Cote d'Ivoire: Responsibility to Protect, Electoral Violence and the 2010 Crisis

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Abstract: The Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) is a highly contested doctrine when authorized or not. Yet, the need to safeguard civilian populations from mass atrocity remains urgent with Cote d'Ivoire's post-election violence being instructive. Numerous studies have interrogated the nature of the conflict and subsequent interventions in Cote d'Ivoire, yet only a few seem to focus on the intervention process, outcome and implications for future application of the RtoP. This highlights need for deeper interrogation of the issues emerging from United Nations Security Council's execution of Resolution 1975 in Cote d'Ivoire and the wider implications for the doctrine. While the Ivorian crisis meets the just cause criteria for RtoP authorizing, its execution in the Cote d'Ivoire exposed some challenges for the emerging doctrine. Challenges encompassing conceptual ambiguity, institutional issues and operational lapses leading to mass violation of rights of the civilian population by intervention forces, and the delegitimizing question of regime change. Future application of the RtoP must be context-specific accounting for the peculiarities of the environment where it is authorized; ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of the process and the actors involved; review of the thresholds for armed interventions; must engage local populations in the peace process and; must be backed by political will of both international and regional actors

Keyword: Responsibility to Protect, Humanitarian Intervention, Mass Atrocity, Electoral Violence, Cote d'Ivoire.

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Introduction

By the early 1990's, a majority of Sub-Saharan African countries were caught up in a wave of democratic transitions (Lynch & Crowfard, 2011). The era was marked by the unprecedented shift from authoritarian civilian and military regimes to multi-party democracies (Burchard, 2015). Though these countries adopted the institutional structures of democracy, they clearly failed to imbibe its more fundamental ethos and, as such, continue to display significant deficits in the operation of crucial liberal values years into the wave of transitions. Against popular expectations, elections as critical lynchpins of democratic practice have been no more than formalities to legitimize autocratic regimes rather than to give voice to the electorate. Electoral corruption has been institutionalized and often stirring up electoral violence (Lynch & Crowfard, 2011). To this end, Africa is faced with a transition crisis where election related violence has emerged as the most prominent kind of political violence across the continent. During this period, almost 60% of all African general elections were marred by violence with 20% these cases recording high levels of fatality (Straus, 2012).

Cote d'Ivoire is a prime example of this state of affairs. Once seen as a beacon of political and economic stability in Africa, the country has spiraled into violence in the wake of the 2010 presidential elections. Old grievances with ethnic roots resurfaced as the two main contenders incumbent, Laurent Gbagbo and challenger Alassane Ouattara, each from competing ethnic groups, vied for the top political position in the country. Against official poll results pointing to a victory for Ouattara, Gbagbo declared himself winner even and ordering widespread security clamp down on key members of the opposition and their protesting supporters.

With the two feuding politicians holding inauguration ceremonies and moving to consolidate their competing claims on power, the resultant showdown between their supporters ignited the violence lasting for the first four months of 2011 (Vasco, 2011). To deter Gbagbo from further acts of aggression, a series of bilateral and multilateral actions, including diplomatic isolation, non-recognition of his new cabinet, travel ban and financial embargoes were imposed on him and key members of his cabinet (Cook, 2011).

Prior to the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire, the international community had taken note in the post-Cold War era of the shift from interstate to intrastate conflict which had accompanied the wave of democratic transitions in much of the developing world and Africa, as well as the high numbers of civilian casualities arising from these conflicts (Straus & Taylor, 2012). A major response to these concerns was the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) doctrine as a framework for the protection of the civilian population from mass atrocities, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing.

The RtoP emerged out of international efforts spearhead by Canada under the aegis of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), formed in 2001 to institutionalize the "*never again"* mantra as universal call to the protection of vulnerable civilian populations. Accordingly, the 2005 World Summit Report, paragraphs 138–140, outlined that states held the primary responsibility for protecting their civilian populations from mass atrocities. It emphasized the responsibility of the international community to assist and encourage states, especially developing ones, in the implementing of this responsibility. Also the international community has a responsibility to deploy diplomatic, humanitarian and other necessary measures in the protection of these populations from these crimes. This may follow when a state demonstrates express inability or unwillingness to protect its citizens. This responsibility placed on the international community was construed as a moral obligation to take collective action to halt these crimes wherever they occur in line with the United Nations (UN) Charter (UN General Assembly, 2005).

