. Men who have experience in security. They have been in the GIGN, they have participated as French military in missions during the Kosovo crisis, and the conflict in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq etc. They are security professionals.

Also, it is important to note that there are institutions offering training in security and security auditing leading to professional certificates. In the framework of the study, we were able to identify two schools. These are the Academy of Private Security and the Training Centre for the Handling of the Security Tonfa.

The security sector in Côte d'Ivoire is rich in personnel who animate this field of security. The heterogeneous composition of the executive and administrative staff is indicative of a sector which is moving towards professionalisation of the security profession in Côte d'Ivoire. However, the progressive formalisation of this security market is not objectified towards quality. In fact, at the level of their concrete functioning, these companies present numerous weaknesses both structurally and in terms of respect for the legal provisions organising the security profession. They act in an autarkic manner, violating the law. Thus, in the following section we present the strategies for circumventing the existing institutional system.

## **II-Private security as a field of political competition**

### **II-1-Security social capital as a resource for political affirmation**

By 'security social capital' we mean the set of relations that political parties have and that they can mobilise in the logic of social control of political power or of a particular social space (Deycard, 2011). These relationships are active within solidarity networks whose foundations were laid during the decades of political strife that culminated in the rebellion. An interesting phenomenon of the Ivorian rebellion era is that these networks are still functioning after the conflict. We saw private security organisations that were affiliated to them, the example of KDS Sécurité and Guépard Sécurité given during the interviews. It can even be considered that they have developed thanks to the reconversion of certain ex-combatants who have brought their former comrades from the front behind them.

The decades of political strife and social demands, and the era of the partition of the country due to the rebellion, even seem to have laid the groundwork for the development of private security organisations. The mobilisation of private security organisations by political organisations is part of the logic of recycling methods of social control and socio-political affirmation. As the political field is competitive, these strategies are aimed at occupying fundamental positions in the active sectors of society in order to control pockets of power. In this way, the tightly woven network they have built during periods of social and political fragility regularly finds areas of expression and confrontation. The social security capital allows for the improvement of a social condition of existence of political parties, for social affirmation and the perpetuation of the political order as well as for political survival.

The development of this security capital is also a means of channelling groups of former rebels or 'very active' young militants when they have not been able to reintegrate into the economic fabric. They are therefore grouped together in security 'safe haven organisations' in the pay of the government or political organisations.

One of the consequences of the effectiveness of security social capital is that the former fronts maintain active contacts and can therefore be mobilised for common causes. During the recent armed crisis in 2010, there was consistent information from operators in the sector. This concerns the participation of certain private security organisations. Sources indicate that, in addition to playing a security watch role, they participate in the political game. This is what C.N., Secretary of SYNPEP, tries to explain when she says

The private security sector is very influenced by politicians for two reasons. One is that the sector produces enormous resources. This attracts greed. Also, since the 1980s we have seen the delegation of security powers. It was a question of politics in the era of the single party creating avant-garde structures to counter protest movements. You can see that these organisations can fulfil various functions. You can also understand the difficulties that these operators encounter when regimes change. There are cases of BIP, BGSP, WACKNAUL, RISK etc., but the seven groups we represent are trying to move away from that. We do private security, we are professionals.

Political parties have always shown an interest in private security organisations. In the French context, for example, the French Militia, often referred to simply as the Milice, was a French political and paramilitary organisation created on 30 January 1943 by the Vichy regime to fight the Resistance, which was labelled as terrorist. The militia, which acted as a surrogate for the Gestapo and other German forces, also took part in the hunt for Jews, social rebels and all deviants denounced by the Vichy regime and the Parisian collaborators. It was also the political police and a force for maintaining order. This was no different in the colonies or overseas territories. In these territories, there were praetorian guards who were supplementary to the army and who paraded on exceptional occasions. These organisations were security control devices (Comi, 2005; Anzouman, 2008).

Furthermore, the relationship with politics allows us to make a typology of private security organisations in Côte d'Ivoire. Returning to the Ivorian private security model and drawing on the historical context of the Vichy era and the Togolese context under the regime of Eyadema Father, we can classify private security companies into two groups. Those linked to the public authorities described as 'vigilante' and those emanating from the process of democratisation of security (Valcrce, 2007).

