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**Responsibility to Protect and its Role During the Humanitarian
Intervention to End the 2010/2011 Post-Electoral Crisis in Ivory Coast**

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HOJA DE APROBACION DE TESIS

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Resumen

La intervención militar ha sido un tema polémico que trata la responsabilidad de las organizaciones gubernamentales internacionales y los países que deciden intervenir.

La comunidad internacional se debate entre la culpa por no haber hecho lo suficiente para detener las matanzas y las intervenciones que resultaron contraproducentes. El principio de la Responsabilidad de Proteger (R2P) es un principio que exige la protección de los civiles, cuando su estado no ha logrado hacerlo. Esta tesis analiza el caso de Costa de Marfil, donde este principio demostró ser clave para evitar más derramamiento de sangre en la crisis post-electoral entre 2010/2011 y la forma en que el papel de un miembro del Consejo de Seguridad contribuyó a la intervención para acabar con un conflicto.

Palabras clave: R2P, Costa de Marfil , la intervención militar, el Consejo de Seguridad, la CEDEAO, la Unión Africana, la crisis post-electoral, Naciones Unidas

Abstract

Military intervention has been a controversial issue that carries out a responsibility for International Governmental Organizations and countries carrying it. The international community debates with guilt for not doing enough to stop massacres and interventions gone wrong. The principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) calls for protection of civilians when its state has failed to do so. This thesis analyzes the case of Ivory Coast, where this principle proved to be key in order to avoid further bloodshed on the Post-electoral crisis between 2010/2011 and how the role of a Security Council member helped for intervention to arrive in the nick of time.

Keywords: R2P, Cote d'Ivoire, Military Intervention, Security Council, ECOWAS, African Union, Post-electoral Crisis, United Nations.

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Introduction

Was French bilateral humanitarian intervention, supported by the United Nations Operation in Ivory Coast (UNOCI), more efficient in ending the 2010/2011 post-electoral Ivorian crisis than a multilateral one would have been?

The military and political role of France in Africa is one about which very little is said in the Americas. Nevertheless, it provides a precedent for intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations (UN) that affects all member states in the long run because the decisions taken in UN committees are carried out by a majority of member states, as well as illustrating the limits and perceptions of a humanitarian military intervention.

Ivory Coast incorporated all the components of a failed democracy (or perhaps one that never existed) since 1999, with coup d'états, fraudulent elections and cycles of tension that resulted in short periods of civil war (Collier, 2009) This paper seeks to provide an analysis that will fill the gap in academic literature about the latest outbreak of violence in Ivory Coast as a result of the 2010/2011 post electoral dispute.

This case study examines a controversial example of French intervention that poses the question whether a bilateral intervention, with UN blessing, is more efficient nowadays to end crises and states of emergency than a multilateral one. Through a qualitative study neither projections nor a statistical analysis can be reached, but a precedent can be analyzed assessing the measures and actions that ended the post electoral crisis, their impact on humanitarian and military interventions and the pressures of operating under democratic standards within time frames established for the future in the West African and Maghreb regions.

This paper will examine aspects such as youth involvement in politics, the ethnic division characterized as Ivoirité and land disputes as the main triggers of the 2011 crisis. The UN

role during the peace building process up to the election is questioned as well as the role of regional interstate institutions such as the African Union and ECOWAS. Finally we examine the role of the French government and the deployment of its army in a decisive unilateral action in order to end the 2011 post-electoral crisis.

Little research has been carried out into the 2010/2011 post-electoral crisis. Most of the material regarding the 2011 conflict in Ivory Coast was in fact produced by major news agencies with bureaus on the ground and interest in the region.

I will contest Eve Massingham (2009) on her view that humanitarian intervention is flawed because it relies on military intervention and the use of forces for humanitarian purposes, making the legality a gray area to be analyzed. Massingham contests the humanitarian side by focusing on its controversial past in cases like Kosovo and Iraq, where Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was an important factor.

My case study proves that the responsibility to react, part of the R2P framework, was met through work on the diplomatic front and by military humanitarian intervention as a last resort, offering a model for future interventions. The key aspect of my theory is the fact that a powerful ally, part of the UN Security Council with interests in the country undergoing a humanitarian crisis, can speed up the pace under which the UN sets its agenda, its resolution writing and its legitimacy towards intervention.