The 2010 Cote d'Ivoire's crisis was a poster case for how unresolved issues of ethnic identity and insecurity weaponised by elite politics can rapidly degenerate into violence. Following the failure of diplomatic channels of resolution, the UN and major regional organisations—the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)—saw the adoption of Resolution 1975 (United Nations, 2011), empowering the international community as a coalition to, in line with its mandate, protect civilians and end the crisis by all means necessary (Cock, 2011).

The crisis and the intervention that followed provides a unique opportunity to interrogate the very character of the RtoP and its mechanism as they operated in Cote d'Ivoire. What gains, impact, challenges and implications for future of RtoP emerged from the 2011 Cote d'Ivoire intervention? A few studies have attended to the intervention process and it outcomes, yet there remains a need to cast a more critical light on the intervention in order to better appreciate its impact on Cote d'Ivoire and long term implications for the application of the RtoP in the future.

This paper presents a number of arguments viz (i) regardless of its positioning as a framework for the timely protection of civilians, the Cote d'Ivoire crisis demonstrates that the definition of cases and crimes that qualify for RtoP intervention remain ambiguous, (ii) great power politics factor heavily into decisions to intervene or not and (iii) the inability of regional organizations, particularly the AU, to take effective control of the Ivorian situation provided France with the excuse to stretch the Resolution 1975 mandate to include a regime change. These factors have coalesced to deepen the institutional, conceptual and operational challenges plaguing the RtoP as well as reinforcing negative views of Western liberal interventionism as agency for advancing narrow national interests by a few states thus shrinking the probability that RtoP will gain support for authorization in potential sites of mass atrocities across the world.

RtoP and the Electoral Violence in Cote d'Ivoire: Theoretical Insights

Electoral violence are actions, whether spontaneous or calculated, manifested as threats, intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, blackmail, destruction of property or assassination at any phase of the election cycle, aimed at influencing an electoral process and its outcome. According to Fischer (2002), violent conflict may exert negative consequences on any nation's electoral process but the degree of victimization may vary from case to case and country. Creevey *et al*. (2005) highlight two crucial features regarding elections in African democracies, (i) the proliferation of political parties and (ii) ethno-regional crisis. They argue that the proliferation of political parties and electoral violence in the wake of dismantled authoritarian regimes that hither to suppressed opposition politics is driven by political leaders cashing in on the third wave of democratization but not necessarily keen on abiding by its overriding foundational tenets including compromise and tolerance.

While elections remain crucial to the democratization process, Bratton (1998) argues that their regular conduct does not automatically translate to mean presence of a democracy. For him, the conduct of elections does not necessarily guarantee a successful transition, except the process of electoral administration is marked by high levels of transparency, accountability and integrity on the part of organizers and contenders. Within the African context, the new norm is the frequent and regular holding of elections which does not however does not necessarily mean the practice is free and fair. On the contrary, malfeasance including inflation of voters carried on voter register, use of violence as campaign strategy, intimidation of voters and opponents, ballot box snatching, ballot box stuffing and vote buying are becoming endemic (Lindberg, 2006). Besides the fact that elections support modern democracies by providing the citizens opportunity to select their leaders, they are also depending on how they are managed, veritable mechanisms to bridging political divides between competing groups and factions, thus acting as a medium for terminating protracted political conflicts.

The present character of conflict in Africa has led not only to the broadening of the scope of Chapter VII of the UN mandate on peacekeeping operations, but also to the initiation of the RtoP doctrine as an emerging framework for the protection of civilian populations, particularly in the face of humanitarian catastrophe with Kenya being the first theatre where it was applied. Kenya's crisis erupted from disputed presidential elections conducted amidst rising insecurity, widespread corruption, massive human rights abuses and state sponsored violence. Against expectations from certain sections, the announcement of incumbent Mwai Kibaki as winner ignited fresh violence leading to the death of about 1,000 civilians with many displaced. Efforts to curtail the spread of the violence led to the setting up of a AU mission led by Kofi Annan to observe the humanitarian situation and to work out a peace deal between Kibaki and his challenger

Raila Odinga (Sharma, 2010). The application of the RtoP here remains unique in the sense that it executed its mandate applying only the non-coercive provision of the doctrine. It's success impressed on the UN General Assembly, the value of proactive non-violent conflict resolution initiatives and facilitated the inclusion of a International Criminal Court Procedure as component of the RtoP, an action which nonetheless remains divisive (Junk, 2015).