As for the 'vigilantes', they are most often close to the state or the ruling party, or at least to the preservation of the existing order, and develop in disaggregated social conditions, yet with a certain degree of autonomy from the state. These groups sometimes do not have a stated political agenda beyond

the protection of a community and participation in the organisation of social and political life (Pratten, 2008). As evidence of this, we have the endorsement of the Ex-Force Nouvelles - a former Ivorian rebellion still influential in the northern areas of the country - to the President of the National Assembly Soro Kigbafori Guillaume if he were to claim the supreme magistracy (Ziao, 2017). As the political field is competitive, affiliation with formal or informal private security organisations plays a part in structuring political and social life.

The common feature of these groups probably lies in their ability to control or act effectively in a specific territory within which they enforce order, relying both on the use of force displayed but also on a certain legitimacy of power or political organisations if they are affiliated.

However, the possession or endowment of security social capital is not all good. The periods of crisis from 1990 to the situation of social fragility in 2011 offer a range of responses. Indeed, from the era of the Twelve Building Sites of the African Elephant through the Republic of Refoundation to the regime of

emergence, we see a reconfiguration of the market field with each change of regime.

## II-2-Private security companies: security watch or political instrument

The decade 2000 was marked by the rise in number of private security structures in Abidjan. The present stage of our reflection aims to understand the context of their creation, the underlying reasons for their accelerated evolution and the reasons for their tolerance by the State.

From this perspective, the insights provided by Mieu (2009) when studying the private security sector and Bah (2013) when studying political violence in western Côte d'Ivoire are very enlightening in terms of the role and function of private security structures.

In his elucidation of the evolution of private security activities in Abidjan, Mieu (op.cit.) shows a politicised sector marked by the ramifications of political actors (power and opposition) that make up the Ivorian political field. The results of his survey, presented in the box below, are a perfect illustration of the stranglehold of the public authorities on the sector.

### Box 1: Côte d'Ivoire: Security business

Companies set up by nationals compete closely with the leaders. Like Bip Assistance, owned by General Tanny Ehueni, a former senior commander of the gendarmerie, which had its heyday in the late 1990s. The company of this close friend of former president Henri Konan Bédié, which had almost all the state contracts, is trying to keep up with the leaders. Other companies, such as MBS Security, Guardian's, 911 Security, Flash, Lavegarde, Vigassistance, SMO, etc., compete with the first mentioned. And according to rumour, politicians and people close to the regime have set up companies to "house" idle ex-militiamen, who could be used at any time as "auxiliaries" for the army. But it is difficult to identify the real owners behind the nominees.

**Source:** Mieu Baudelaire (Jeune Afrique, 8 September 2009) on

<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/201365/politique/ctedivoiresecuritybusiness/>

Bah (2013), in his reflection on the 'socio-political stakes and mobilisation of militia organisations in community conflict areas in western Côte d'Ivoire', describes the logic of action of militia organisations as a way of asserting their right to forest resources. Furthermore, in this attempt to explain the conflict, he divides the actors in the conflict into two categories. On the one hand, there are the indigenous people, strongly guided by nationalist ideology, and the non-indigenous people and non-nationals who protect the social status acquired in this region and whose objective is to make this control permanent and to extend the influence of the rebellion over this area rich in mining and forestry resources.

During this period of military and social structure collapse, the quest for political, economic and security space extended to the capital Abidjan. In this quest for social control, an informal privatisation of the security apparatus took place. At that time, the public and private security sector was politicised. This politicisation of the security sector made it a major player in the crises that have constantly shaken Côte

d'Ivoire (Anzoumana, 2008). The transformation of the security apparatus (public/private) into an active political actor is inseparable from the use of force and violence as a means of expressing identity claims, access to resources and political power (Anzoumana, idem). In this logic, the instrumentalisation of private security actors has led to the creation of numerous security companies (Mieu, 2009). This politicisation of this private pillar of the security apparatus has motivated a race to monopolise and create private security structures. And each of them had proven political ramifications. In this respect, we rely on the speech of A.S., owner of a private security company and member of the technical committee for consultation and delivery of approval at the Ministry of the Interior, who states the following:

"In 2002, after the coup d'état of 19 September, we could all see that some members of the ex-rebellion had individuals in their ranks who were known in Abidjan as security guards. One of them was in the security of the current president of the republic, His Excellency Mr Ouattara Alassane. And in 2010, we



had the Lafon cases of the company Risk, which has now become Artemis.

