



Police Murders and Violence against National Police Officers in Abidjan (Ivory Coast)

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Abstract

The study aims to analyze the relationship between police blunders and violence against police officers in Abidjan. Based on the theory of defiance, the working hypothesis maintains that the violence exerted against police officers appears as a self-defense reaction to the illegitimate exercise of force by certain police officers. One hundred and sixty (160) people determined using the reasoned choice method participated in the survey. The collection and data collection techniques are interview, observation, questionnaire and documentary research. Our investigations show that violence against National Police officers in Abidjan most often occurs during dynamic situations (demonstration, riot, crowd, etc.) between security forces and citizens, in which citizens protest against the use of force by the police. Indeed, some police officers, using the power conferred on them by legislation to repress certain actions of citizens, often act beyond the legal framework. This use of police force, which does not obey the founding principles of the use of force, in particular proportionality, legality, responsibility and necessity, is not accepted by the populations who are victims of it. Thus, the violence exercised against police officers appears as a self-defense reaction to the illegitimate exercise of force by certain police officers.

Subject Areas

Criminal Sociology

Keywords

Violence, Police Blunders, Proportionality, Legality, Responsibility, State of Necessity, Abidjan, Ivory Coast

1. Introduction

Urban violence in African agglomerations has taken on such proportions, espe-

cially over the last fifteen years or so, with particular mention for the last five, whether it is Black Africa or White Africa, North Africa or Southern Africa, relatively rich Africa or desperately poor Africa [1]. This violence has led to many dysfunctions and profound social changes in these African societies [2]. Given these negative consequences, violence has been and continues to be a major concern [3] in African countries such as Côte d'Ivoire. In Côte d'Ivoire, specifically in the city of Abidjan, the phenomenon of violence is omnipresent in several sectors of activity, particularly in transport [2], in the street ([4] [5] [6] [7]), at school [8], at university [9], in the army ([10] [11]), etc. As a result, violence is at the center of attention in the district of Abidjan, especially since today it is one of the attacks carried out against certain professional groups assigned to public nature, in particular police officers. These attacks against police officers in Abidjan very often take place in response to the exercise of illegitimate violence by the police. This police violence considered an illegitimate manifestation of force is obviously not provided for by law, and therefore is not accepted by some individuals. Facts reported by newspapers account for this violence exercised against police officers in response to the use of force by police officers: *“The rebellion of the people against the police in general and more particularly the National Police of Côte d'Ivoire is imminent... I am not the instigator even if I am for it, however, just listen to individuals living on Ivorian territory. Everyone is fed up. Via the burrs and attacks on people living in Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivorian police have climbed, in my opinion, all the levels of ‘inhuman’ stupidity by taking pleasure in beating up people, from the most insignificant person to glory worldwide such as our National Dad Laurent Pokou. What is most shocking to me is the futility of the causes of these despicable, uneducated acts. It is sad to see that people in Abidjan, for example, at the sight of a police roadblock, instead of feeling safe, systematically become anxious, not knowing the next invention of the police. So much so that I wonder if the evil is not deeper than we think? How are they selected? How are they formed? What are their specifications on the ground? The code of ethics of the National Police is explicit. I therefore conclude that, if the police continue to extort and humiliate the citizens of this country, it is because they know that they will not be worried,”* said Mr. C. B., a respondent. Several national and international organizations, including Human Rights, Amnesty International, Wanep-ci, have decried the behavior and attitudes of men in uniform in terms of violence, affront to dignity and the integrity of populations. *“On Tuesday, October 30, in front of the police compound facing the Ministry of Defense on the plateau (Abidjan), elements of the security forces parents of students, mostly women, who came to denounce cheating during the entrance examination to the Preparatory and Technical Military School (EMPT) session 2012. Result: several injured including two women and a young person”* [12]. *“Near the great mosque of Adjamé, CECOS elements who arrived in vehicles no. 33 and 34 to carry out a police operation to check his identity and severely beat a young 15-year-old street vendor whom they had demanded the payment of the*

sum of 5000 FCFA. His employer, who had intervened to ask elements of the Security Operations Command Center (CECOS) to stop beating the young boy, was also violently beaten. Having lost consciousness, the victim of Niger nationality was evacuated by the care of the Embassy of Niger to the Hospital and University Center (CHU) of Treichville. The medical certificate drawn up there mentions, among other injuries, head trauma” [13]. Press organs have also reported on the violence inflicted on police officers: “The atmosphere was overheated yesterday in Adjamé Liberté around 7 p.m. A policeman attacked by a mob was murdered. According to the witnesses of these horrible acts, a mini bus ensuring the Adjamé-Bingerville line was to convey its customers to Adjamé Renault. Arrived at Adjamé Liberté, the apprentice of the vehicle orders his passengers to get off because his boss would no longer go to the usual terminus. This information angers passengers. An altercation then ensued between a passenger (a policeman who had been waiting for his change for a long time) and the driver of the vehicle. According to our sources, the man in uniform had given the sum of 500 francs and was waiting for the apprentice to return 200 francs to him as change. Another driver who came to inquire about the news takes the side of his colleague and speaks strongly to the policeman. Upset by the humiliation of his interlocutor, the policeman shoots him on the spot and flees. But no pot for him, because he will quickly be overtaken by a raging crowd like a single man who knocks him out with clubs and pieces of bricks. According to our sources, the police officer succumbed to these injuries” remarks published by Mr. J.Z. “The clash between gbaka (mini car) drivers and police left two dead on Sunday evening in the town of Adjamé in the center of Abidjan, reports a new assessment of this incident. According to this new report given to APA by security sources, the policeman who had been seriously injured finally succumbed to his injuries in a medical center in Abidjan where he had been evacuated in a ‘comatose and unconscious’ state. A gbaka driver had been killed a little earlier in the sector of 220 housing units in the town of Adjamé by this deceased policeman after a scuffle during which the police officer uses his gun. The police officer was then ‘taken to task and lynched’ by the driver’s colleagues before being ‘exfiltrated’ in a ‘comatose’ state and evacuated to a medical center. This incident ‘plunged’ Adjamé into a boiling situation, each side visibly seeking revenge” remarks reported by Mr. H.G., a respondent.

