Militarized youths in western Côte d'Ivoire: local processes of mobilization, demobilization, and related humanitarian interventions (2002-2007)
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Some theoretical considerations

This section gives a brief overview of the theoretical debates related to post-conflict humanitarianism and violent processes of mobilization that are relevant to the scope of this study. In this work, the general approach for building theory is inductive and inspired by the grounded theory methodology developed by Strauss, with special emphasis on the continuous need to compare between phenomena and contexts to make the theory strong (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). The main intention of having this distinct theoretical chapter is to give conceptual keys of interpretation to the reader and eventually, by looking at existing theories in the light of the western Ivorian context, to help conceptually refine some of the phenomena already presented in the introduction.

Since the main research question in this study is to understand the extent to which externally driven interventions targeting militarized civilians should be conceived as special processes compared to other social processes at play in the local environment, it is worth reflecting on several dimensions of the humanitarian apparatus: the risk of capture of humanitarian resources by one of the belligerents, the extent of entanglement in the local dynamics, and the question of power seen from the point of view of the intervention itself but also from the points of views of local actors using the intervention for their own ends. If there is existing theory on these themes, its main flaw is to be based on static situations where humanitarianism plays a central role in the immediate context, with tangible effects on the local system. In situations where post-conflict interventions play a more marginal role, varying over time (like the situation in western
Côte d’Ivoire), there is a blatant lack of conceptualization. Yet it remains interesting to examine the effects of interventions in such settings, notably to examine the extent to which they reproduce a patronage and clientelistic mode of functioning.

Post-conflict interventions are paradoxical in nature: they do not initially belong to the context in which they operate, and yet, as soon as they start operating, they become entangled with local social networks, and not necessarily in the way they would like to be. Capturing the extent of such entanglement in the contexts under study is a fundamental key for any informed analysis, as well as empirically assessing the extent of ‘humanitarian legitimacy’, and the genuine effects humanitarianism has in complex environments (especially as Ivoirian microcontexts are known to be extremely disparate from one location to another). As I was leading these reflections for interventions that specifically targeted ex-combatants, I could not be unreceptive to debates that regarded the extent of ‘milicianization’ of a given society. After all, an interesting peculiarity of the Ivoirian case is that the militarization of civilians has been relatively contained in time, space, and degree of violence (in comparison with neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone) despite the fact that rebel forces have been occupying half of the country for nearly a decade.\(^1\) The second conceptual pillar therefore examines existing analytical distinctions from a critical perspective (civil war vs. sociopolitical outburst, militia member/rebel vs. local vigilante) and eventually proposes a comprehensive categorization of theories related to processes of violent mobilization that help to better grasp the concept of militarized youth.

The paradox of post-conflict interventions

‘Apolitical’ political actors

There is a global approach to post-conflict interventions. Peace-building processes and conflict prevention are largely based on the idea that positive change can be induced by targeted interventions, and it is expected that the propensity for recruits to resume fighting can be diminished if sound interventions are implemented step by step, according to some kind of checklist. Donors and humanitarian practitioners talk in terms of programme objectives, outcome indicators, accomplishments, number of beneficiaries, and a twelve-month reintegration programme for ex-combatants\(^2\) is genuinely considered enough to prevent recruits from getting re-enrolled. Perhaps the most obvious reason why a

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\(^1\) This observation continues to hold in the light of the recent events.

\(^2\) Donors and practitioners generally use the term ‘ex-combatant’ in their writings. The term ‘militarized civilian’, with the implication we saw in terms of blurred borders between the military and the civilian spheres, has not yet entered their discourse.
global approach to post-conflict interventions is inappropriate is that it largely overestimates the impact of external interventions, namely by ignoring the fact that they are always reshaped by contextual dynamics. Interventions take place in a social arena, they interact with different stakeholders, and as a consequence, they rarely go as planned; they are constantly being reshaped contingent on the changing balance of power at the local level (Long, 2001). If initial objectives are rarely met, there is nothing wrong about it. I remember humanitarian staff working on reinsertion projects for ex-combatants being deeply annoyed by the fact that some ‘beneficiaries’ were not performing the way they were supposed to and were ‘diverting’ from the project objectives. Lack of assiduousness and disposal of project equipment in other ways than planned were in general judged severely and often interpreted as deviant behaviour. One can only regret that understanding the reasons for such changes of behaviour does not have a place on practitioners’ agendas. Pouligny is rather provocative when she writes that ‘most outsiders falsely believe that the date of their arrival is zero for the country, as if nothing had happened before them’ (Pouligny, 2004a). Yet she points to the right paradox: there can be no attempt to rebuild a society without pairing the peace-building process with an in-depth examination of the existing resources. Local means are usually in place long before external interventions, and by being deeply rooted in the social and cultural context, they are usually naturally accessed by the local population when needed (Pouligny notably mentions the positive effects of some of the actions undertaken by traditional healers on former Mozambican and Sierra Leonean child soldiers after their return to their respective communities). In this particular study, this point is perhaps best exemplified by the extensive recourse to extra-humanitarian activities in the search to secure basic income. The fact that some of the reinserted recruits under study engaged in private activities in Guiglo and Man in parallel to their participation in a humanitarian project, and that some even preferred to skip participation because they were committed elsewhere, reveals the relatively low importance of interventions from the points of view of the youths themselves, compared to other opportunities arising from the contextual dynamic. Humanitarianism has only been a extra in western Côte d’Ivoire and there is no need to overestimate its effects: on the counter-insurgent side, humanitarian support for militarized civilians only materialized two or three years after the militia elements had left their respective armed groups – thus right after their effective demobilization, former recruits were mainly tapping into local resources. Such a phenomenon certainly opens up the debate whether an indigenous process of peacebuilding is conceivable in western Côte d’Ivoire, given the context we know. I come back to that point below, when reflecting on non-interventionism.
The humanitarianism-legitimacy nexus

But there is another reason why a global approach to post-conflict interventions is inappropriate. It namely sets too ambitious goals, and notably a goal of state (re)building which is highly unlikely to be compelled by outsiders (Jozan & Ray, 2009). As Duyvesteyn (2009) points out, key to the process of state consolidation is the forging of a bargain between rulers and constituents. But when humanitarianism enters the scene, by the mere fact that external interventions inject additional resources and usually fulfil a role in basic service provision, there is the risk that an overdose of interventions undermines that very bargain between rulers and constituents, making internal agencies competitors of the State, or, in contexts outside state control, competitors of the armed group that plays the role of local sovereign. This argument of linking the injection of humanitarian resources to local legitimacy (which, pushed to the extreme, may lead international agencies to compete with the local rulers) finds most resonance in contexts where humanitarianism is at the core of social change. For other situations, and for the Ivorian case in particular, it is worth reflecting on what happened, since the local environment was hardly disrupted by the process of intervention. I indirectly and empirically address this point in Chapters 8 and 9, when reflecting on the blurring of spaces between the humanitarian, military and civilian arenas and when examining the process of intervention itself.