In Zimbabwe, after disputed rounds of presidential elections, violence broke out leading to mass raping, torture, mutilations, massive human rights violation, as well as state sponsored violence on members of the Movement for Democratic Change. While assessing the humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe, Ban Ki Moon not only called for an end to hostilities, but reminded the government and key political leaders of their responsibility to protect civilians (UN News, 2009). Following arguments and counterarguments whether the situation met RtoP authorizing thresholds, the international community adopted RtoP as a framework for ending the crisis. Implementing RtoP here also did not include the use of sanctions or military force (Thakur, 2010).

In Cote d'Ivoire, following second rounds of presidential elections, violent conflict erupted among supporters of the two main contenders – Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara. Quickly assuming ethnic dimensions, the state deployed overwhelming security forces against Ouattara supporters. In view of the state's military action, France, leading an international effort sought and received authorization from the UN Security Council on 30 March 2011 under UNSC Resolution 1975 to intervene militarily in Cote d'Ivoire. Adjudging Gbagbo's security attacks on civilian population as constituting crimes against humanity, the Resolution called for the use of "all necessary means" to protect civilians, including prevention of "the use of heavy weapons" by the military (Cock, 2011). Security experts agree that the resolution represented a fundamental shift from the era of non-intervention as well as demonstrating the willingness of the UNSC to employ military action against perpetrators of atrocities (Serrano, 2011).

Since the intervention in Cote d'Ivoire, there have been commendations, condemnations and criticisms aimed at the execution of the process and the RtoP in general. Some experts have therefore, justified AU's intervention through Article 4(g) & (h) which empowers it to bypass state sovereignty on account of mass atrocities against civilian populations (AU, 2000), as not only timely but prompt. IRIN (2013), observed that a humanitarian catastrophe was imminent in the country and the AU and the international community's intervention saved lives. Within the general context of escalating conflicts in Africa and Cote d'Ivoire, in particular, the intervention was critical (Abatan & Spies, n.d). What distinguished this intervention was that, besides protecting Ouattara and key members of his cabinet, it created space and time for international diplomacy aimed at persuading Gbagbo to compromise prior to the adoption of Resolution 1975. For Martins (2011), the Resolution was thus timely in responding to Gbago's instigation of attacks

on civilian population loyal to Quattara. Combined experiences from Cote d'Ivoire and other sites of atrocities like Libya, support the choice military intervention as effective policy for responding to such violence fuelled by recalcitrant leaders.

Other experts have also criticized the intervention in Cote d'Ivoire on observations ranging from poor understanding of the nature of the conflict and by extension the type of intervention best suited to addressing it as well as other issues bordering on lack of consensus and political will among African states and leaders. They have also drawn attention to the need for evolving better, more effective means of getting warring factions/parties to commit to peace agreements as well as emphasis on engineering more effective conflict resolution frameworks. Equal value has also been placed on the role of dialogue in achieving conflict resolving compromise (Ramis, 2011). Arguments here draw attention to the fact that as practicalised by the use of non-military force to resolve the post-election conflict in Kenya and Zimbabwe, the use of force in Cote d'Ivoire's case was not justified as the use of the non-coercive elements of the RtoP were not explored to their full extent.

While some commentators have praised the AU's role in the Cote d'Ivoire intervention, Rupiya (2012), contend that their effectiveness in conflict resolution was hampered by many factors including the Arab Spring and political instability that ensued in its wake. Thus, by the time of Cote d'Ivoire crisis, the AU was already experiencing intervention fatigue. They were as such constrained by numerous problems by the time the UN moved for intervention in Cote d'Ivoire. The intervention itself exposed fundamental weaknesses in the AU's own conflict resolution architecture typified by its inability to match words with actions, non-compliance with obligations by member states, non-ratification of critical protocols and clear over-dependence on the international community in terms of finance and logistics.

Stemming from this, a section of experts continue to perceive the AU as being no more effective but just as inept as its defunct predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity. For many, also, the Cote d'Ivoire put clarion calls such as 'African solutions to African Problems' to the test and came out as empty talk lacking substance. This positions are energized by the AU's slow and fractuous road to a final decision on the crisis and the decision deadlock that paved the way for the foreign intervention spearheaded by France which relegated the AU to an assisting role (Apuuli, 2012). Other studies have also interrogated the intervention in Cote d'Ivoire's post-election crisis through lens of the international community's adoption and application of Resolution 1975. Some argue that the RtoP was merely the high point of the build up of the series of the UN's Operation in Côte d'Ivoire since 2004.