This phenomenon has justified that scientific studies be devoted to the search for its determinants. Indeed, several authors have hypothesized the explanation of the violence exercised against police officers in relation to police blunders. To this end, Sherman [14] maintains that this form of violence occurs when the State through its representatives performs acts that certain populations weakly integrated into society consider unjust. They revolt all the more easily when they are weakly integrated into society and do not fear punishment, or even feel a certain pride in transgression. Thus, in the event of police blunders, the reaction of certain citizens in the form of violence has become almost systematic. This is

very logical, according to Vaillant [15] who specifies that violence always begets violence. As a result, Doumbia [16] emphasizes that this form of violence is a co-production between citizens and law enforcement. Because it is a joint action in which citizens and police can be aggressors or victims and move from one role to another during the same event. Thus, it occurs in situations of role contestation where each actor tries to maintain or save face [17]. These situations of contestation, when they are repeated, create conflicting antecedents between citizens and populations, which thus promotes the crystallization of antagonisms. Such conflicting antecedents, according to Doumbia [16], generate a cleavage between police and populations which, memorized, will be updated during subsequent encounters in the form of revenge to be taken or the phenomenon of scapegoating. All these elements underline the responsibility that the police officer has in the emergence of the violence exerted against the police forces. It is the practical knowledge that the police officer has of his job that guides his behavior in the field. This is at least the hypothesis defended by Della & Reiter [18]. But, contrary to the assertions of these authors, Waddington [19] points out that the actions of field agents are coordinated by a single command, which eliminates their power of discretion. Consequently, the actions of agents are the product of a triadic relationship between political authority, police and citizens [20]. The police is certainly an instrument of power, but also a professional body with its codes and interests, and a public service. The terms of the debate are identical in many African countries where, as in Côte d'Ivoire, the majority of studies remain captivated by the distinction between professional and non-professional forces [21]. Considering it according to one dimension while ignoring the others is reductionism [22]. A fruitful study of violence against police officers should therefore take into account, on the one hand, the resistance put up by individuals and, on the other, the perception and interpretation they have of the police threat. On these two levels, interaction ([23] [24] [25] [26]) and meaning, symbolic interactionism offers the necessary keys for such an understanding. Thus, it appears that the violence against police officers is the consequence of a dynamic situational transaction between security forces and citizens, in which the two actors, protesters and police, resort to non-incapacitating weapons, where stones the former respond to tear gas from the latter.

It therefore appears that violence against police officers has multiple causes. It occurs despite the violence prevention strategy and the sensitization of the populations to respect for public force implemented by the State and its strategic partners, in particular the regulatory framework aimed at sanctioning violence against police officers. To this end, Articles 256 and 257 of the Ivorian Penal Code provide that violence against police officers in the performance of their duties is punishable. These are, in this case, offenses of “rebellion” (Article, 258 of the Penal Code), “contempt” (Article, 251 of the Penal Code) and violence against the agents of the public force and possibly “crimes against the internal security of the State”. Article 174 of the Penal Code is also applicable and targets

a particular form of slander and insults against a depository of authority. In addition to these legal provisions, the Ivorian State, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), has implemented a series of projects to promote rapprochement between the forces of order and the populations, in particular, “the project to support reconciliation between the population and the National Police of Côte d’Ivoire”, and the “Support Project for Urban Security (PASU)”. In addition, the State has initiated activities relating to the restoration of confidence between the police and the population, and the reduction of the feeling of insecurity. These are based in particular on the development of community partnerships between law enforcement and local communities through the Communal Security Committees (CSS) set up in the municipalities of Abidjan and the Ivorian Forum for Security (FISU) set up and tested by PASU in recent years [27].

However, despite these state and non-state initiatives and the awareness-raising carried out [27], police officers are at the center of attacks [16]. They suffer violence from certain populations. From this point of view, we can ask: why despite these devices, the police officers are attacked? It is therefore to answer this question that we are conducting this research to analyze reactionary violence to police blunders. The specific objectives assigned to the study revolve around a dual approach: to describe the acts of violence committed against police officers and to identify their determinants. To achieve these objectives, the following hypothesis will be verified: the violence exercised against police officers appears as a self-defense reaction to the illegitimate exercise of force by certain police officers. To account for the object of study, we used the theory of defiance proposed by Sherman [14], to explain that the use of force by the police is at the origin of violence exercised against police officers. This theory therefore makes it possible to understand that acts of violence exerted against the police appear as movements of revolt against the police. They occur most often when police officers perform acts that certain populations weakly integrated into society consider unfair. They revolt all the more easily when they are weakly integrated into society and do not fear punishment, or even feel a certain pride in transgression. Then, the studied phenomenon can be apprehended by the theory of defiance.

2. Methods

The methodology presents the investigation sites and the study participants, the investigation tools and the data analysis methods.