Beyond this question of ‘humanitarian’ legitimacy, there is the need to clarify the concept itself in light of the contexts under study. After all, the northern half of Côte d’Ivoire was not controlled by the State between 2002 and 2007 (the research period), and this calls for a closer look at the links between legitimacy and local territorial sovereignty. If we adopt a classical view, state-building requires the construction of the monopoly of force in a particular territory and the establishment of legitimacy of that monopoly; the core challenge here is to find ways to legitimate the rule (Weber, 1997). The recipe that was developed in the 1990s for rebuilding failed states – a recipe vehemently criticized by Duyvesteyn and others – focused on creating strong institutions through democratic elections, the basic assumption being that this would be sufficient to generate a legitimate rule. However, legitimacy does not always follow from institutions like the liberal view suggests, it mostly follows from order, and as Duyvesteyn put it, it does not really matter who is responsible for it. Big men, warlords and rebel leaders can be particularly successful in creating some sort of social order in unstable contexts. They are therefore likely to be entrusted with some sort of legitimacy at the local level and even beyond. In this study, this trait was particularly relevant for the Guiglo site, a location where warlords literally emerged from and reconverted into local politicians. Post-conflict interventions found therefore themselves there in a quite awkward position: on the one hand, having
to find some kind of working grounds with the local guarantors of social order (the former warlords); on the other hand, trying to promote a certain type of social contract, not necessarily in line with the local norms.

If one explores a specific post-conflict setting mainly shaped by external interventions, it could be argued on many aspects that it is an artificial construction and that what tends to be reproduced is the pre-war situation (I already alluded to that in the introduction). The problem with that perspective is that it tends to overestimate the regulating role of the pre-war structures. As Englebert and Tull wrote: ‘Today’s state-building practice favours the use of terminology of recreating the state as it existed before the conflict. But terms such as “rebuilding”, “resuscitating”, and “reestablishing” are misleading in so far as they imply the prior existence of effective public institutions waiting to reemerge’ (Englebert and Tull cited in Duyvesteyn, 2009). Indeed, in many situations, well-functioning institutional pre-war structures simply never existed, or at least, they never functioned in the sense generally implied. Patrimonialism\(^3\) is still the established political mode in most developing states (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa), and almost everyone is used to be involved in some kind of patron-client relationship (civil servants being no exception). ‘Rebuilding’ and ‘reestablishing’ pre-war structures therefore make little sense in such conditions. Why should one long for that if all it means in the end is recreating a system that favors patronage and clientelism under the guise of a democratic façade? Despite this criticism, the ‘rebuilding’ and ‘reconstruction’ paradigm continues to be widely used in practice, raising a certain number of concerns about the genuine driving force of these post-conflict interventions.

In situations when humanitarianism does not play a central role and when it is conceived at the local level as an ‘extra’ social opportunity coming on top of other social opportunities (of a more private or public nature), it remains interesting to examine the extent to which interventions in such settings reproduce a patronage and clientelistic mode of functioning. After all, whether interventions play a central role in a local context or a more modest one, the overall discourse remains the same: ‘rebuilding’ and ‘re-establishing’ pre-war structures is still the aim. But because existing studies tend to overrate the place of post-conflict interventions in the local dynamics, there is a lack of conceptualization for interventions that acknowledgeably play a modest role in their immediate contexts. This work is a first-hand attempt to shed some light on that aspect.

\(^3\) Tellis-Nayak (1983) gives a particularly accurate definition of the patron-client bond as being ‘an asymmetrical, voluntary, and instrumental friendship in which non-comparable goods and services are exchanged for mutual benefit’.
Main debates on humanitarianism

In politically unstable contexts, there is much ground to question the ‘apolitical’ nature of humanitarian deeds. Weinstein warns about ‘the rebel bias’, observing that external input in interventions makes rebel victories ‘substantially less likely’ because they favour ‘negotiated settlements’ over ‘military victories’ (Weinstein, 2005). There is indeed an international disposition to obstruct rebel victories, and although this is an obvious sign of partiality, it is rarely presented as cause for concern. Duyvesteyn goes one step further and argues that the current focus on democratization, negotiation, compromise and increased aid as conflict resolution mechanism has the adverse effect of jeopardizing viable state-building because it bypasses important indigenous state-building mechanisms and neglects the fact that states in turmoil have the ability to recover themselves (Duyvesteyn, 2009). Others have also acknowledged the benefits of such autonomous recovery, even if it means the continuation of war for some time: ‘War-making is a process that can provide strong incentives for competing groups to secure the consent of the governed, overcome sectarian tendencies in favor of more national identities, and develop the administrative capacity required to deliver public good to their constituents’ (Weinstein, 2005). The main argument here is based on the assumption that indigenous state-building mechanisms are the only form of state-building that combine domestic sources of legitimacy with realistic views on domestic capacities.\(^4\)

If a certain line of thought is strongly in favour of a non-interventionist approach, there is the need to reflect on the nature of humanitarianism and on the debates humanitarianism generates. Not because non-interventionism is marginal. A few scholars in fact remind us that the principle of non-intervention actually applies in many situations (in Algeria, Colombia, Chechnya for instance) and that sometimes, interventionism can play a very marginal role (Bradol, 2003, 2004). But where planned interventions take place, there is the need to reflect on the real place they take in their local environments, since in war-affected contexts humanitarianism does not always act as a central driving force.