This was the case in Ivory Coast during its post-electoral crisis. France, as a former colonial power, maintains close ties with the West African nation. When the standoff between presidential candidates started after results were announced, France started pushing for negotiation talks for an end to the crisis, in Paris, Abidjan and in New York City, presenting before the Security Council the threat that the ongoing crisis represented

for stability in the region. France highlighted the devastating effects of the civil war and was thus able to push for sanctions against key individuals and institutions as the crisis unfolded.

The continuous lobbying by France meant that the United Nations Operations in Ivory Coast (UNOCI) could count on support when it reported human rights abuses and massacres to the UN headquarters. By the time diplomacy had failed in reaching an end to an escalating crisis, France could similarly count on UN Security Council and General Assembly member states to support decisive intervention to protect the expatriate and Ivorian population.

France's support and mediation role has carried on for decades and her underlying interest endures since colonial days. Without France, little would have been done and multilateral agreement to intervene would have taken longer.

This historical linkage, underpinned by modern economic and political factors, meant that bilateral cooperation led to bilateral reaction once a humanitarian crisis was underway, in a much more effective way than a multilateral intervention. One actor taking decisions during a crisis in a matter of hours rather than days can be crucial to avoid death tolls rising and a country plunging into chaos.

The research and framework for this paper has been based on observation at the time of the crisis carried out between February and August 2011 while living and working with an ECOWAS-sponsored NGO - RASALAO/WAANSA (West African Network on Small Arms). A further visit to Abidjan during early August 2012 provided an opportunity to interview and see the aftermath nearly a year later, as well as to interview officials who were on the ground during the crisis and had followed the process. The interviews with

officials on the ground during the crisis were conducted during late July and early August, 2012, before the USFQ “Institutional Review Board” was launched and regulations regarding interviews for dissertations set. For safety reasons, no names will be disclosed.

Mike McGovern’s book “Making war in Cote d’Ivoire” (2011) represents a major piece of research that laid some of the groundwork for this paper regarding the ongoing, 10 year Ivorian conflict, explaining in detail variables such as the cocoa industry, the economic downfall and the Hophouet-Boigny era and its aftermath. McGovern’s book was pending publication when the 2010/2011 post-electoral crisis loomed, yet his article for Foreign Affairs “The Ivorian end-game” proved to be a key resource for this paper, analyzing the aftermath of decades of tension.

Alex Bellamy and Paul Williams have done groundwork in their essay: *The new politics of protection? Cote d’Ivoire, Libya and the responsibility to protect*. Ivory Coast is one of the examples of the changing politics regarding humanitarian and military intervention.

On the final part, R2P as a principle is discussed regarding how the crisis ended and the role France played, and why it was more efficient to have France intervene at a military level than a complex operation with several countries would have been

This paper is based on qualitative research through participant observation in Ivory Coast during February to August of 2011, interviews with study subjects, and analysis of news coverage at the time compared to observation on the ground. Observation was held on the July/August 2012 period conducting interviews with officials involved in decision-making level during the post-electoral crisis.

This paper will consider several aspects to analyze in depth regarding the crisis. Starting by a historic summary that reviews Ivory Coast since its independence and its bursts of violence.

The section of this paper called *“From Ivorian miracle to an African war”* explores the eventual downfall of the prosperous nation throughout issues that were not considered major until they became a key element of the war- Ethnic divisions and the role these divisions played in Cocoa industry, the engine of Ivorian economy.

“Whose land is this” analyzes the land tenure problem, a problem that was a result of land appropriation and customary laws from the early independence days. Tensions within communities rose as the Cocoa Market and its volatile nature plunged the country into an economic crisis in the 1980s and 1990s and generations of foreigners that went to work on the cocoa farms were perceived as taking land by Ivorian nationals.

“Ivorit  ” (“being Ivorian”) examines the result of the land tenure issues, where calls for Ivorian purity increased in an attempt to blame foreigners for the economic meltdown. The role of Ivorit   is discussed throughout the paper because of its major role in the country’s civil war and in the post-electoral crisis. This is followed by a focus on the French-Ivorian relationship since independence and the role the French expatriate population had in Ivory Coast.

“Was the road to peace poorly paved?” analyzes the conditions that applied when the 2010 elections were held and many of the underlying issues described above that were neglected and proved to be a powder keg on the outset of the crisis. The role of the international community with the presence of UNOCI is part of this analysis.