2.1. Sites and Participants

The city of Abidjan constitutes the field of investigation of our study. This choice is due to several reasons. The city of Abidjan has 36 police stations and police districts, for a total staff of approximately 1800 officers. This security system makes the city of Abidjan a privileged place where we could carry out investigations with a larger population of police officers. Also, the various communes

of Abidjan were the scene of violent clashes between the police and the population [27]. In addition, the city of Abidjan, it should be remembered, was one of the cities most seriously affected by the post-electoral crisis of 2010-2011, the consequences of which are still vivid, despite the efforts made by the authorities, to strengthen social cohesion. Indeed, Abidjan constitutes a vast cosmopolitan space in which promiscuity, and the rise of precarious neighborhoods (the UNDP establishes that 20% of the population of the district of Abidjan live in some 143 precarious neighborhoods, which cover at least 2% of the city) and the idleness of a predominantly young population pose major security challenges. During the post-election crisis, the conflict in urban areas evolved into community violence, with strong involvement of young people, due to the instrumentalization of ethnic and/or political fiber by political protagonists [28]. Finally, the statistical information of recent years from the activity reports of the General Directorate of the National Police and the police stations for the city of Abidjan drew our attention. Indeed, the balance sheet of activities from 2011 to 2012 shows an evolving trend in the number of offences. We went from 26,426 known facts in 2011 to 111,756 in 2012, a difference of 85,330 offences, with the appearance of facts such as kidnappings, economic and financial crime, the phenomenon of “microbes”. In addition, on average only 6.80% of recorded offenses are resolved [29].

In view of all the above, the city of Abidjan was chosen to carry out our investigations related to the phenomenon of violence against National Police officers. But, not being able to carry out the study in the twelve (12) municipalities of the city of Abidjan, we decided to privilege during our investigations, a certain number of municipalities which could help us to better understand the phenomenon. It is within this framework that our choice fell on four (4) communes of the city of Abidjan which are: the communes of Adjamé, Abobo, Cocody and Yopougon, as specific fields of investigation. The choice of these different municipalities is explained by the fact that the municipality of Adjamé ranks 3rd among the municipalities of Abidjan in terms of drug consumption [30]. Drugs known to be hard (cocaine and heroin) appeared there during the 1990s. “Dealers” and consumers established their activities around the right-of-way of the railway, an unserved sector therefore difficult to access, isolated and dangerous [31]. In the commune of Cocody, we are witnessing a type of “nomadic criminality” [32]. Cocody therefore seems to be the municipality of Abidjan most affected by the phenomenon. This is confirmed by data from the National Police which show that in 2009 nearly 25% of armed car thefts in the capital took place in Cocody, followed by 20% in Yopougon [32]. The municipality of Yopougon is the largest with 153 km² on which some 1,071,543 people live including at least 56% under the age of 20 [33]. Supposed to be close to the old regime, this commune sheltered, before and during the post-election crisis, various groups of militias supported by many Liberian auxiliaries. This commune alone concentrated much of the political and military violence that took place during the nine years

of crisis in Côte d'Ivoire [34]. The municipality of Abobo and its 1,030,658 inhabitants [33], is presented as a dormitory town hosting most of the low-income populations of the city of Abidjan. Lacking a real industrial fabric, it concentrates a low-skilled and unemployed youth, in a local socio-economic context marked by the preponderance of the informal sector and crafts as the main sources of household income. These different municipalities by their specific characteristics seem sufficient to allow us to carry out our study and try to better understand the phenomenon studied. The choice of the survey population obeyed a concern for the diversification of data sources. A total of 160 people from different social categories as mentioned below were interviewed. Consulting the population was a challenge in itself, given not only the groups and individuals targeted by these consultations, but also the mistrust and suspicion that tend to characterize the relationships between the groups or individuals targeted and the students. These difficulties explain the size of our sample. This survey population was obtained from judgment sampling. The choice of this method was motivated by the freedom it gives the researcher to interview people with the characteristics required for the survey. The target population is made up of people living in the various communes surveyed in the city of Abidjan. Thus, the following target groups that were selected for the purpose of the survey are recorded in **Table 1**.

2.2. Investigative Tools

To collect information on this phenomenon, the investigation tools that were used are documentary research, questionnaire, observation and interview. The documentary research used information collected in documents such as specialized journals, books, archives, reports (Amnesty International, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI), National Commission for Human Rights in Côte d'Ivoire (CNDHCI)), press articles, university works, as well as data statistics available. The documentary research, although having been very useful in our research, showed certain limitations that other data collection instruments have corrected, such as observation, questionnaire and interview. As for the observation, it consisted on the one hand in noting in the answers to the questions put to the respondents the indicators of violence (injuries, assaults and murders, assassinations, intentional beatings, incivility, insults, confrontations, fights, threats, etc.) circumscribed in space and time; and on the other hand, to observe the clashes between unions and National Police officers on several sites, in particular the Félix Houphouët-Boigny University, the Adjamé station, etc. Also, the questionnaire addressed to police officers, transport auxiliaries, etc., was chosen to know the life experience of these subjects vis-à-vis the phenomenon. Finally, the individual and semi-structured interview was retained. This technique has the advantage of allowing the respondent to express themselves freely on a given subject, in the words they wish and in the order that suits them without dispersing themselves

Table 1. Survey sample.

Social Categories	Workforce
Police officers (policemen, policewomen, commissioners)	90
Trade unions (Student and School Federation of Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI), National Union of Land Carriers (SNTT), National Federation of United Drivers' Unions of Côte d'Ivoire (FENASCU-CI), the inter-union of professional organizations transports)	08
Transport auxiliaries (apprentices, gnambrôs, bacrômans)	10
Road users	15
Traders	07
Political parties (Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR), Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), etc.)	13
Agents from the Ministry of Interior and Security, the Ministry of Transport	09
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for the defense of humanrights (National Commission for Human Rights in Côte d'Ivoire (CNDHCI), International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDHO), Ivorian League of Human Rights (LIDHO), Ivorian Human Rights Movement (MIDH), etc.)	08
Total	160

Source: Survey, 2016.

and without deviating from the main subject. Indeed, the interlocutors were interviewed using an interview guide developed in advance in order to collect information from our respondents, in particular trade unions, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), political parties, etc. They shared with us their perceptions, their interpretations, their experiences, their concerns, but also their needs and proposed solutions.