Interestingly, there is no single perspective on the driving principles of humanitarianism. If many restrict its mandate to emergency relief for victims of war and survivors of natural disasters, some go beyond that, ‘just because lives are no longer at immediate risk does not mean that suffering has ended’ (Barnett

\(^4\) A disturbing trend nowadays is only to tap into ‘indigenous capacity’ when having to legitimize an external intervention, and several authors recognize this (Weissman, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b). The role of local actors becomes limited to the role of sub-contractants, with some capacity at best, none at worst. If they manage to create the right legal and administrative structures, they might succeed in entering a system where international aid agencies delegate operational tasks to them under discourses of ‘capacity-building’, ‘sustainability’, ‘recognition of indigenous knowledge’.
& Weiss, 2008). The main ideals behind the concept include neutrality (as defined by a rule of behaviour that demands that external interventions refrain from taking any side) and humanity (a precept that commands attention to everyone and that does not prioritize or sacrifice some to the detriment or benefit of others). But even that latter point is not exempt of fierce debate within the practitioner community, between those advocating interventions in certain zones, regardless of the consequences, and those preferring to stay out when it is too difficult to untangle the political, military and humanitarian aspects. Aid can be very selective and it is important to reflect on the grounds on which such selection is made. If there is no single perspective on its driving principles, there are also several approaches when placing it into context. One is to place humanitarianism at the core and to assume that post-war contexts are mainly shaped by ‘apolitical’ interventions that promote peace and reconciliation in war-torn societies. Another approach is to place humanitarianism at the side, and to consider it, from the points of view of actors, to be a social opportunity among other social opportunities. The second approach is the most relevant for our context.

• The risk of capture

In their analyses of humanitarian action, Barnett and Weiss highlight two contradictory trends that developed in the past two decades: a first one indicating the growing willingness and ability of outsiders to help those at risk using discourses diffusing ideas on ‘the responsibility to protect’, and a second one reflecting on the various issues that contemporary complex emergencies pose for humanitarianism (the assumed ‘neutrality’ and ‘apolitical’ nature of aid being increasingly called into question). There is indeed plenty of evidence of projects being manipulated, at least partially, to serve non-humanitarian agendas. In contexts where humanitarianism has become so intertwined with the local politics, there might be no other option than to have to choose sides, challenging thereby the neutrality/impartiality window of planned interventions and blurring the traditional analytical boundaries between the ‘humanitarian’, the ‘civilian’ and the ‘military’ spheres (Pouliquen, 2003, 2004a; Weissman, 2003a, 2004a). There are many examples in recent history. In Angola, for instance, at the end of the 1990s, aid was clearly manipulated by Luanda. The UN refused to jeopardize their already shaky position and deliberately chose not to start any assistance programme in the UNITA-controlled areas (Messiant, 2003, 2004). In Sudan, belligerent parties developed a real savoir-faire in capturing and controlling humanitarian resources, to the point of making them play a significant role in the political economy of conflict (Lavergne & Weissman, 2003, 2004). When aid takes sides, it might be unintentionally at first but it usually quickly evolves into an informed act. In addition, external interventions are rarely seen as neutral by the local popula-
tions, and in many contexts humanitarianism finds itself subject and object of diplomatic games in which humanitarian parameters are far from being the most determinants. In Côte d’Ivoire, for instance, there is ground to argue that the way post-conflict aid was conditioned eventually served political ends, especially in 2007-2008 as more and more donors started linking the continuation of their financial support to political progress and Ivorian presidential elections being held.5

• The extent of entanglement

But if Angola and Sudan were clear examples of situations where humanitarian resources were captured by a belligerent, other contexts remind us in fact that, instead of capture, what happens foremost at the microlevel is the enmeshment of postconflict interventions in the local dynamics (and many times, not necessarily in the way wanted or anticipated). External interventions inevitably end up liaising with local actors in order to be able to operate, and key local actors often assume many roles in the community. It is in fact rather common to have a situation where warlords are also respected traditional chiefs, with a foot in the local politics and a certain influence on their environment through their range of ‘development’ brokerage actions. Because the mere fact of delivering aid supposes some form of negotiation, recognition and legitimization, planned interventions have no other option than to become entangled with local social networks upon which they have little control, and these networks can include groups or individuals known to have a direct or indirect link with the belligerents. If the humanitarian context in western Côte d’Ivoire did not manage to escape this situation (I’ll develop this more when reflecting on the question of power), one cannot really speak of a sophisticated system of capture, and humanitarianism is far from having played a central role in the political war economies of Man and Guiglo.

An important aspect that Pouligny brings to the fore with regard to entanglement is the ambiguity of most assistance programmes that claim to help rebuild a war-torn society but that ‘drain’ all of its political substance, reducing the process to mere technicalities. She writes:

‘The “peace” that we pretend to rebuild might as well be an empty project. We may help rebuild economic and socio-political infrastructures and institutions but they are no more than “empty boxes”, because we have given little consideration to the conceptual roots of social and political life (…). Reconstruction efforts have to see with changing identities and group boundaries, the difficulties of communicating across boundaries, justice and “reconciliation” the distribution of property, land and wealth, the writing of history, the rebuilding

5 France and Japan for instance suspended their support to education using such argument (personal interview with the ERNWACA representative).
of trust and the capacity for new political systems. Yet behind these lies a host of cultural meanings which are usually unremarked and unanalyzed.’ (Pouligny, 2004a)

It is indeed a fundamental mistake to downplay the embeddedness of external interventions in the local politics and the mere fact that the people with whom these interventions are dealing are not apolitical subjects should actually be self-explanatory. At the local level, it is partly people’s behaviour that sets the stage for action or inaction. One should therefore carefully reflect on their perceptions of what happened during tense periods (who is to blame, what vengeance is due, to which side do they feel the closest, is there any point in rebuilding at all, …) and a good understanding of these views should be the basis of any intervention. Pouligny yet regrets that this dimension is given too little attention in comparison with the exaggerated current focus on technicalities (I tend to share her line of thought) and is not the only one to warn about the inappropriateness of promoting a too technical approach. Agier & Bouchet-Saulnier (2003), for instance, pinpointed a worrying shift that has occurred in recent years. On the one hand, they describe the 1990s as a decade in which unprecedented efforts were made to provide material assistance to people in need (mainly focusing on refugee contexts), but on the other hand, they also depict the same period as an era of ‘apparent effervescence’ and as a decade mostly known for having clearly marked the deterioration of individual legal rights.6 They write:

‘Behind the apparent effervescence, the question of legal protection has truly regressed. From the closing of borders to forced repatriation, endangered populations found themselves trapped in conflicts, transformed in human shields, in baits for international aid, in mere objects deprived of rights and subject to all kinds of violence and arbitrariness. The disappearance of all sort of legal protection for these people has increased their physical vulnerability (…).’ (Agier & Bouchet-Saulnier, 2003)

What is central in this argument for the scope of this study is the recognition that under cover of generosity, pragmatism, emergency, and proximity with the people in need, an overdose of interventions may run the risk of drying up important social mechanisms that already exist at the local level (namely, social interactions that regulate responsibilities, rights and reciprocal obligations and that generally arrange social life on a much more stable basis than imported solutions). Agier and Bouchet-Saulnier strongly advocate resisting the current trend that conceives humanitarian spaces as ‘spaces of exception’, where generosity and pragmatism override people’s responsibilities and rights (Agier & Bouchet-Saulnier, 2003).