Thakur (2011) argues that while whether international military action in Cote d'Ivoire would consolidate or weaken the RtoP norm remains unclear, what is clear is that the(se)

interventions signalled a fundamental rebalancing of interests and values. They add that, regardless of the debates against intervention, the alternative of standing idly by would only have added more weight to evidence of the international community's inability to act in protection of civilian populations against mass atrocities. Albright and Williamson (2013), contends it is erroneous to suggest RtoP applies only in certain high profile cases. They claim the post-election fracas in Cote d'Ivore, leading to the killing of hundreds and displacement of over 450,000 people, was indeed a justifiable cause for international intervention through the RtoP in the country.

On their part, Bellamy and Williams (2011) argue that the international community's response to the crisis stands out for four reasons. First was the ability of the UNSC to label the crisis in terms of humanitarian catastrophe and justifying the need for protection; secondly, the willingness of the UNSC to authorize the use of force; thirdly, the increasing role played by regional organizations as important gatekeepers, actively affecting the framing of issues and the acceptable set of policy options open to the Security Council; fourthly, the impressive commitment of the international community in collaborating with the Security Council to determine responses to the catastrophe. They conclude that lessons from Cote d'Ivoire and other places like Libya, Kenya and Guinea, underly the need for institutional synergy between the UN and regional organizations for effective interventions.

The intervention has also been dogged by criticisms of ambiguous interpretations of the UN mandate. Amidst sustained attacks on UN peacekeepers and civilians by Gbagbo loyalists, the UN displayed reluctance to implement its mandate provided for in UNSC Resolution 1528 which clearly permitted the use of force to protect civilians if government forces found themselves unable to do so. This, in part, emerged from the narrow understanding and interpretation of Resolution 1975 which left the UN undecided as to whether to use force to protect civilians or not. Consequently, not reacting in the face of the growing threat and hatred in Cote d'Ivoire had persisted even though the situation was recognized as having the potentials to go down the path of a Rwanda-like genocide (Zounmenou *et al*., 2012).

Regardless of the debate generated by the UN intervention in Cote d'Ivoire, the intervention's neutralization of Gbagbo's National Defence and Security Forces (NDSF), protection of civilians and rendering assistance to Ouattara's forces in the capture of Gbagbo represented a critical step in averting a generalised armed conflict situation which would have destabilized the country and the entire sub-region. While the three month crisis left about 3000 killed, large-scale massacre and destruction was forestalled. For all these achievements, the intervention left Côte d'Ivoire more divided and with a weakened central government and state capacity (Zounmenou & Lamin, 2012).

Background to the 2010 Cote d'Ivoire Post-Election Crisis

Elections in Africa have become increasingly a violent affair. Election-related violence are emerging as consequences of the seemingly uphill task of institutionalizing liberal democratic values on the continent. Cases abound across the continent of states who have recorded violence at different stages of the election cycle instigated by electoral malfeasance and contested outcomes. The turn of events in the 2010 Ivorian Presidential Elections and the run-offs are typical studies in the emerging trend of post-electoral violence.

Three decades of stability in Côte d'Ivoire under its first president Felix Houphouet-Boigny was interrupted by a chain of events including bad blood from election-related violence in 2000, a civil war fought between the 2002 and 2010, a controversial political succession debate and an ill-negotiated transition under a military junta that came to power via a relatively peaceful coup in 1999 all of which coalesced in an incendiary situation that was set off by a disputed runoff presidential election held on November 28, 2010 between incumbent president, Laurent Gbagbo, and former Prime Minister turned into the opposition leader, Alassane Ouattara.

Prior to this, both contenders had come out neck to neck in the first rounds of elections where the president polled 38% and his main challenger, 32% of total votes cast in October 31, 2010 presidential elections. With each candidate claiming to have won the runoff, under separate inaugurations took the oath of office then proceeded to form parallel governments with a full compliment of cabinet. Claiming to be the legitimate executive, each began implementing steps to consolidate their position (Cook, 2011).