2.3. Data Analysis Methods

The data collected was analyzed and processed quantitatively using data processing software (use of SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 22) and qualitatively. Indeed, the qualitative analysis made it possible to better understand the experience of the respondents in terms of practices, meanings, perceptions of the violence exercised against police officers and to identify the logic of the actors, as well as their ideas expressed. It also made it possible to analyze the data relating to the opinions, opinions and speeches of the people met. As for the quantitative analysis, it was of significant use insofar as it made it possible to group the data from the questionnaire using computer software. Through this software, the data collected was transformed into descriptive and inferential statistics. Based on calculations, statistical tables, graphs, and statistical tests, the object of study was explained.

3. Results

The results of the study present the manifestations of violence against the agents of the national police and the police blunders which are at the origin of this violence.

3.1. Manifestations of Violence against Police Officers

On a sample of 90 members of the National Police of all ranks whose age varies from 24 to 56 years, the proportion of people who have been victims of violence is recorded in **Table 2**.

3.1.1. Prevalence, Periodicity and Forms of Violence

According to the results in **Table 2**, 66.67% of respondents claim to have been victims of violence. On the other hand, 33.33% of respondents declared that they had not been victims of violence. In general, it appears that the majority of police officers surveyed (66.67%) claim to have been victims of violence. Also, during our interviews, we noticed that the respondents who claimed not to have been victims of violence personally, nevertheless witnessed the victimization of a colleague directly. With this information, the existence of violence against police officers in Abidjan is reinforced. In addition, in order to better understand their existence, we studied two (2) variables retracing the periodicity of the violence exerted against the agents of the National Police throughout the professional experience of our respondents (during the career and recently). The 66.67% of respondents who say they have been victims of violence emphasize that their victimizations took place during their career. **Table 3** shows these forms of violence. The most important are blows (33.33%), threats against relatives (21.70%), boos (16.60%) and injuries. physically (15%). In addition, they also attest to having experienced recent victimizations (during the last twelve (12) months). The most significant forms of violence suffered are made up of being pulled/pushed (30%), being beaten (18.33%) and personal threats (15%). All the data presented confirms that violence against National Police officers is not just a recent phenomenon. They have been present throughout their career. In addition,

Table 2. Victimization of respondents.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Valid	Yes	60	66.66	66.7
	No	30	33.33	33.3
	Total	90	99.99	100.0
Missing	System	0	0	
Total		90	100.0	

Source: Survey, 2016.

Table 3. Victimization of the respondent during his career and types of violence suffered.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
	Physical injuries	9	15	15
	Insults	4	6.66	6.7
	Personal threats	4	6.66	6.7
Valid	Threats against family members	13	21.67	21.7
	Gets booed	10	16.67	16.6
	Receiving blows	20	33.33	33.3
	Total	60	99.99	100.0
Missing	System	0	0.0	
Total		60	100.0	

a particularity of this violence is that it also occurs outside service hours and sometimes concerns members of their families. This violence is declined under several modes in relation to which, they receive their qualification. It is therefore verbal, physical, and psychological violence. According to the survey data, the violence observed is: verbal violence (31.25%), physical violence (47.5%), and psychological violence (21.25%). We then sought to find out the frequency, places and populations at risk of this violence.

3.1.2. Frequencies, Places and Populations at Risk of Violence

According to field data, 55.70% of National Police officers who are victims of violence have been victimized several times in the last twelve (12) months. And 44.30% say they have been victims of violence several times a year. This information reflects the recurrence of violence against National Police officers. They are of various forms and more frequent from one given place to another. It is this aspect of the phenomenon that leads us to determine the places most at risk for the occurrence of this violence among our respondents. **Table 4** presents the opinions of respondents (police officers) regarding the places most at risk. According to these respondents, this violence takes place: during interventions (41.11%), during missions (22.22%), during traffic (16.67%), at home (11.11%) and in police stations (8.89%). It generally emerges from the analysis of these data that violence against National Police officers occurs most often during interventions and missions (63.33%). But what about the groups most at risk? The National Police officers who are most at risk of being victims of violence according to our respondents are young police officers (37.78%), female police officers (23.33%), former police officers (22.22%), and police administrators (16.67%). Young police officers (37.78%) are the group most victims of violence. This is explained by the fact that this category has limited competence of the

Table 4. Places most at risk according to respondents.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Valid	Police stations	8	8.88	8.89
	During the missions	20	22.22	22.22
	During the interventions	37	41.11	41.11
	The circulation	15	16.66	16.67
	Home	10	11.11	11.11
	Total	90	99.98	100.0
Missing	System	0	0	0
Total		90	99.98	100.0

Source: Survey, 2016.

police function. We confirm this analysis with the following statements: “*We made statistics, we saw that on the last 6 cases practically, it was young people from the promotions 2002-2004. I have been informed that there have been accelerated one-year training. While most of you have had 2 years of training. I am delighted that we are resuming the two-year training*”, remarks by Minister Hamed BAKAYOKO, Minister of State, Minister of the Interior and Security. It is this lack of professionalism of young police officers that makes them the group most at risk of violence against National Police officers. Also, the respondents pointed out to us that most often during interventions, it is the young police officers who essentially constitute the intervention units. This is because young police officers are the most zealous, trained in endurance and excessive roughness at the expense of conflict reduction training.