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6 Agier & Bouchet-Saulnier notably argue that the deterioration of their legal protection is partly linked to the confusion between the notion of ‘protection’ (which has legal implications) and the notion of ‘physical security’ (which is not legislated in international law). This confusion is sustained by the ambiguity of UN peace missions, and particularly those under Chapter Seven of the United Nations Charter, which foresees military interventions to provide physical security to the local populations, provided a range of conditions (Agier & Bouchet-Saulnier, 2003).
chet-Saulnier, 2003). The risk, they warn, is that generous aims can be distorted to the point of depriving war-affected populations of the little agency they have left. What is to be encouraged instead is a constructive confrontation, which does not annihilate people in need as thinking subjects. If their warnings make perfect sense in situations when humanitarianism plays a central role in its immediate environment, it is interesting to examine the same stand from the perspective of contexts and societies where interventions play a more marginal role, especially in this Ivorian case, where the militarized youths who have been locally recruited and locally demobilized have actually always stayed in contact with their pre-war social groups.

• The question of power

The question of power has to be seen from the point of view of the intervention itself but also from the points of view of the local actors who use the intervention for their own ends. If humanitarianism is frequently presented as being devoid of power, power is nonetheless an inherent feature of it. Humanitarian organizations mainly rests on two types of authority (Barnett & Weiss, 2008): an ‘expert authority’, that gives them credibility because of their assumed specialized training, knowledge or experience, and a ‘moral authority’, that gives them trustworthiness based on the assumption that they speak and act on behalf of the most destitute populations. Since humanitarian actors frequently operate from a position of dominance vis-à-vis the populations they are interacting with (to the point of seeking partial control of individual behaviour), there is ground to dispute the base of their authority (which can be understood in this context as the ability of one actor to use institutional and discursive resources to induce deference from others). Do ‘beneficiaries’ actually confer humanitarian interventions an authority or is it an authority that is externally bestowed?

Much of the existing literature emphasizes the external endowment aspect. Firstly, because of their social position and symbolic standing, humanitarian agencies are among the few that have the social capacity to designate a situation as an emergency and to determine therefore which countries, groups and individuals receive attention and which do not. Secondly, by pointing out the current trend that seeks justification for limitless interventions, there is a tendency to suggest that humanitarian agencies cannot be circumvented: ‘No longer content with treating symptoms, aid organizations are now tackling the “root causes” of disease, conflict, and poverty. Toward that end, they have attempted to intervene in a nearly limitless set of social problems that demand to be catalogued, controlled, and solved’ (Barnett & Weiss, 2008).

In comparison, there is little scholarly production that focuses on the authority conferred from below and when such a perspective is discussed, it is usually to
highlight the ways in which humanitarianism is manipulated by the local elites and by current or former warlords (Hammond, 2008; Lavergne & Weissman, 2003, 2004; Rubenstein, 2008). If it is to some extent true in our case that humanitarian interventions targeting ex-combatants have de facto inherited existing patron-client relationships over which they had little control (militia and rebel leaders had after all much more say in selecting the recruits to include in the reinsertion projects than humanitarian staff), it would be worth examining the extent of manipulation of the clients themselves, regardless of the patron-client relationship. This study will examine this gap, as well as those mentioned above, by reflecting on the nature and effects of a humanitarianism which took a rather side role in two distinct war-affected environments. By placing much emphasis on the viewpoints and actions of ‘reinserted’ recruits, it will ultimately examine the extent to which ‘reinserted’ recruits (understood as recruits who have benefited from some kind of reintegration assistance) are different from ‘non-reinserted’ ones in contexts where interventionism is marginal. What role have external interventions really played in such complex processes and how did they become entangled with their respective contexts? To what extent should externally driven interventions targeting militarized civilians be conceived as special processes compared to other social processes at play in the local environment, and what are the conditions that make humanitarianism a good (or poorer) opportunity in comparison with other types of social action? These are the core questions I attempt to answer in this work. Recourse to internationally driven projects is far from being the ideal way to alleviate suffering. Yet it is a widely promoted solution and it is usually tolerated by parties in conflict. If one should not long for it, in many instances there is no way to avoid it. The challenge therefore is to find satisfactory ways to put external interventions into perspective, especially these days, when general enthusiasm for humanitarian values is turning into general scepticism.

Some theoretical reflections on war and mobilization processes

This particular section examines a neglected point in war theories, which unfortunately is too seldom brought to the fore, despite its empirical adequateness with the concept of militarized civilians. It namely reflects on the boundaries of civil war and socio-political outbursts, and on the relevance of continuing to make an analytical distinction between non-State armed groups and local vigilantes in situations where the borders have become blurred between the two. This last point is particularly relevant to make in our case for the government-controlled area, since during the period under study, most low-ranking militia elements in fact navigated between different positions according to the conflict phase and their individual skills: from local vigilante in the very beginning, to fighter or
logistician in advanced bases in the stage that followed, to more backstage positions later on, and eventually back to rural vigilantism. This observation is developed further in Chapter 8, where I give several examples of such multi-tasking. Reflecting on the boundaries of civil war and socio-political outbursts is also particularly relevant for the scope of this study given the extent of diffusion of violence in western Côte d’Ivoire: in certain areas, violence has come to permeate every layer of society and this strikingly comes out of the chronology of violent events for the western context (Chapter 5). One could therefore wonder if, in these types of ‘no war, no peace’ situations, it is possible to clearly continue distinguishing between acts of war and mere socio-political outbursts. Perhaps is it only a question of terminology? I reflect in any case on these questions below, ending the section by proposing a comprehensive categorization of theories related to violent mobilization processes. This framework will be used in the following chapters when reflecting on the respondents’ pre-war profiles and motives.