On the final part, R2P as a principle is discussed regarding how the crisis ended and the role France played, and why it was more efficient to have France intervene at a military level than a complex operation with several countries would have been.

Literature Review:

The basis of the principle in international relations called “Responsibility to protect” (R2P) is the starting point for this paper. The case of Ivory Coast offers a new narrative regarding the legitimacy and circumstances of humanitarian intervention.

The principle of collective security faces a major challenge as well, under a constructivist view, considering the aggressor is the host state and the victim is its population. The focus of this paper is the new scenario Ivory Coast presents regarding humanitarian intervention.

The situation in Ivory Coast prepared the ground for a humanitarian intervention, led by the UN and France. It is not often one hears of an interstate organization being the decisive voice for an intervention in a crisis, with no vested interest.

Although the UN, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were the legitimacy tools, in this case France did the work of lobbying its allies and pushing the agenda towards the UN Security Council. For Ivory Coast, an ally in the Security Council proved to be a valuable resource and the military intervention, if controversial, proved to be an effective tool.

The seeds of conflict – a summary

Ivory Coast was a pampered colony, the French model colony, for constant cooperation and economic prosperity due to its transition to independence without bloodshed and its importance in the Cocoa market. Upon independence in 1960, “old” Felix Houphouet-Boigny, representative in France for the French colony, assumed power in a peaceful way, thus maintaining France’s close ties with its former colony and making Ivory Coast the poster child of the Francafrique¹ model (Haski, Pierre, 2013) .

Houphouet-Boigny was not inclined to step down and remained president for the next 30 years with one party rule. (McGovern, Mike 2011) Laurent Gbagbo, university professor in 1982, founded the opposing party Ivorian Popular Front (FPI for its French initials) but becomes an exile in France for his leftist, anticolonial ideals, where he developed close ties with socialist intellectuals.

As result of close ties with France Abidjan became the “African Miracle”. While countries like Ghana fought bloody wars of independence, Ivory Coast reached a peaceful independence and became the region’s main cocoa exporter, making the Ivorian economy a viable economic model for the rest of the region, based on its agricultural sector.

As expected with a single crop economy, Ivory Coast was dealt a severe blow in the mid 1980s when cocoa prices fell dramatically worldwide. (McGovern, Mike 2011)

¹ Term coined by Felix Hophouet Boigny to refer to the close ties between the former French empire in Africa. It has been used negatively to describe post-independence control over colonies by France.

The economic catastrophe led to a general unrest among the population, which saw in the migrant waves coming from Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso the scapegoats for their problems.

Ethnic tensions began surfacing. Houphouet-Boigny came under pressure from France, while more opposition parties emerged. The first multi-party elections were held in 1990, which Houphouet-Boigny won with an 85% margin (McGovern, Mike, 2011)

Houphouet-Boigny died in 1993, closing a prosperous chapter in Ivorian history, but by now the country was in decline. After Houphouet-Boigny's death, Alassane Ouattara, then prime minister, and Henri Konan Bedié, President of the National Assembly, had a brief power dispute that made them enemies. Bedié assumed power.

The following year, during elections, Ouattara was barred from running for office under the concept of "Ivoirite" that required being 100% Ivorian and excluded migrant children, legitimizing a xenophobic feeling. Ouattara was excluded as were thousands of first generation Ivorians, children of migrants that during the boom years were an engine of progress.

On Christmas Eve 1999, Ivory Coast suffered its first Coup d'état, staged by the military, who installed General Guei as their leader. Guei promised to return the country to democracy, but within six months, he was changing the constitution so that his main opponent, Alassane Ouattara, would not be able to run – again, under the concept of "Ivoirité".

Gbagbo won the elections in October 2000 but Guei refused to accept the results. Supporters of Ouattara, Gbagbo and Guei clashed in the streets. Guei escaped two days later.

Gbagbo was recognized as legitimate leader by the international community, but violence would not let up. On Sept. 19th 2002, Ivorian soldiers back from exile planned a Coup d'état. They failed to take the economic capital, Abidjan, but they did take cities up north such as Bouaké. During the Coup, Guei and his family were murdered, but to this day no one knows who the assassins were.