3.1.3. Perpetrators and Weapons Used to Commit the Violence

The various observations and interviews carried out in the investigation areas revealed that the violence perpetrated against National Police officers in the city of Abidjan involves various perpetrators, the main ones being: trade unions, transport auxiliaries (apprentices, gnambrôs, bacrômans), road users, shopkeepers, police officers, and political parties. The data relating to the perpetrators of violence against National Police officers are recorded in **Table 5**. The analysis of **Table 5** shows that various perpetrators are at the origin of the violence exerted against the agents of the National Police. These are political parties (30%), trade unions (18.75%), road users (15%), transport auxiliaries (12.5%), traders (13.75%), and the police (10%). It generally emerges from the analysis of the data that political parties and trade unions (48.75%) are the main perpetrators of violence against National Police officers in Abidjan.

3.2. Police Blunders Determining Violence against Police Officers

3.2.1. Illegal Use of Force by the Police

The State is responsible for providing discretionary internal security, that's to

Table 5. Perpetrators of violence.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Valid	Trade unions	30	18.75	18.75
	Transport auxiliaries (apprentices, gnambrôs, bacrômans, etc.)	20	12.50	12.50
	Road users	24	15	15
	Traders	22	13.75	13.75
	The police men	16	10	10
	Political parties	48	30	30
	Total	160	99.99	100.0
Missing	System	0	0	0
Total		160	99.99	100.0

Source: Survey, 2016.

say the regulation of relations between people within the State. It also provides external security, which consists of protecting citizens against attacks from other states or citizens from other states. The state thus has a monopoly on the exercise of legitimate physical violence in the name of this security. This explains why security is often considered a sovereign competence of the State. This sovereign competence of the State is exercised by these legal representatives such as the Police, the Gendarmerie, the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI). As a representative of the State, within the meaning of the following articles of the Ivorian Constitution of 2016: Article 39 *“the defense of the Nation and the integrity of the territory is a duty for every Ivorian. It is ensured exclusively by national defense and security forces under the conditions determined by law”*. And Article 45 *“Every citizen, vested with a public mandate or responsible for a public job or a public service mission, has the duty to accomplish it with competence, conscience and loyalty. He must be honest, impartial and neutral”*. The police officer's mission is to ensure compliance with the law and rules in force in society. The safety of goods and people nevertheless remains the core of its mission. As a result, he has the right to carry out any form of verification and monitoring. This is why he is present everywhere, at any time, and for any security reason. By virtue of his powers, he finds irregularities, sanctions at the first level the perpetrators of offenses against the criminal law, ensure the maintenance and restoration of public order. Therefore, it is called law enforcement. This designation emphasizes the fact that the police officer in the exercise of these functions can use force and violence to compel citizens to maintain order and security.

But contrary to the legitimate use of violence, it is common, according to respondents and observations in the field, that the police are involved in numerous abuses, blunders, etc. Indeed, some police officers, using the power conferred on

them by legislation to repress certain actions by citizens, often act beyond the legal framework. In this regard, we were able to collect the following statements from certain citizens and from certain documents during our investigations: “*The police are sometimes responsible for the violence they suffer. They do not respect the rights of the citizens that we are, they sometimes despise us*”, remarks reported by a trader M. B. C. “*All those who committed these acts will be brought before the military tribunal. We will also engage the responsibility of their leaders on the administrative level. That is why I value your consideration of this message. It’s our image, your image, it’s our outfit, it’s your outfit that’s at stake. It’s not acceptable that in less than three months there have been at least six cases of this type of smudge or men and women have been killed by the use of police weapons. We made statistics, we saw that on the last 6 cases practically, it was young people from the promotions 2002-2004. I was informed that he had accelerated one-year training. While most of you have had 2-year training*” about the former Minister of State, Minister of Interior and Security Hamed Bakayoko to the police. “*To express their dissatisfaction following the death last Monday of one of their own, gbaka drivers observed a work stoppage yesterday on the Adjamé-Abobo highway line. The inhabitants of the commune of Abobo had difficulty yesterday, at least the users of the minicars commonly called ‘gbakas’, to make their trips. The reason, the death of a gbaka driver from the Adjamé-Abobo highway line last Monday, following a strong intervention by the Security Operations Command Center (CCDO). Indeed, according to witnesses, the driver of gbaka arrested by the police refused to comply. A chase ensued which finally ended with the arrest of the unscrupulous driver. The latter, without any other form of trial, was beaten up by the police. The unfortunate man, following this beating, passed from life to death*” comments reported by J. P., a teacher. “*The gbaka driver was killed following a police blunder, when a third source claims that two drivers were killed. Beaten up, they succumbed a few hours later as a result of these abuses. Informed of the death of their colleague, the drivers would have gone in large numbers to the place of this assassination to protest. Also, to disperse them, a gendarme would have fired a warning shot which unfortunately will cause a second victim among the demonstrators. Reached by telephone, Mr. Yacou Diakité, president of the collective said that the deceased driver is called Louan Sidibé. He worked on the Adjamé-Abobo Autoroute line. ‘The driver was arrested by members of the CCDO. He refused to comply. After a chase, the CCDO agents put the grab on him. Beaten up, he died and was taken to the HMA morgue’. Our attempts to contact a secure source were unsuccessful. This troubled situation caused an increase in transport costs on the Adjamé-Abobo line via the highway. Yesterday Tuesday, the trip on this axis cost 500 francs instead of the usual 150 CFA francs*” remarks reported by Miss R. K., a journalist. “*On the night of May 11 to 12, an alleged bandit was fatally shot by elements of CECOS, at the Adjamé market. Surprised by the local population while he was stealing, he fled and found himself face to face with Se-*