The sector has always been politically influenced and the events of the armed political crises characterised by the conquest of political power had a strong impact on the private security sector in Côte d'Ivoire. These companies were marked by a dual function of private security companies during the decade of crisis. This is what M.B.D, a gendarme and close guard, shows when he states:

"If you see that politicians are behind certain security companies, it is because everyone wants to have their own army. Recruitment is done among unemployed young people who adhere to their political ideologies. This is one of the reasons for all the problems with firearms ownership and the failure to respect the decree in force, because the big companies manage their supplies directly with their headquarters abroad and our companies, thanks to repeated crises with the proliferation of weapons, are rendering the decree null and void. I know young militiamen who actively participated in the 2010 crisis, who are now working in security companies. They are part of the demobilised from the DDR programme. Before the crisis, we all witnessed that the conflicting political actors had their clans constituted as self-defence groups for some and rebel forces for others. These groups were mainly made up of young people. Many of them have received military training. These young people are now in private security.

In the same vein, M.B.S, administrative manager of Flash Intervention, confided to us that.

"With the new government, many companies have been created. We have even been approached within the framework of the integration of demobilised soldiers to integrate the auxiliary staff of ex-combatants into our company. We refused, because we felt it was unwise to integrate individuals with this profile. We were asked to integrate them into our workforce, to train them, but their salaries would be provided by the state.

Having a strategic position in the security system in Abidjan, the political links of private security companies preside over their function and role, and therefore explain this proliferation in the district of

Abidjan. This density in Abidjan responds to a double challenge. Firstly, to be 'security guards' in times of relative calm and, secondly, to be 'military auxiliaries' of the parties in times of political confrontation in the quest for political power and control of the social space. This quest for control of the political and economic space and the security apparatus has made the autonomous district of Abidjan into a highly militarised space (Buzan, 1991). The objective of this struggle is, in addition to securing people and property in its official form, to aim at a social control of political power through the monopoly of the state and private security field. These security companies in this context appear as instruments that can be mobilised for the conquest or defence of political power. They are political instruments.

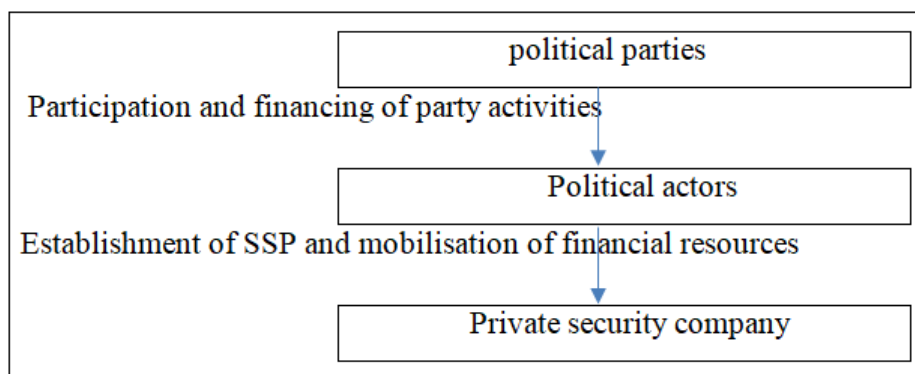
In the same vein, F.U., a gendarmerie officer, states the following:

"I confess that I have heard that some companies have participated in the crisis and in what way I do not know. But as I told you before, there are politicians who have security companies. Businessmen and politicians have entered the sector. So, let's not be surprised to see companies involved in the crisis. Companies close to the powers that be have certainly participated in the crisis. Look at the companies that are in trouble after the 2010 crisis and the ones that formed.