Citing the Constitutional Council's decision, Gbagbo claimed to be the clear winner and rejected local and international calls to step down. With early projections pointing to a Ouattara win, the Constitutional Council's decision was preceded by coordinated efforts by Gbagbo supporters to discredit selected runoff polls and prevent their announcement by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) following concerns Gbagbo would not emerge winner at the polls. They orchestrated disruptions aimed at delaying the collation process to extend beyond the three-day deadline required by the IEC for the validation of the election results. Sustained actions to subvert electoral outcome, on December 1, led Damana Adia Pickas, a member of the IEC nominated by Gbagbo to seize and tear up the provisional IEC results on live television preventing Bamba Yacouba, the IEC spokesman, from making the announcement. This disruption caused the IEC to miss the legal deadline for announcing the results. This served as basis for the Constitutional Council's review and rejection of the IEC's conclusion (Cooks & Coulibaly, 2010).

Both sides in the standoff resorted to the use of violence and intimidation and that caused the killing of dozens of people. Under the pretext of public security, Gbagbo imposed a curfew which was defied by Ouattara supporters in Abidjan taking to the

streets in protest. Their protest was met with a heavy security clampdown resulting in the death of five people with many others injured. The Constitutional Council on the claims of pervasive rigging in the North canceled 660,000 Ouattara votes and delivering the elections to Gbagbo. This sparked fresh rounds of violent demonstration on December 16, again met with state sponsored violence that killed at least eleven civilians. Straus and Charlie (2009) identified two main dynamics to the violence: repressive violence directed at urban demonstrators, northern Muslims and West African nationals by Gbagbo's forces and reprisal violence between rural ethnic minority groups in the country's West.

The prevailing violence set the tone for the humanitarian situation in Cote d'Ivoire. By early 2011, the international community was confronted by an increasingly volatile situation. The present threat to civilian populations led UN and French forces already in Cote d'Ivoire to shift focus from peacekeeping to civilian protection. Though Gbagbo's de facto regime continued to receive the support of de jure authorities, it perceived the UN peacekeepers as partisan enemies. The situation was also marked by a stalemate from the start regarding actionable efforts to defuse the crisis and protect civilians. AU leaders under Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act, initiated regional efforts to break the impasses and resolve the crises. ECOWAS on December 24th, through a delegation made up of the Presidents of Benin, Sierra Leone, and Cape Verde asked Gbagbo to cede power or face use of legitimate force against him. On its second mission to Cote d'Ivoire, the delegation on January 4, 2011, announced a breakthrough indicating Gbagbo's willingness to negotiate without any preconditions (Richard, 2012).

Regardless, the atmosphere remained tense on account of Gbagbo's unyielding hold on power and unwillingness to compromise. ECOWAS resolving to adopt stiffer measures in dealing with Gbagbo at an extraordinary session convened in Abuja on December 24, reaffirmed their recognition of Ouattara as legitimate President of Côte d'Ivoire (ECOWAS, 2010, para. 7). They expressed support for the existing sanctions imposed on Gbagbo by regional organisations and the international community. The Organisation resolved to pursue other measures of last resort should Gbagbo continue to fuel the impass including the use of legitimate force (ECOWAS 2010, para. 10). The heads of state and governments mandated the ECOWAS Commission President to convene an urgent meeting of the Organization's committee of Military Chiefs to draft actionable options should Gbagbo continue to disregard their message (ECOWAS, 2010, para. 11).

The Committee sat in Abuja from 29th to 30th December, and in Bamako from 18th to 19th January, 2011 to draft options for the forceful ousting of Gbagbo if diplomatic options failed. ECOWAS commitment to end the conflict quickly buckled as contemplated military action was halted by opposing positions among its leaders over how to implement the intervention. Progress stalled due to lack of political will and dissensus. Ghana, for one, displayed its unwillingness to contribute troops to the ECOWAS regional force

to remove Gbagbo arguing that its military being tied down in peacekeeping operations globally, including Côte d'Ivoire. This politics of delay paved the way for the UN intervention with France playing the leading role.

The RtoP, Electoral Violence and Regime Change in Cote d'Ivoire: A Critical Analysis

The RtoP represents efforts on the part of the international community to circumvent constraints institutionalized by traditional notions of sovereignty in responding to humanitarian crisis within the borders of sovereign states. It aims to re-conceptualize the Westphalian interpretations of sovereignty as a right to be earned as opposed to being the inalienable right of sovereign states. It, as such, outlines conditions allowing the international community to insert itself into the process for the prevention or halting of ongoing mass atrocities against civilian populations in supposedly sovereign nations.