curity Operations Command Center (CECOS) elements on foot patrol, who used their firearms. On June 22, around 4 p.m., CECOS elements were killed without warning four (4) individuals who were about to attack a trader living in Agban village in the commune of Attécoubé in Abidjan. Their bodies could not be identified for a lack of identity documents. On August 5, two (2) alleged thieves were killed by Port-Bouët police. A passerby was fatally injured in the exchange of fire between the police and these alleged bandits. This police blunder was not properly investigated by the competent authorities” [13]. “On June 22, a lady of Nigerian nationality, manager of a bar located at the wharf of the port area, was arrested with her employees, beaten in the face and dragged to the ground by a police officer on patrol following a violent altercation between a Russian sailor and the bar guard. This altercation was due to the non-payment of the fees for the use of the bar toilets by the sailor” comments reported by UNOCI [13].

In view of these remarks, it is undeniable that the use of force by the police is a thorny subject in the population and it occupies an important place in the media. The main role of the police is to protect the population. This role allows the police officer, in the circumstances determined by law, to deprive a citizen of liberty. They also have the right to use force against individuals who present a serious and immediate danger to others. However, as Montesquieu [35], so aptly said, “every man who exercises power is led to abuse it”. The use of a certain level of force always entails risks for both the police and the citizens. The execution of the power therefore faces a certain risk that must be kept in mind. Thus, he must only intervene as a last resort when there is a serious and immediate danger. Moreover, in order to protect citizens from abuse of power and to ensure the legitimacy of police actions, several control mechanisms have been put in place. In this regard, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was adopted on December 16, 1966, by the General Assembly of the United Nations with a view to strengthening the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified on March 26, 1992 by the Côte d’Ivoire establishes the rules and regulations governing the use of firearms by the police and security forces: “*The use of force and firearms incorporates respect for international human rights standards and national legislation in Ivory Coast. It must be done with strict respect for proportionality, legality, responsibility and necessity*” (Article, 224). Thus, the use of force by the police must obey (4) principles: proportionality, legality, responsibility and necessity. We therefore sought to find out whether these founding principles of the use of force by the police were respected in Abidjan.

3.2.2. Failure to Respect the Principle of Proportionality in the Use of Force by the Police

The principle of proportionality is a principle of law. It is mentioned in title III of the Ivorian Penal Code in chapter II, where it is a question of the causes which remove the offense. Article 100 of this Code stipulates: “*There is no offense when the facts are commanded by the present necessity of defending oneself or*

others or a property legally protected against an unjust attack, provided that the latter cannot be excluded otherwise and that the defense is concomitant and proportionate to the circumstances, in particular to the danger and the gravity of the attack, the importance and the value of the property attacked.” The proportionality principle is one of the founding elements of self-defence. It constitutes a justifying fact making it possible to respond with violence to current and unjust aggression directed against oneself, persons or property. Applied to the use of force by the police during interventions, it requires the police to match the degree of force they use with the level of resistance offered by the offender. In addition, there are certain elements which may justify the use of force. These elements are based on the overall analysis of a situation by the police officer. This analysis is thus based on the assessment of all the components of the situation. It therefore allows police officers to analyze and assess a situation, to choose among reasonable options and to intervene in order to ensure their own safety and that of the public. Explicitly, this means that the police officer adapts his level of force not only according to the level of resistance (passive resistance, active resistance, aggression or injuries), but also taking into account individual and situational factors. These factors include imminent danger, proximity to a firearm, etc. inherent in a situation and which may influence the use of force by the police. The analysis of the facts and the statements reported by the persons investigated shows that several cases of police assaults took place in response to the exercise of excessive violence by the police during interventions. We corroborate our words with the following statements: *“Since July 14, a video has been circulating on social networks, showing an agent of the National Police taking the life of an unarmed person unable to defend himself. On July 16, 2016, the National Police, in a press release, confirmed the incriminated facts, condemned the act of its agent, announced his arrest and the opening of an investigation”* remarks reported by Namizata SANGARE, President of the National Commission of Human Rights in Côte d’Ivoire (CNDHCI). *“A minister is not simply being at the head. But having a real relationship with the elements, protecting them, helping them but this important message. Everyone wants to know what’s going on. Why does the policeman draw and shoot easily? I will do everything to ensure that our men are protected, I cannot accept that our men are taken to task. But the cases before us probably show that we have sometimes gone too far. Especially the last case where the agent had the ability to neutralize the individual. But not by two shots to end his life. I want you to talk to each other. I feel challenged, I feel bad when I see that. Because I am one with the police. I do not dissociate myself from the police. Together, we must be proud when reports from around the world say in Côte d’Ivoire the relationship between the police and the population has evolved in the right direction. This is the message I wanted to pass on to you. We are going to be very rigorous on these issues and as I said, we are going to hold the chiefs accountable because it is up to you to supervise. We will do everything to ensure that our young people who have had*