Furthermore, based on interviews with a former intelligence officer, we can caricature the modes of operation of the security apparatus when it is intertwined with private security groups in the management of the security environment. These companies act as relays for political organisations as shown in the following diagram:

### **II-3-Private security companies: instruments for mobilising the financial resources of political parties**

A look at the financing strategies of ruling parties is necessary insofar as they are generally the masters of the political game, especially in the unconsolidated democracies of West Africa. And considering that their strategies are aimed at staying in power and that they use both orthodox and unorthodox means to this end, this paper will focus on the sources of funding for the political parties' strategy. In the diagram below we can see the process of financing these organisations.



**Figure 1: Process of financial resource mobilisation by political actors**

*Source: our survey, 2017*

As the above process shows, security companies are structures for mobilising financial resources for the financing of political party activities. Political actors create or sponsor companies, including private security companies, in order to benefit from financial advantages. In the Ivorian context, the most influential companies in the private security sector are tutelised. Political actors are channels for the transit of funds for party activities.

In the life of a political party, the search for financial resources plays a key role in social positioning strategies. This social positioning involves developing the party's esteem among the population (Banégas, 1998). In such a context, a political organisation is one that asserts itself through its financial power, its logistical capacity and that of the elites that make it up in the quest for political power (Mboj, 2005). Unlike many developed countries, including Canada, France, Belgium, Japan, etc., the financing of political life is still a foreign fact in African democracies. Although there is only an embryo of financing for electoral campaigns, the absence of a real system for financing the political activities of these parties means that it is up to the political organisations to find sources of financing for party activities (Mboj, idem). This situation of financial precariousness of political organisations creates the conditions for sometimes unconventional financing and we cite as an example the case of the PDP in Nigeria. "In Nigeria, in the twilight of Olusegun Obasanjo's reign, a major problem of national interest arose in 2006-2007. This was the corrupt practices of officials of Nigeria's ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), during the 2003 general elections and the diversion of funds from a federal government agency to a fictitious account to finance the party. Indeed, parties are in some cases the direct beneficiaries of corrupt acts' (Adejumobi, 2007: 30). In poor countries, networks of sponsorship, co-optation and direct funding are major instruments for electoral victories and the retention of power in elite hands (Adejumobi, 2007).

Based on these observations, political parties use all sorts of strategies to mobilise resources to ensure the survival of the party. This approach can be explained by the correlation between the decline of political organisations in the Ivorian political arena after the elections and the decline of certain private security structures. In the questionnaire outlines of our field surveys, we asked the following questions: "What is at the origin of the disappearance or decline in influence of certain security companies in the aftermath of regime changes in Côte d'Ivoire?" and another question that we often asked was: "Why do others emerge in the same context with impressive logistics? The words of A.K., an agent of the gendarmerie, reflect this reality when he says.

"The big security companies in Côte d'Ivoire are the preserve of politicians and when they are no longer in business their companies also fall or change name to avoid being in the sights of the new authorities. Yesterday, it was BIP, OMEIFRA, LAVGARDE under the Bédié regime, then we had companies like BGSP, MBS, WAHKNALL and others under Gbagbo and today it is PUISSANCE 6, KDS and new companies that share important market shares. They are financially powerful in terms of the equipment they have and the money they earn. These companies are all created by politicians who are very close to power and sometimes are very active members of their political parties.

It is clear from this speech that far from being the work of economic operators, both ruling and opposition politicians engage in this practice. As we have already mentioned, the context of insecurity is a social offer of economic opportunity for operators in the private security sector. The integration of the political class in this field constitutes a "rational strategy" that aims to earn money by being sensitive to the control of the private security apparatus. Thus, the resources mobilised contribute to the material affirmation of political parties and their leaders. Why leaders? Let us recall Sawicki's (1996) approach in his understanding of the internal competitive field of political organisations. In essence, politics is, according to its definition, a

struggle for the conquest of positions of power both inside and outside political organisations. The occupation of a position or responsibility in the party hierarchy is dependent on the social position of the holder or the structure of his social resources (Gaxie, 1977). Actors within political organisations use material and symbolic resources to present themselves as safe values of the party. In the Ivorian context, private security organisations are used to mobilise resources to secure important positions in the long term.