The international community, under the UN Charter and acting through the UNSC is obligated to intervene in a state displaying a clear inability or unwillingness to protect, or actively deploying deadly force against its or sections of its civilian populations. The RtoP encompasses three specific responsibilities to, (i) prevent, (ii) react and, (iii) rebuild. This multiphase conception of the RtoP developed by the ICISS necessarily broadened prior conceptions of international intervention emphasizing that any effective response to mass atrocities need not be merely reactive but go beyond to focus on sustained engagement to 'prevent' new conflicts and to 'rebuild' society after intervention (Stahn, 2007).

Motivated by the AU and ECOWAS' inability to act with common resolve in the face of Gbagbo's unwillingness to handover power to Ouattara and the increasing violence, the international community apprised the Ivorian government of its manifest failure to protect its citizens. Following a series of failed diplomatic interventions, the UNSC, on March 30, unanimously passed Resolution 1975 recognizing Ouattara as President, condemning Gbagbo position and authorizing the United Nations Operation Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) to 'use all necessary means' to protect civilians in the country. The Resolution also imposed travel ban and assets freeze on five individuals determined to have obstructed the reconciliation process efforts and perpetrated violations against human rights and international humanitarian law.

French intervention under the auspices of the UNSC Resolution was crucial to the ousting of Gbagbo. France deployed scores of soldiers and 30 armored vehicles to assist in Gbagbo's arrest. On April 11, 2011, the attack launched by the FRCI on Gbagbo's residence led to his arrest and transfer to the North of the country to be held in detention before being handed over to the International Criminal Court along with his wife to face charges of crimes against humanity. Gbagbo's arrest and detention followed by the swearing-in of Ouattara as President marked the end of the post-election crisis in Cote

d'Ivoire with the AU's Chairperson declaring the AU's intent to fully engage its rightful role in the peace consolidation process (AU, 2011).

Since the collapse of Gbagbo's regime, the intervention process and its outcomes has been the focus of emerging discourse involving the RtoP as implemented in Cote d'Ivoire. These issues may be subsumed under three broad areas, institutional, conceptual and operational. Prominent were the questions of conceptual ambiguity, application, as well as the problem of identifying who is a civilian needing protection and, from what? Prior conflicts like Libya's had exposed urgent need for the RtoP doctrine to clarify who is a civilian and who is not. The urgency of the matter especially in the post-Cold War era emerges out of the fact that while civilians have increasingly become targets of violence during periods of armed conflict, they have also been implicated as perpetrators of violence and atrocities. In Cote d'Ivoire's case, civilians suffered casualties from aerial bombardments executed by French warplanes, they also inflicted violence on fellow citizens. The blurred conceptual line between RtoP and traditional peacekeeping have meant that peacekeeping missions are confronted with operational challenges especially in the interpretation and execution of their respective mandates often running concurrently and simultaneous as expressed in the case of Cote'd Ivoire.

More controversial about the Cote d'Ivoire intervention was the perceived overstretching of the UNSC mandate to include regime change. This has strengthened arguments that liberal Western interventionism in the third world is a smokescreen used by 'great powers' to reward or punish perceived allies or enemies. Though the RtoP sets out to punish those culpable of mass atrocities, intervening states focused only on the atrocities perpetrated by Gbagbo's supporters and conveniently, glossed over evidence of similar atrocities by Ouattara's supporters. The seeming unwillingness of the international community to identify and prosecute all the parties in the perpetration of mass atrocities in Cote d'Ivoire suggests the selective application ofRtoPprinciples. Thus, the Cote d'Ivoire experience tends to lend strength to arguments casting the RtoP as an instrument of coercion and control in the hands of powerful western states (Wai, 2014; Mandani, 2009). In particular Mamdani (2009) states that, the RtoP is nothing but the legitimization of the desire of strong states to punish weak states without constraints of being held accountable and an attempt at the recolonization of Africa's failed states.

At the institutional level, internal Security Council politics served to hamper timely response to the Ivorian crisis. Opposing opinions among its members divided the Council on how best to respond to the crisis. While the U.S and other European members early on favoured imposition of additional sanctions, Russia and China questioned the rationale behind and opposed the sanctions. Gbagbo's refusal to negotiate eventually helped to galvanise the Security Council to adopt a united front (Bellamy & Williams, 2011). Similarly, the AU and ECOWAS were handicapped by internal divisions and a lack of coordination and coherence. Though understanding the gravity of the situation,

division immobilized them from acting. Factors fuelling these divisions ranged from concerns with significant financial costs required for the intervention, differences in tactical suggestions of the committee of defence chiefs, fear of spillover, lack of funds and political will on the part of regional leaders.