accelerated training in recent years have refresher training. To fill the gaps that cause the lack of mastery and control in the use of the firearm. You don't give a gun to just anyone. We do not give a firearm endowment to just any civil servant. We give it to the police because we know that he knows how to use it in the direction of the protection of the population and not the opposite. I count on you so that we can stop these acts which do not honor us. I am counting on you so that we can meet this challenge. I call you to a real mobilization. I expect a lot from your commitment in taking into account the orientations of this message' remarks by the former Minister of State, Minister of the Interior and Security Hamed BAKAYOKO to the police following the blunders policewomen. On the night, around 1 a.m., a security police force, in an advanced post in Assouindé, fired a warning shot in order to compel the driver of a beach vehicle carrying three other teenagers, to stop for verification. The named Rayan Yacine, thirteen years old, pupil, wounded by bullets, was immediately transported to the Pisam of Cocody. This terse press release from BredouM'Bia, from the communication unit of the national police, does not close, far from it, this police blunder. Undoubtedly aware of the seriousness of the incident, the First Lady, Dominique Ouattara, and the Minister of State for the Interior, Hamed Bakayoko, took turns during the day of May 16 at the bedside of the injured to express their sympathy and regret to his family. On May 19, the 40 police officers who officiated in this seaside town were all transferred, as a punishment. What had to happen, however, happened. The observation in Paris of the clinical death of Rayan Yacine and the opening of an investigation by the French prosecutor's office risk forming clouds in the clear sky of Franco-Ivorian relations. Crime is not ordinary. It was committed by a member of the Ivorian security forces officially on duty in front of the home of the Ivorian number one. An instruction on facts of this nature is ultra-sensitive. The police blunder is turning into a state affair. Where will she stop? How far will French justice go? How will the State of Côte d'Ivoire react? A single certainty: "the extent that this case risks taking invites serious reflection on the value to be given to human life and on the control of the use of firearms by the so-called police forces" remarks by Mr. J.O., a respondent.

All these facts reported show non-compliance with the principle of proportionality by police officers in the use of force. Indeed, according to the provisions of the National Police Code of Ethics, the Penal Code and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, law enforcement officials must not use firearms against persons, except in self-defense or to defend others against an imminent threat of death or serious injury, or to prevent a particularly serious crime seriously endangering life, or to arrest a person presenting such a risk and resisting their authority, or preventing it from escaping, and only when less extreme measures are insufficient to achieve these objectives. In any event, they will intentionally resort to the lethal use of firearms only if it is absolutely unavoidable to protect human lives. However, we note that several police officers following fits of anger used their weapons against offenders who did not have

weapons. These police blunders most often are the basis of their own victimization. We confirm this analysis with the following comments: “*Vexed by the humiliation of his interlocutor, the policeman shoots him on the spot and flees. But no pot for him, because he will quickly be overtaken by a raging crowd like a single man who knocks him out with clubs and pieces of bricks. According to our sources, the police officer succumbed to these injuries*” remarks by J. Z., a journalist. “*A gbaka driver had been killed a little earlier in the area of 220 housing units in the town of Adjamé by this deceased policeman after a scuffle during which the police officer used his gun. The police officer was then ‘taken to task and lynched’ by the driver’s colleagues before being ‘exfiltrated’ in a ‘comatose’ state and evacuated to a medical center. This incident ‘plunged’ Adjamé into a boiling situation, each side visibly seeking revenge*” remarks reported by Mr. A. C., a respondent. These facts show that the police are most often at the root of their victimization. Because it intervenes as a sign of reprisal following their own illegitimate use of force.

3.2.3. Failure to Respect the Principle of Legality in the Use of Force by the Police

The use of force by police officers is governed by law and can in no way be random. It is article 39 of the Ivorian constitution of 2016 which allows the police to use force “*The defense of the Nation and the integrity of the territory is a duty for all Ivoirians. It is ensured exclusively by the defense forces and national security under the conditions determined by law*”. This article specifies that the police officer, because of his sovereign function, must have reasonable grounds to use force, for his own protection or that of others and an absence of other reasonable means of dealing with the situation. He must also ensure that this use of force falls within the limits determined by law. During the intervention, the police officer must therefore continually assess the situation in order to act sensibly in order to ensure his own safety and that of the citizen or offender. Thus, the use of force by the police must be considered defensive rather than offensive. The analysis of the facts and statements reported by the people surveyed shows several cases of police assaults that took place in response to the exercise of illegitimate violence by the police during interventions. These abuses, considered as an illegitimate manifestation of force, are obviously not provided for by law, and therefore are not accepted by the population. We corroborate our words with the following statements: “*Vexed by the humiliation of his interlocutor, the policeman shoots him on the spot and flees*”, comments published on Tuesday, August 16, 2016 by J. Z., a respondent. “*This policeman died after a scuffle during which the police officer used his weapon*” statement reported on Monday, August 15, 2016 by the African Press Agency (APA). “*Everyone wants to know what’s going on. Why does the policeman draw and shoot easily? I will do everything to ensure that our men are protected, I cannot accept that our men are taken to task*”, remarks published on Friday, October 7, 2016 by the former Minister of State, Minister of the Interior and Security Hamed BAKAYOKO to the

police following the police blunders. These facts show that police officers use their weapons outside the conditions provided for by law. In angry situations, they use their weapons to assault unarmed individuals. This use of force is illegal and leads to vindictive reactions from the populations who are victims of it.

3.2.4. Failure to Respect the Principle of Accountability in the Use of Force by the Police

In crisis situations, such as more common interventions, police officers must assess the level of risk before deciding to use force. This assessment proceeds from their responsibility to respond to the consequences of their use of force. The assessment of police officers must pay particular attention to a type of threat. Threats are of several types. These are more particularly verbal threats or more or less serious behavior, but they can go as far as murder. Indeed, police officers intervene in crisis contexts to deal with a type of risk. Or that directed towards other actors as police or civilians. Thus, the decision to use or not to use force during an event follows a subjective judgment on the part of the police officer as to the threat and the individual he is facing. This subjectivity of the police officer is linked to internal and external factors which are at the origin of his decision-making. The first factor types relate to individual characteristics such as personality or cognitive abilities. The second types of factor relate more particularly to his social responsibility and his time pressure, which means that a more risky situation leads to decisions that are also riskier. These factors alone may not have a direct impact on the choice of police officers to intervene by force or not, but the fact remains that the police will not intervene in the same way in the same situations. The many observations made on the ground have made it possible to identify concrete cases of abuse of force by the police. These abuses take place when the assessment of risk by the police is more subjective than objective.