As already noted, there is something peculiar about the Ivoirian case if we compare it to other African conflicts. Despite the split of the country in 2002 and the persistence of a rebel-controlled area in the northern half of the country, the professionalization of violence has been relatively contained in Côte d’Ivoire in terms of time, space, and degree of violence. However, a worrying development nonetheless took place within the Ivoirian society and at the local level, the war has become the occasion to legitimate extensive use of minimal forms of violence, which have become extremely difficult to put to a halt. In the government-controlled areas, traditional forms of urban/rural vigilance have evolved into more sophisticated structures (better armed and usually linked to one of the main belligerent parties), and the visible proliferation of self-defence groups has re-configured many spaces, to the point of entirely changing local balances of power in certain areas. The situation in the Zone de Confiance was particularly illustrative of such power shifts, and I’ll come back to this point more specifically when presenting the immediate context. But why were the Ivoirian militarized youths not as keen as elsewhere on pursuing opportunistic careers in para-state armed groups? Or to probably put it better: why were local warlords not interested in continuing to push these youths into an armed movement? If some analysts describe Côte d’Ivoire as having engaged in a process of “miliciani-
“zation” of society, privatization of violence and militarization of the youth by the government in place’ (Banégas, 2008), there is a need to confront these claims with empirical evidence and to be particularly careful when drawing conclusions. If to some extent, one could argue that such claims held true for a certain fringe of the youth (namely, for the Young Patriots, a political movement particularly active in Abidjan and in the main urban hubs, composed of a diversity of individuals ranging from simple demonstrators to violent thugs), there is ground to question the relevance of such statements for the suppletive recruits hired close to the combat zones.

Civil war or socio-political outburst?

In countries experiencing a situation of ‘no war, no peace’, there is a time when non-State armed groups usually start giving up their purely military tasks (attack/defence) to fulfil a function of local guardian with the aim of ensuring some kind of social order in the places under their control. Translated into practice, this means that once the period of combat has passed, many of these groups do not do more in fact than what local vigilantes do, i.e. protect the direct environment of a village, a town or a neighbourhood, at least from a military perspective. The existence and persistence of such phenomena raises a number of issues. Firstly, and returning to the previous question, it points to the diversity of players in matters of local security, even if it is likely that some groups emerged during the war and that others were empowered by the internal conflict. In western Côte d’Ivoire, armed mobilization took several forms and borrowed elements from both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ institutions. On the insurgent side, it revived the long-standing semi-secret hunters’ association known as ‘dozo’ (Hagberg & Ouattara, 2010); on the counter-insurgent side, it was mainly grounded on community ways of policing and on the paramilitary structure derived from these (eventually becoming enmeshed with the national army). These ‘self-defence’ groups – this term is the most common one used to describe such movements – certainly resembled the most paramilitary structures at the peak of the counter-insurgency, and when the period of combat operations passed, they gradually gave up their purely military tasks. But it remains interesting to explore what remains of this local security apparatus in more peaceful times, by examining the extent to which these armed groups are (or not) partially

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8 It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the phenomenon of the Young Patriots in depth. For more information, I refer to the works of Banégas, Arnaut and Koné.

9 A socio-anthropological focus would have brought more to the fore the embeddedness of local vigilantes with their political environments. See for instance the work of Chauveau et al. (2011) based on other Ivorian contexts.

10 Detailed contextual information is given in Chapter 5, when describing the immediate context.
reactivated to fulfil a function of local guardian more in line with traditional forms of urban/rural vigilantism.

A second issue that such phenomena raise is that it has become very complex at the local level to distinguish between component features of civil wars and mere manifestations of social and political violence. To paraphrase Cramer (2006: 50): ‘When and on what grounds is an event defined as a war? How clear is the difference between a civil war and a political or a social outburst? And when is war not a war?’ If categorization is a necessary feature of the social sciences (without it, the social processes that scholars try to describe would simply be too diverse and complex to be understandable), one should not forget that analytical frames are socially constructed and can therefore be changed. After all, the first function of classifying and defining boundaries is to help identify patterns in the data, the boundaries can be refined. Any analytical attempt to define civil wars (by looking at the number of battle deaths, by recognizing an active armed opposition to the State, if the State is one of the main belligerents)\(^{11}\) could therefore easily be challenged since the chosen criteria generally mask important diversities of features. In fact, a main characteristic of many modern wars is that they do not have clear-cut beginnings and ends and that the modes and causes of contemporary warfare often resemble communal violence and socio-political outbursts. Reflecting on that, Cramer argues that the important point is not to advocate a rigid distinction between civil wars; firstly, because there is a great diversity within the category of civil wars itself, and secondly, because there are forms of political outburst that sometimes share more characteristics with certain civil wars than other social phenomena classified in the ‘civil war’ category (Cramer, 2006:74). In line with other scholars (Debos, 2010; Duyvesteyn, 2005; Guichaoua, 2010; Richards, 2005a, 2005b), Cramer conceptualizes reality as a spectrum of violence with overlapping brutal events. He views the concepts of ‘war’ and ‘peace’ as a continuum rather than as two distinct phases, and to him, the question is not so much to identify when, how and why a civil war turns into a socio-political outburst (the question actually

\(^{11}\) Sambanis (2004), for instance, came up with nine criteria: 1) the war must take place within the territory of an internationally recognized state with a population of more than 500,000; 2) the parties to the conflict must be politically and militarily organized with identifiable leadership and publicly stated objectives; 3) the government must be a principal combatant; 4) the main rebel groups must be locally represented and composed of local recruits (though there may be international involvement in the war); 5) the war is deemed to begin in the first year that the conflict causes 500-1,000 deaths and the war is only classed as a war if cumulative deaths over the next two years exceed 1,000; 6) the civil war must involve sustained violence, with no single year having fewer than twenty-five deaths and no three-year period having less than 500 conflict-related deaths; 7) the weaker party must be able at all times to inflict at least 100 deaths on the stronger party; 8) the war ends if it is interrupted by a peace treaty, cease-fire or decisive military outcome producing two years or more of peace; and 9) if new parties enter the war, fighting over new issues, a new war is then begun.
loses its relevance when one stops reasoning in phases), but rather when, how and why certain forms of violence emerge, increase, decrease, persist and disappear at certain periods of time and in specific settings. I tend to agree with his line of thought, which eventually renders the term ‘civil war’ obsolete.