At the operational level, the capability of the UNOCI to execute inclusive measures for the protection of civilians proved problematic. Originally, the UNOCI was a Chapter VII mandate mission inaugurated in 2004 under Resolution 1528 to monitor the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Accord of January 2003. UNOCI absorbed ECOWAS and UN MINUCI forces deployed since the initial outbreak of the conflict in the country since 2004. Regardless, UNOCI troops were seen more as an invading force by the Gbagbo administration, instigating supporters to target them. The implication was violence against UNOCI personnel. Consequently, UNOCI in the execution of their mandate, their perceived alignment with pro-Ouattara forces as well as their response to violence perpetrated against them raised questions about their impartiality and neutrality and the RtoP as a whole, with negative implications for its universal acceptance.

Furthermore, the nature and dynamics of power politics associated with the UNSC threatened the intervention in Cote d'Ivore. For instance, there was obvious disconnect and misunderstanding in the interpretation of the UNSC mandate. The United Kingdom's representative was of the view that the Resolution 1975 did not alter UNOCI's mandate to use all necessary means to protect civilians, but reaffirmed its role in civilian protection. China's position, on the other hand, argued strongly for peacekeeping operations to be guided at all times by the 'principle of neutrality'. As such, UNOCI should act only in assisting capacity in the peaceful settlement of the crisis and avoid becoming a party in the conflict. India maintained that peacekeepers cannot be utilized as agents of regime change. To this end, UNOCI could not become a party to the Ivorian conflict.

Consequences of the 2010 Cote d'Ivoire Post-Election Violence on the RtoP

Noble as the idea of the RtoP, its application in Cote d'Ivoire has exposed issues with critical implications for its future. First, the argument surrounding liberal western interventionism and its failure to effectively address the complex problem permeated the Ivorian crisis. While the intervention may be counted successful for actually halting the perpetration of crimes against humanity, the inability of intervening states to adopt soft power options of the RtoP, as proven was possible in Kenya and Zimbabwe, suggest excessive focus on the military component of the doctrine without due consideration for its more destabilizing impacts. As such, the RtoP beyond interpretation as an honored principle for civilian protection against mass atrocities, in the same breath assumes the posture of a tool in the hands of western nations for advancing narrow national and economic interest. Therefore, applying global standards without adequate accommodation of the complexities of the social dynamics in countries serving as theatres of

intervention is making interventionism a significantly flawed framework of mediation, further jeopardizing universal endorsement of the RtoP doctrine.

Second, the excessive concentration on the military component without exploring to their full extents the potential of other principle of the RtoP such as the 'responsibility to prevent' and the 'responsibility to rebuild' has exposed concerns and the increasingly problematic challenge of reconciling the difference between humanitarian intervention and the use of force. Particularly, the intervention has proven to be counterproductive as Cote d'Ivoire still records pockets of violence and persisting plights of civilians. More so, the operational challenges associated with the intervention, such as the overstretching of the UNSC resolution to include the removal of Gbagbo, the indiscriminate use of force, aerial bombardment of civilians and, the non-recognition of the recommendation of Cote d'Ivoire's Constitutional Council suggests that the doctrine is still mired in controversies. This not only discredits its framers but also hampers the possibility of itS future application in places like Syriaand Myanmar, where the safety of civilians remain precarious.

In summary, while the Ivorian experience has put the RtoP in a bad light and re-emphasized the controversial and damning aspects often associated with liberal western interventionism, it remains likely that the RtoP will see increasing application in future conflicts as its adoption in the first place was largely demand-driven. To strengthen its position, the RtoP, will benefit from adopting strategies custom designed to account for the complexities of specific societies where they are to be executed and backed by adequate political will as well as strict monitoring and evaluation of every stage of the process and the actors involved. Also necessary is the review of thresholds for interventions and other salient issues such as question of 'right authority' and effective monitoring frameworks for carrying out UNSC resolutions. The RtoP must also improve existing local and foreign institutional capabilities to enhannce critical engagement. It must also address the debate on what constitutes intervention. Finally, there is need for the UNSC reform to align its composition with the new realities of an ever changing world.

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