On Sept 22th, French troops arrived to protect their nationals, but they took no sides although Gbagbo pressured Paris for the French troops to defend against “foreign intruders” (Gbagbo accused Burkina Faso of supporting the Coup) (Jeune Afrique Economie, 2002)

Human Rights Watch, in its report “*The new racism, the political manipulation of ethnicity in Cote d’Ivoire*”, blames the government directly for perpetrating racist and xenophobic attitudes among the Ivorian population. The report, published in August 2001, became a constant echo in this conflict, where the variables of race and nationality are determining factors.

Paris became mediator when it hosted the 2003 peace negotiations between rebels under the command of Guillaume Soro and the Gbagbo regime. Supporters of Gbagbo, not satisfied with the negotiations that called for Gbagbo to share power, took to the streets of Abidjan to destroy French cultural centers and schools and to attack French nationals.

The French Army asked for a cease fire line between the two sides. France asked that its military contingent become the peace broker through the establishment of *Operation Licorne*, with bases in the north and south of Ivory Coast. Gbagbo accepted the conditions as did the rebels, but differences in the application of the Linas-Marcoussis treaty signed in

Paris were constant. The UN blue helmets along with the French troops established a safe zone.

In November 2004 the Ivorian Army launched operation “Dignity” to retake the north of the country; this included bombing places where the Forces Nouvelles (FN) were located. On the third day of the bombing campaign nine French soldiers and one American died when bombs hit their barracks. The French contingent responded by destroying the Ivorian Air Force.

Up until the Coup d’état, Ivory Coast hosted the largest French population outside France. Gbagbo demanded that France send troops to defend its nationals, who were being beaten, robbed and raped in three days of uncontrolled xenophobia in the capital Abidjan in the aftermath of the French counterattack.

France found itself trapped into defending the Gbagbo regime to avoid a massacre of French nationals. Even though France was defending Gbagbo from the forces attacking from the north (by then grouped as Forces Nouvelles) his public speeches and those of his cabinet were anti-French and called for violence (Collier, 2009)

On November 9th 2004, Thabo Mbeki arrived as mediator for the emergency from the African Union (AU). Mbeki arrived on the very same day that French soldiers fired on Ivorian protesters outside the Hotel Ivoire, the country’s largest hotel and a sign of the luxury that Abidjan had been used to. Quai d’Orsay argues to this day that the death toll was about twenty, while the Gbagbo regime talked of sixty victims. This episode was the origin of hatred toward Force *Licorne* by the population. The name of the principal avenue was changed in 2012 to “Ave. Des martyrs” to honor the victims of November 9th 2004.

After a week of unrest and violence in the streets, with embassies closed and an evacuation of French nationals underway, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1572, which authorized an arms embargo and sanctions against perpetrators of hate and violence. (McGovern, Mike 2011)

This series of violent acts stopped on a large scale, but they still sporadically take place to this day, in towns and neighborhoods in the north and south of the country, where they can be ignored by the authorities since they do not affect the political and economic centers.

Mbeki invited the main actors (Gbagbo, Bedié and Ouattara) to Pretoria in 2005 for negotiations that became the Pretoria I and II accords. Gbagbo annulled Article 35 of the Ivorian constitution, and this paved the way for Ouattara to run for president.

The international community pressed for elections, saying that elections would represent a triumph for democracy and a transition to peace. In 2005, Koffi Annan, then UN Secretary General, acknowledged that elections may be too soon, and Gbagbo was granted one more year to govern. The “year of grace” ultimately extended to 2010.

The Carter Center in Cote d’Ivoire described the pre-electoral process as “irregular”. (The Carter Center, 2008-2009) None of the involved parties wanted to participate and the issue of nationality became once more a breaking point in the voter registration process.

Elections took place on November 28th 2010. The Electoral Council did not read the first results at the appointed time and one day later the person in charge escaped from the electoral premises so that the results could be read in front of the press, that camped for days before hearing results (Oved, Marco, 2011). Ouattara was declared the winner of the election by Mr Choi, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General.

Gbagbo did not recognize the results that were backed by the UN and members of the international community. The spiral of violence that followed resulted in a civil war between the troops from the north loyal to Ouattara and the Armed Forces and militias loyal to Gbagbo, the latter without proper military training. The civil war lasted until 11th April 2011, when Laurent Gbagbo's Presidential Palace fell. This after UN Security Council resolution 1975 was passed, emphasizing the protection of civilians, the mandate under which Operation Licorne and ONUCI intervened to end the conflict.