**Mobilization processes**

Violent movements take multiple forms and vary widely across contexts in terms of size, composition, ways of functioning, strategy and their degree of connection to the State. They include insurgent and counter-insurgent groups, but also angry mobs, groups of thieves, and ‘self-defence’ movements. In terms of size, they range from tiny groups that encompass a dozen militants to mass organizations comprising thousands of recruits drawn into the war by compulsory conscription, coercion, or on a voluntary base. In Côte d’Ivoire, youth engagement took many forms across the country and there was a great disparity by regions, departments, and even neighbouring villages or towns. Some recruits wore many hats at the same time, and some navigated much more easily than others between their different affiliations. The simplest questions were not easy to answer during fieldwork: Who is a rebel/militia element? Who is a simple ‘barragiste’ (the local term for ‘vigilante’)? The confusion also reached its peak when some of the interviewed youths claimed affiliation to one category while they were generally classified in another. For instance, someone known to have done (only) vigilante work in the surroundings of his village could be referred to as a pro-government militia, and two people who fulfilled the same exact function during the war could be ‘rewarded’ very differently (I for instance met two siblings in that situation in the village of Zouan, near Guiglo. The sister was officially ‘listed’ as paramilitary recruit and had received substantial payment, while her brother did not get anything.).

The literature is particularly prolific when it comes to conceptualizing mobilization processes, and much has been written on the propensity of youth to join violent movements. Theories can be roughly divided into four stands, none of which being mutually exclusive, with some theories being given much more credit than others. There are indeed several ways to classify the existing theories but the categorization below is based on my own reflection. A first trend is based on an assumption of causality that implies that adverse structural conditions largely explain engagement with contentious politics. A second trend stresses the importance of ‘cultural-based’ elements. A (timid) third trend focuses on political geography, and a fourth trend tries to bring to the fore the influence of

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12 Beyond youth studies, this is in line with a broader trend that attempt to assert one – more or less – exclusive causal factor that explains contemporary wars.
individual emotions in explaining protest behaviour. I develop their main features below. Many of these approaches overlap, but they place different emphasis on what should be central in the research approach. I come back to this categorization in my conclusions, where I discuss it from a more epistemological perspective, but here I present the main features of each theory trend.

• Theories that emphasize a relation of causality

In a certain stream of literature, youths have been portrayed as a serious threat to the existing social order and those living in developing countries have been particularly pointed out since they represent the largest segment of the population.\textsuperscript{13} Those living in Sub-Saharan Africa have been stigmatized even further since the whole continent has gained a reputation of backwardness and state collapse, with scholars pointing out ‘spectacular experiences of social orders disintegrating’ (Kaarsholm, 2006: 1). The leading argument in these theories is based on the assumption that youths are increasingly being pushed to the margins of society. Regardless of the definition one adopts, ‘youths’ are believed to display very different characteristics than ‘non-youths’ and some ideas are firmly anchored in the popular sociology: youths would be more prone to engage in social unrest because they are expected to take up any opportunity thought to be likely to relieve them of their perceived condition of outcast (even if only for a short while). This conceptualization of youth as outcast is worth a closer look, as it points to an important shift in youth studies. From a problematic centred on the renewal of generations, Chauveau (Chauveau, 2005a, 2005b) rightly noted that the problematic has switched in recent decades to one centred on presenting the youth as an apart category. One explanation for this conceptual change is rooted in history and in the in-depth structural adjustments that occurred in African countries in the 1980s under international pressure. It is well documented that young people were particularly vulnerable to these changes by being among the first to be affected in terms of access to employment and access to studies. Linking joblessness to the propensity to join groups of contestation is therefore a step that many analysts took. But not before long, ‘idleness’ replaced ‘joblessness’ in the causal equation, conveying a notion of inherent laziness. Youths have been dichotomized in the literature, alternatively presented as ‘vanguards’ or ‘vandals’, as ‘makers’ or ‘breakers’, as if there could be no overlap between the two concepts and as if the definition of these terms was not arbitrary. One

\textsuperscript{13} One reason why youths have been set as an apart category is numeric. About half of the population is under 25 in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has led some analysts to argue that the demographic pressure is real and that one of the major stakes is to find a satisfactory way to use the bulk of this active force in a positive way.
view has emphasized their potential to be agents of positive change; the other has conceptualized them as a social problem for society. Several scholars have nevertheless warned against such oversimplification, and have seriously questioned the relevance of suggesting a causal link between the fact of being young and the fact of being more prone to violence (Abbink, 2005; Abbink & Van Kessel, 2005; Honwana & De Boeck, 2005a, 2005b).

Another influential argument in explaining youth’s engagement in violent processes is the argument of ‘blocked social mobility’ (Abbink, 2005: 16). It is linked to the preceding argument in the sense that it also assumes a causal link between the fact of being young and a certain propensity to join violent groups, but the reason explaining the link is different. It is not so much because they are ‘idle’ that youths are likely to end up in groups of contestation. They rather join in when they become aware that their room to manoeuvre has been consciously limited by the older generation AND when they judge the context opportune for certain adjustments to take place. ‘Through looting and violence, the rebellious young generation consciously “takes back” what they consider was monopolized by the older generation’ (ibid). Teinting the rationale for engaging in social action with identity concerns is in line with the current trend in social movement theories that emphasize political struggles over material ones.14 This line of reasoning is particularly significant in Africa, as African economies have a very low capacity to absorb their educated youth – there is a structural overproduction of graduates and inherent frustration over the lack of social and economic opportunities. Several scholars have based their argument along the same line, postulating that, in the past, youths had quite limited room for manoeuvre, very restricted powers of decision and were confined in making their claims heard. In contrast, today, youths are believed to have more means at their disposal to express their claims – increasing their participation in the local politics or resorting to violence being some of their options (Abbink, 2005; Abdullah, 1999, 2005; Bierschenk & Olivier De Sardan, 1998; Chauveau & Bobo, 2003; Peters & Richards, 1998; Richards, 1996). But if there are some examples that show that resorting to violence is one response to a situation of stagnation and a lack of future prospects (Abbink notably mentions the leftist urban revolt of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party in the 1970s), it should not be taken as the norm. After all, the precise dynamics of processes of mobilization remain empirically grounded, vary widely across contexts, and there are many cases where structural lacks of opportunities do not necessarily translate into political insur-}

14 Ellis & Van Kessel (2009: 3) rightly point out though that concerns over material issues remain as relevant to these struggles as they were to earlier social movements.
The ‘blocked social mobility’ argument finds much resonance in theories that rest on explaining forms of mobilization through grievance motives (Bazen-guissa-Ganga, 1996, 1999). While it has been scientifically proven on several occasions that rebellions are unlikely to be solely grievance based (Collier & Hoeffler, 2000), it is important to understand the central concepts behind grievance-based theories of conflict to be able to fully capture the complexity of violent processes of mobilization. The notions of ‘relative deprivation’ and ‘horizontal inequalities’ between groups with different characteristics stand at the core of such a line of thought, with ‘relative deprivation’ defined as the discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they actually believe they can get (in other words, the gap between people’s aspirations and achievements) and ‘horizontal inequalities’ defined as ‘inequalities between culturally defined groups’ (Stewart, 2008: 7). The most commonly used example of relative deprivation is the case of educated young men who cannot find decent employment and who eventually join violent mobs in frustration (Collier & Hoeffler, 2000; Gurr, 1970; Murshed & Tadjoeddin, 2007). Grievance-based theories of conflict therefore stress socio-economic inequalities hence poverty as a prelude to war. As Cramer pragmatically put it: ‘Where the poor have little alternative, there is little to be lost in fighting’ (Cramer, 2006: 75). Relative deprivation and horizontal inequalities are in fact thought to be important vectors of conflict in contemporary wars.

