

Reforming the Ranks

PUBLIC SECURITY IN A DIVIDED CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Since 2002, Côte d'Ivoire has been divided into a rebel-held area in the north and the government-run south and is therefore subject to a very peculiar system of governance, with two security apparatuses, two treasuries, and two administrations. As such, the country represents a rare opportunity to study not only complex post-conflict security sector reform, but also a dual system of security provision—by rebels on the one hand and an official state administration on the other.

Literature on the Ivorian armed forces is scarce; not a single reference book is available on the Ivorian military or on the rebellion. The chapter therefore draws largely on field research conducted by the author in 2010 and on a national household survey conducted during the same year.

One country, two security sectors

The chapter examines the evolution of the relationship between the military and political leadership since independence and finds that the crisis has not only affected security provisions in the rebel-held area, but also in the government-held part of the country. To a large extent, both sets of armed forces face the same deficiencies: violations of human rights are widespread, corruption is high, democratic oversight is lacking, accountability is poor, and resources are insufficient. To this effect, security forces might almost be described as 'predatory' and, as a result, there is a fundamental lack of confidence in them across the entire territory.

Contrary to common perceptions, state security providers do not perform much better than the rebels.

In general, the Ivorian population feels unsafe. Both perceived and genuine insecurity is widespread and while the sense of insecurity is higher in the rebel-held zone, research has shown that civilians in the government zone are just as likely to become victims of armed violence.

Insecurity dynamics in a divided Côte d'Ivoire

In 2010, Côte d'Ivoire was subject to types of insecurity that are common in post-conflict countries that have not yet completed their transition to peace: economic and criminal violence, sexual violence, post-war displacements and disputes, political violence, and violence related to law enforcement. The typology of insecurity does not differ significantly between the rebel-held zone and the government-controlled area.

Figure 7.1 Responses to victimization

Responses (percentage) to the question 'What course of action would you take if you had been the victim of a violent crime?' in the government zone (n=1,782) and in the CNO zone (n=658)

■ Government zone ■ CNO zone

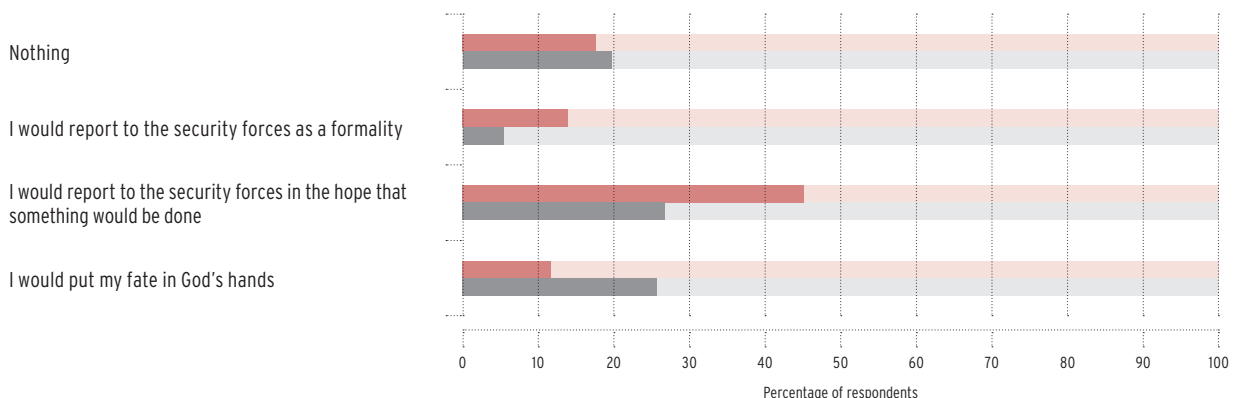


Table 7.4 Crimes reported to the Criminal Police in the district of Abidjan, 2004–09

Crimes	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Total number of crimes	5,045	5,479	2,889	3,472	3,267	2,379	22,531
Voluntary homicides	46	55	48	71	57	46	323
Theft—all categories	4,409	5,294	2,454	2,731	2,740	2,067	19,695
Armed robberies or violent robberies	3,539	4,653	1,813	1,900	2,067	1,490	15,462
Armed burglaries	322	343	255	215	190	286	1,611
Attacks on private vehicles	1,576	2,312	865	803	1,011	732	7,299
Attacks on taxis	1,519	1,869	642	744	638	328	5,740

Filling the security vacuum: resorting to non-state security providers

The deficiencies of the security forces, combined with the level of insecurity throughout the country, have encouraged the emergence of a wide range of coping mechanisms in both areas. Non-state security providers include community self-defence and vigilante groups, traditional hunters or *dozos*, militias, and private security companies. The private security sector has grown rapidly since the beginning of the crisis and without any form of regulation. Furthermore, arms possession is widespread; the results of the household survey show that, contrary to other countries in the region, close to half of the population considers firearms primarily a mean of protection.

Non-state security mechanisms create new forms of insecurity.

Security sector reform: beyond a reshuffling of the ranks

The Ougadougou Political Agreement (OPA) defines a series of measures that aim to bring an end to the conflict and reunify the country, including conventional post-conflict initiatives. Yet three years after the signing of the OPA, little progress has been made in terms of security sector-related reforms. While the need for reform is indisputable, efforts have largely focused on the reunification of the security apparatus rather than addressing the lack of democratic oversight, strategic objectives, professionalism, or logistical weaknesses of the security forces. In addition, quick-fix security measures undertaken by national and international stakeholders, such as the disarmament and demobilization of combatants, have failed; disarmament exercises have been relatively fruitless and the chains of command in the militias and the Forces Nouvelles have survived. Finally, the chapter shows that not everyone stands to benefit from the reunification of the country and the establishment of the ‘New Army’ and that many outstanding issues still need to be addressed.

The 2010 post-electoral conflict has produced additional challenges to security sector reform. The violent repression of civilian demonstrations has undoubtedly intensified the population’s lack of confidence in the security forces, but perhaps more worrying is the fact that the political struggle has increased the politicization of the armed forces and removed any democratic oversight of the military. The process of redefining political–military relations in Côte d’Ivoire is some way off. ❏