### III-DISCUSSION

If the importance of security organisations in our daily world raises questions about their contribution to the construction of a secure environment and their participation in the fight against insecurity, the content analysis reveals that the "social" risks linked to their subjective development are little mentioned by the press and, above all, their instrumentalisation by the political class remains little addressed in the studies. The conclusions of the study by Peroumal (2009) and Hassid (2010) state that the development of private security companies is the result of the 'big brotherisation' of society and the advent of neoliberal ideology. In approaches to elucidating this issue, the determinants of the expansion of the private security sector remain essentially limited to economic perspectives and new social risks such as technological attacks and the spectre of terrorism as well as the phenomenon of urban insecurity (Sotlar, 2009).

However, an important aspect in understanding the phenomenon of the proliferation of security companies has not been addressed and this is a limitation of these previous contributions. That is, the impact of the dual role of the state as a provider of standards and as a client of private security organisations and the structural and social implications that may systematically follow from this. Especially since states, or at least the life of a state, is driven by political organisations in formal or informal competition in political, social and economic spaces. Moreover, the orientations of public policies in the different sectors of activity are reducible to the ideologies of the party in power as well. Consequently, policy choices in the area of security are related to this. The link between the current development of private security in the Autonomous District of Abidjan and the political choices made by the political and administrative authorities over the last few decades is a source of reflection that allows us to understand the real reasons for this expansion. Indeed, in an Ivorian context where economic liberalism is struggling to take off, it is not very objective to see the excessive development of private security companies as an objective consequence of the Ivorian liberal economic model and the precariousness of the security climate (Touré and Kouamé, 1994).

Thus, the idea that the multiplication of security companies can be explained by the government's policy of liberalising the security market, as supported by Pérouse de Montclos (2008) in response to the security situation, is diluted by the fact that the legal framework for the organisation of the sector remains incomplete and creates cognitive dissonance in the field of the actors involved in the study's results. Indeed, the disarticulation of the security system following its political takeover, its logistical precariousness and the years of politico-armed crises has presented itself as social offers for political organisations in their quest for financial and strategic resources in order to gain a lasting foothold in the political arena and in the security apparatus.

The development of private security organisations took place in the Ivorian context, which was marked by political and armed crises and the fragmentation of the security apparatus. Thus, in the struggle for political, economic and security control spaces, state political actors or political professionals have transposed the political competition in these fields, which for a long time had remained non-mercantilist, into a politically privatised field.

Furthermore, through the networking system between different public and private security actors, a public-private continuum has been established in this commercial security sector, which benefits neither the process of reinforcing public security nor that of liberalising the security market, but rather the political parties or political leaders. The aim is for these companies to be an extension of the political parties. Thus, from being partners in the co-production of security, they have become instruments of social control of the social field.

### IV-CONCLUSION

This contribution deals with the social logic of the maintenance of private security organisations in the Autonomous District of Abidjan. Indeed, for more than a decade, Côte d'Ivoire has occupied a comfortable position in the production of private security services, thanks to a political will asserted since the 1990s, which has favoured the expansion of guarding companies with staff and equipment that rival those of the public police. However, at the end of 1999 and from 2000 to 2010, the authorities in charge of the private security sector launched an awareness-raising campaign and actions aimed at showing that security companies are dysfunctional and for the most part operate without authorisation in Côte d'Ivoire and particularly in the Autonomous District of Abidjan. It emerges from this study that the maintenance of private security organisations is the result of the lack of transparency in the application of institutional provisions regulating and organising private security activities. The development and maintenance of illegally established private security structures is supported by two (2) essential reasons.

Firstly, the maintenance of private security organisations is linked to the logic of disengagement of the state in the securing of people and goods. Secondly, the maintenance of private security organisations is explained by a logic of social control of political power.

Furthermore, the present study results also provide insight into how the importance of social capital or social network and economic capital, as well as political capital, facilitates the anarchic development of private security companies.

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