• Theories that emphasize the ‘culture of violence’ aspect

Another influential argument in explaining youth’s engagement in violent processes is the argument of the ‘cultures of violence’, which can potentially explain why the militarization of civilians in certain countries is more contained in time, space, and degree of violence than in others. For instance, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana,

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15 Collier & Hoeffler (2000) compare them to social movements that emerge in response to socio-political resentment. They are fuelled by ‘inter-ethnic/inter-religious hatred’, ‘political exclusion’, and/or ‘revenge’, but cannot subsist without predation, or they would lack the solid financial base to be able to sustain themselves. A lot has been written on greed versus grievance-based theories of conflict. Collier’s provocative findings that neither social fractionalization by ethnicity/religion nor inequality of income/assets increased the probability of civil war came under much criticism, especially in non-economist spheres. However his focus on ‘how to financially sustain a rebellion’ had the merit to emphasize money as the very heart of war. In later works, Collier refines his analysis and argues against a solely greed-based interpretation of rebellion (Collier et al., 2003; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004): ‘Loot is not usually the root motivation for conflict but may become critical to its perpetuation, giving rise to the conflict trap’ (Collier et al., 2003: 71). Predation remains central in his perspective though, and is object of fierce debate between scholars who view it as the outcome of warfare, and others who view it as the cause.

16 In such perspective, group boundaries have to be clearly defined (for instance young vs. old, or autochthones vs. foreign).

17 Yet, Cramer is a fervent critic of theories solely based on grievance rationales.
Tanzania, and Botswana have experienced a conflict of much lesser intensity than Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and even within a country itself, if we could argue the example of Côte d’Ivoire, we could argue that the southeast region was much less affected by the war than the western districts. As Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans (2009: 38-39) put it:

‘Africa is the continent in which to observe contextualized contestation (…). Countries vary in terms of the circumstances they create for contentious politics. The political opportunity structures, the openness of the political system for challengers, the access points available for people to defend their interests and express their opinions and the temporal political configuration, have all been identified as determinants of the incidence and type of protest.’

The advantage of adopting this perspective is that it clearly shows that the mere combination of lack of opportunities, demographic generational imbalance and socio-political tensions is not enough to explain extreme forms of violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. Abbink (2005: 17) pinpoints important political and sociological factors that are likely to play a role in mitigating the escalation of violent practices. He stresses the importance of a strong central state tradition and the existence of a pattern of values within society that encourages cooperation and discursive conflict mediation. He also stresses that a society used to a plurality of beliefs and multiple ethnic identities should be less likely to transmit values that promote intolerance between groups. This perspective clearly places a strong emphasis on the role of leaders and elites in promoting certain values within society (or within the social movement they represent). The central question becomes then to what extent these leaders and elites are fulfilling a role of promoting positive values that promote broad-mindedness, understanding and acceptance of other cultures, since they are also known for occasionally promoting negative ones and for regulating part of the local violence when it serves their needs. So how to analyze the ways in which values are transmitted? For Kaarsholm: ‘This involves an appreciation of the fora and discourses through which political understandings and endeavours are constituted; how these fora and discourses relate to the state and to each other in different ways, and how they change and evolve overtime’ (Kaarsholm, 2006: 13). What is suggested, in other words, is a mapping of specific public spheres to get an in-depth understanding of their mode of functioning, to investigate how the ‘local’ is constituted, changed historically and how it is used to interact with other levels of society.

Kaarsholm’s remark links up to an interesting aspect of social movement theories, the issue of framing. How are specific facts disseminated to the general public? What is the context in which a demand for action is presented? And how are such demands interpreted? Several scholars have reflected on these questioning (Ellis & Van Kessel, 2009; Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009). Because engaging in collective social processes requires some shared understand-
nings of who should act, why and how, social movements seek to affect the interpretations of the general public and of their members by the information they disseminate, a process known as ‘framing’; the maximum is therefore done to communicate how a social, political or economic change should be interpreted and what should be done about it (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009: 31). If a relatively simple and localized fact can potentially be presented by skilled leaders as something much larger, one should not forget that there is a multiplicity of players capable of framing local discourses in a given arena (political parties, armed groups, local elites, the local, national and international press, etc.). It should therefore not systematically be taken for granted that a single view predominates in a given context and different framing processes might compete against each other. This question of framing is particularly relevant for the Ivorian case since propaganda and hate speech diffused by the local media has been a political tool widely used during the period under study, a phenomenon I come back to in the Contexts sections.

As they were tainted by a number of fallacies, theories stressing the importance of political culture have been somewhat neglected in the past, and when they were brought to the fore, cultural traits were at first very broadly conceived (for instance as Dutch or French, African or Asian, Catholic or Muslim) and there was little room for nuance within such wide categories. Culture itself tended to be defined as people’s predominant beliefs and attitudes, without recognizing the multiplicity of patterns. Political culture theories also focused on elites, as they considered them the only agents capable of paving the way to the development of a political culture; they largely ignored the masses. Finally, a certain level of growth was believed to be a precondition for the development of a political culture to take place (Kaarsholm, 2006: 11). Recent theoretical efforts have brought a more critical and dialectical understanding of political culture. Firstly, there is now recognition that there might be different political cultures in a given context, and that these cultures may potentially struggle for hegemony. Secondly, ‘masses’ have been rehabilitated and are now seen as at least as important as the local elites in shaping political culture frameworks. Thirdly, it has eventually become acknowledged that poor people are not exempt from political aspirations (ibid: 11-13). The first point is particularly important since it links political cultures with theories of framing, emphasizing the multiplicity of patterns.
Theories emphasizing the importance of immediate contexts and political geography