3.2.5. Failure to Respect the Principle of the State of Necessity in the Use of Force by the Police

This principle of the state of necessity is found in article 104 of the Penal Code: *“There is no offense when the facts are committed to preserve from a serious and imminent danger the life, the bodily integrity, freedom or property of the author of the act or of a third party, and on condition that the danger cannot be averted otherwise and that the author uses means proportionate to the circumstances”*. The police code of ethics also has an article to this effect. Article 9 stipulates that *“When authorized by law to use force and, in particular, to use his weapons, the police officer may only make use of them strictly necessary and proportionate to the aim at hand. Reach”*. The use of violence by the police should, in the light of this article, necessarily be part of the fulfillment of these sovereign duties. But it is clear that in fact, the police commit acts of violence whose necessity is not proven. The analysis of the comments examined in the light of the rules and regulations governing the use of firearms by the police and the security forces, shows that most often, the use of force by the police does not obey the founding principles of the use of force by the police in Abidjan. This

reality of the facts considered as an illegitimate manifestation of force, therefore not provided for by law, is not accepted by the population which is the victim. Thus, the violence exercised against the police appears as a self-defense reaction to the illegitimate exercise of force by certain police officers. It should also be noted that this reaction of the population is also disproportionate and illegitimate.

4. Discussion

The results of the study show that police blunders explain the violence against National Police officers in Abidjan. Indeed, violence against National Police officers is linked to the lack of control of police officers in the face of frustration, anger, provocation, etc. Amossé *et al.* [36] and Agnew [37], approaching in the same direction specify that it is the failure to manage in a legitimate way the negative emotions, more especially the anger and the frustration which more often pushes the individuals precisely the police to engage in deviant behavior [38], such as the illegal exercise of force and violence against certain individuals. In fact, this recourse to illegitimate behavior is a kind of outlet to reduce or escape the tensions aroused [39], or to attenuate the negative emotions which result therefrom. Thus, their victimization is the consequence of their own use of violence. These results are in line with the approach of Karoué [40], which establishes that violent behaviors are, in this approach, mainly perceived as motivated by the desire to reduce an unpleasant affective state linked for example to a provocation, a failure or a deprivation. Thus, the phenomenon of violence against police officers points out that negative emotions resulting from categories of tension, in particular anger, frustration, but also depression or anxiety can lead, when repeated, to violent behavior. Violent conduct exposes police officers to violence from individuals who are themselves victims of police violence. However, some authors ([23] [24] [25] [26]) specify that for a better understanding of violence against police officers, it is necessary to take into account two (2) parameters. On the one hand, the resistance offered by individuals and, on the other, the perception and interpretation of the interaction they have with the police threat. Thus, it appears that the violence against police officers is the consequence of a dynamic situational transaction between security forces and citizens, in which the two actors, protesters and police, use force to try to impose themselves. This approach is corroborated by the work of Debarbieux [41]. However, it specifies an aspect of the interaction that should also be taken into account. Indeed, Debarbieux [41] shows that the interaction between authors is not built in an autonomous and independent way with respect to the society which defines the social models and references. The action is the product of the symbolic interpretation of the attitude of others. Each actor decodes and interprets the conduct of the other before acting accordingly. These works by Debarbieux thus highlight the symbolic character that each actor gives to the actions of the other. This approach of the author confirms our results on circular causality

where each protagonist constitutes the stimulus for the other. Violence against police officers is the consequence of the illegal exercise of their force.

5. Conclusion

It emerges from this study that the phenomenon of violence against National Police officers is a recurrent phenomenon in Abidjan. Especially since it now affects an increasing number of police officers. In seeking an explanation for this phenomenon, we posed as a starting hypothesis that the violence exerted against the police appears as a self-defense reaction to the illegitimate exercise of force by certain police officers. One hundred and sixty (160) people determined using the reasoned choice method participated in the survey. The collection and data collection techniques are interview, observation, questionnaire and documentary research. Qualitative and quantitative analysis made it possible to process the data collected. Our investigations show that out of a sample of 90 National Police officers of all ranks, made up of 63.7% men and 36.3% women, whose age varies from 24 to 56 years, 66.67% of them claim to have been victims of violence. This violence against National Police officers is not just a recent phenomenon. They have been present throughout their career. In addition, a particularity of this violence is that it also occurs outside service hours and sometimes concerns members of their families. This violence comes in several forms including verbal (31.25%), physical (47.5%), and psychological (21.25%). According to the survey data, this violence takes place during interventions (41.11%), during missions (22.22%), during traffic (16.67%), at home (11.11%) and in police stations (8.89%). The National Police officers who are most at risk of being victims of violence are young police officers (37.78%), female police officers (23.33%), former police officers (22.22%), and police administrators (16.67%). This violence against National Police officers in Abidjan most often occurs during dynamic situations (demonstration, riot, crowd, etc.) between security forces and citizens, in which citizens protest against the use of force by the police. Indeed, some police officers, using the power conferred on them by legislation to repress certain actions by citizens, often act beyond the legal framework. This use of police force, which does not obey the founding principles of the use of force, in particular proportionality, legality, responsibility and necessity, is not accepted by the populations who are victims of it. Thus, the violence exercised against the police appears as a self-defense reaction to the illegitimate exercise of force by certain police officers. The results obtained confirm our research hypothesis.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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