From Ivorian Miracle to African war?

A look into the causes of the conflict and triggers for the 2010/2011 post-electoral crisis.

The background plot for the dramatic events after the disputed 2010 election in Ivory Coast had been slowly cooking from before Cote d'Ivoire's independence. It was not a matter of "people living happily together until politicians came along", but rather a set of circumstances that would inevitably promote conflict, later stirred up by politicians, depending on how favorable the outcome would be.

As colonial rulers the French introduced cocoa to Ivory Coast and found it to be a well-accepted crop with a promising future, especially by the Baulé, a significant tribal group of the centre and east of Ivory Coast. The Baulé remained the most significant group and were in charge of planting cocoa in the region, which led to preference and socio-political distinction. The Baulé were portrayed as efficient and organized, while other groups were seen as "backward" (McGovern, 2011)

Keeping the divisions between groups and encouraging them to work on the cocoa plantations seemed to be a plan that worked for Houphouët-Boigny and his PDCI party, encouraging groups such as the Baulé, as well as northern Ivorian groups like the Jula and citizens from Burkina Faso and Mali, to keep migrating to the settlements. The incentives from migration translated into de facto citizenship rights such as voting and sale of customary rights of land. (McGovern, 2011) This political strategy proved to be key in understanding how Houphouët-Boigny won over the population of Ivory Coast in times of prosperity and made it impossible for his opponents to win over the largely migrant population that he had worked on for decades.

It seemed the only option for aspiring opponents, once Houphouët-Boigny died in 1993, was to disenfranchise these migrants, and neutralize them as a political grouping – they simply did not count.

In the mid-80s, with cocoa prices plunging, the Ivorian people started looking for a scapegoat to blame for their downward spiral to economic meltdown. By this time, youths that grew up in a promising environment of prosperity, due in part to public spending in public services, had to return to their villages, to see their relatives impoverished, while many migrants were well off² (McGovern, 2011) because of their previously privileged position. The “others”- meaning immigrants - were the ones to blame for taking jobs from the indigenous population.

In Ivory Coast finding someone to blame seem to be the key for boosting political popularity, along with neutralizing potential opposing votes. Land tenure problems, ethnicity exacerbated for political means and the role of the youth within the conflict-triggering context are all key in order to understand the political crisis.

² McGovern interviews an Ivorian Academic.

Whose land is this?

As previously mentioned, Ivory Coast had de facto citizenship for Malian and Burkinabe immigrants, in order to attract manual labor, needed at the time, to the prosperous nation. Access to land was fairly simple for immigrants in Ivory Coast, making the administration of fertile cocoa areas a disputed process in the long run.

Tensions were not unknown to migrants working in areas of agriculture. Many found little trouble during the agricultural estate season, only to be chased away during the harvest. This cycle repeated each season, without escalating to widespread conflict (McGovern, 2011). After the economic crisis in the 80s, however, demand for land created “inter-generational conflicts” (McCallin, 2009)

Many youths whose parents sold land to migrants wanted the land back once they came back from their studies, since land was inherited within family and land ownership was based on customary rights, rather than private property. There had been a tacit ownership “laissez-faire” under the Houphouët-Boigny rule, with the only element of state authority being legal transactions carried out before a notary (McCallin, 2009). That was all called into question when land disputes and minor displacement started springing up in all the cocoa areas of the country. In 1998 Ivory Coast established legislation regarding private ownership in an attempt to cool down the effects of land disputes. However, the law excluded non-Ivorians from owning property, and foreign migrants that had land up to that point were not offered any compensation (McCallin, 2009). The situation of migrants thus became vulnerable and their vulnerability was legitimized by the state.

While customary and private ownership land rights run in parallel, it is the former that prevails, making land ownership one of the sources of conflict. According to the report by McCallin for the Norwegian refugee council, in the Western Region of Moyen-Cavally alone 80,000 people were internally displaced between 2002 and 2003, due to growing insecurity relating to land and ethnic disputes. The west of Ivory Coast had been particularly neglected and security had been an issue for decades. Massacres that took place during the crisis, such as the one in Duekoue, show the fragility of the area and the vulnerability of the people.