Arjona and Kalyvas are among the few to recognize the importance of political geography in explaining mobilization processes. Drawing on a study of counter-insurgent groups in Colombia, they found that the ability of armed organizations to rule specific areas has an important effect on the willingness of individuals to join in. In other words, local territorial sovereignty would be an important dimension of recruitment in civil wars and would continue to matter as the conflict evolves overtime:

‘A country in the midst of civil war is best conceptualized as a fragmented territory and the ensuing “micro-orders” are characterized by varying standards of governance established by the ruling armed groups. (…) A person is most likely to make the decision to join an armed group if she lives in a micro-order where that group has consolidated its power and the majority of the community has embraced its rules. This is most likely to occur in localities where the group has engaged in a comprehensive type of rule – i.e. if combatants are able to establish a monopoly of the use of violence and rule over other aspects of human interaction.’ (Arjona & Kalyvas, 2009)

It might sound self-evident, yet it is striking to note how theories stressing the importance of local territorial sovereignty are downplayed in the literature, in comparison with theories that rest on assumptions of causality. If one could argue that armed groups might conquer areas that are already receptive to them for a host of structural reasons, others could oppose that it is only a matter of geographic and military factors, and that it is an empirical question after all. But in both cases, whoever controls a given place is likely to have some influence on people’s behaviour. Such way of theorizing rehabilitates the importance of local processes of mobilization in explaining the rise and fall of social movements (these have lagged far behind explanations that emphasized the grievance and structural aspects). It is linked to political cultures theories in the sense that they also emphasize processes of framing and people’s perceptions, but it seems to be less rooted historically and more subject to drastic reversals (in a contested territory, the ruling armed group can be rather quickly replaced by another). These theories find particular resonance in our case and will mostly be exemplified in Chapter 7, when reflecting on motives to join armed groups.

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18 Political geography is the field of human geography that is concerned with the study of both the spatially uneven outcomes of political processes and the ways in which political processes are themselves affected by spatial structures (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_geography).
• Theories bringing to the fore the influence of emotions for explaining protest behaviour

Collective action is a group phenomenon rather than an individual one and conflict can probably not solely be explained from individualist perspectives (Cramer, 2006: 108). But because in the end individuals themselves decide whether or not to join an armed group (when they are not being coerced) or whether or not they would like to enter a project, it is necessary to examine what connects the individual to the collective and the influence of individual emotions on protest behaviour. Identification seems to be one answer:

‘People participate not so much because of the outcome associated with participation but because they identify with the other participant. Group identification changes the focus from what “I” want to what “we” want. Collective action participation is seen as a way to show who “we” are and what “we” stand for, and people experience commitment and solidarity with other members of the group. In addition, group members have the idea that “we” have much in common (by way of shared grievances, aims, values or goals). Group identification seems to be a powerful reason for participating in protest.’ (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009: 32-33)

People have many social identities. What therefore makes some repertoires central to mobilization and others not? Probably the most powerful factor that comes to mind when bringing individuals together in some kind of membership is conflict or rivalry between groups, the so-called ethnic, religious or political wars. Western Côte d’Ivoire is particularly propitious to such development as there are many stakes associated to the control of land and a historical background of contested autochthonous and non-autochthonous rights. But this cannot explain why violence occurs only at particular times and places, and why, even at such times and in such places, only some people participate in it and others do not. There is therefore the need to look beyond the influence of social identities and to try to provide clues on differential responses to the same structural conditions.

Why do people act so differently despite sharing similar characteristics and originating from the same contexts? Why are some aggrieved and not others? Why do some feel afraid and ashamed where some feel empowered and proud? Social constructivists attempt to draw on explanations founded in emotions to seek to uncover interpretation and meaning. The main argument here is that structural explanations are limited, because individuals who are in the same structural position do not necessarily display identical behaviour (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009: 30). When they do, their motivational background and accompanying emotions can be very different. Little is known about the influence of emotions on protest behaviour, and there has been little research on the complex emotional processes that channel fear and anger into moral indignation, political activity and violence (probably because these are very complex
phenomena which are very complicated to research). Yet it is acknowledged that emotions permeate all phases in participation in social movements: they inform behaviour at the recruitment stage, during the stay within the group, and when a participant drops out (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009: 32-33). Because emotions propel behaviour, if one wants to understand engagement in collective action, one must understand how emotions work. Obviously, emotions can be manipulated. Goodwin, Jasper & Polleta (cited in Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009) argue that emotions are socially constructed, but that ‘some emotions are more constructed than others’. Other persuasive scholars have also stressed that participation in social action is rooted in a notion of belonging (identification with a group), in experienced grievances (influenced by processes of framing), and in emotions that initiate action. In western Côte d’Ivoire, the fact that being exposed to the same trouble did not automatically translate into participation in violent action is worth careful consideration.

Concluding remarks

The contexts under study and the data collected during fieldwork have brought to the fore a series of phenomena that are so far under-theorized for situations where post-conflict intervention plays a side role in the local system. This chapter has called into question several analytical categories (the distinction between militia and local vigilante and the dichotomy between civil war and political outburst). It has also uncovered some conceptual gaps that this study will attempt to fill (the genuine effects humanitarianism has in environments where post-conflict interventions do not play such a central role in the immediate environment, the extent of manipulation of the intervention by the clients themselves going beyond the simple patron-client relation, the extent of a possible indigenous recovery with regards to the demilitarization of civilians), and it intuitively hopes to strengthen timid theory trends that conceptualize the propensity of the youth to join violent movements (namely those theories emphasizing the importance of immediate contexts in explaining engagement, and those focusing on the influence of emotions).

But if we want to understand local processes of mobilization/demobilization well, it is important to place contentious movements into perspective by exploring the extent to which particular mobilizing contexts have been shaped by their historicity and local context. Several scholars have in fact argued that answers to questions such as who protests, why people protest and the forms that contention takes, lie in the interaction of supranational processes, national political processes and local immediate contexts (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2009: 37). Different spatial and temporal locations would therefore give birth to different forms of action. In the following section, I particularly explore the
second factor – the interaction of national political processes with the dynamics of non-State armed groups – since national political processes have, in the opinion of many, played a major role in leading Côte d’Ivoire into war, and in fostering a situation of ‘no war, no peace’ for several years. I also put humanitarianism in Côte d’Ivoire into perspective by emphasizing its relative recentness and by reflecting on the place it took as post-conflict interventions gradually started becoming enmeshed in the national politics.