Liberia played a role in the crisis as well, since it was widely thought that many mercenaries were hired in Liberia and crossed the porous border in the west. (Corie-Boulet,Robbie, 2013)

Ivoryité

Henri Konan Bedie, Houphouët-Boigny's successor, was one of the first public figures to speak out against people who were not born, or whose parents were not born, in Ivory Coast. This rhetoric became mainstream and the perfect excuse for xenophobic attitudes, especially from Ivory Coast's youth. Furthermore, in the last few years there was a charismatic, young, European- educated Ivorian who would personify this rhetoric and encourage a backlash against Ivory Coast former colonial power: Charles Blé Goudé.

Born in 1972, Blé Goudé made his political career in the Student and school confederation of Ivory Coast (FESCI) before going to Manchester to study conflict management (Trial, web access) in 2001, Blé Goudé created the Pan African congress of young patriots (COJEP) which was a nationalist student organization.

The so-called "General of the streets" had a prominent role during the 2011 crisis. The national TV station RTI (Radiodiffusion Télévision Ivoirienne) gave prime time to Blé Goudé during key hours such as midday talk shows. The charismatic leader in the rallies that took place before the youth was called to enlist in the army on March 20th (Mark, Monica 2011) ,Ble Goudé openly blamed France directly and the UN for "declaring war on Ivory Coast" (Unreported World, 2011) ³

The young patriots have been widely criticized and nowadays opinion regarding what they did is mixed among the Ivorian population. Many people Interviewed mentioned the young

³ Seyi Rhodes filmed "Inside the Battle for Ivory Coast" during the rallies in March 20th, 2011. In the documentary, during the first 5 minutes, Ble Goudé can be seen addressing the youth and blaming the UN and France for the ongoing crisis. (Documentary available online)

patriots' role as one of "protecting citizens" (Loza, 2011) while an international correspondent mentioned the roadblocks these young males set up during curfew hours to check for guns as "The only civilians illegally carrying arms I have seen were the ones running the roadblocks" (James, John, 2011)⁴

Blé Goudé embodies the evolution of violence in Ivory Coast. He embodies Ivory Coast's youth, frustrated at the country's economic meltdown that blamed its country's problems on the former colonial power and immigrants. The youth that bitterly attacks foreigners, yet never lived under colonial rule.

Johan Galtung, in his article regarding cultural violence, describes violence that takes place in a regular basis, becomes accepted in a cultural context. In the case of Ivory Coast this violence was legitimized through figures such as Blé Goudé and his constant rhetoric (Galtung, Johan, 1990)

On the other side of the spectrum, we have a political figure not as dramatic yet who started his political career in the same organization as Blé Goudé and became one of his main political rivals. Guillaume Soro led the rebellion in September 2002 against Gbagbo and led the Forces Nouvelles (an umbrella term for the militias in Ivory Coast that took control of the north). Soro has mediated both for Ouattara and Gbagbo. He served during Gbagbo's administration as prime minister, as a result of one of the peace negotiation conditions, only to resign once the constitutional council announced Gbagbo as the elected president in late 2010, in order to support Ouattara.

Unlike Blé Goudé, Soro has not been indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Yet he represents another successful young figure in politics that worked his way up the

⁴ John James, BBC Ivory Coast correspondent at the times gives an account of how his life changed during the crisis. He mentions the ongoing harassment by Young Patriots and how they were armed, despite an arms embargo ruling at the time in the country.

ranks through violent means at times (Baxter,Joan, 2004) . The Forces Nouvelles have been accused of murder and rape during their offensive (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

While direct violence is an event, structural violence is a process and cultural violence is a permanence (Galgtung, John, 1990). The events of March 20th2011, when Ivorian youths poured on to the streets to enlist in the army, unprepared yet ready to fight, proved the normalization of violence and as a cultural phenomenon as a result of over a decade after the country first went to war.

What hope or future is there for the over 59 % of the population in Ivory Coast under 24 years old (CIA World Factbook, 2013) who have no memories of the so called Belle-époque in Abidjan?

An Ivorian university student, 2 months after the crisis was over, could be found selling mobile phone credit sitting on a stool in the street. He had nothing else to do since the university (a hotbed of pro-Gbagbo support during the crisis) was closed by Ouattara's authorities. For months after the crisis, he sat there, selling cards, uncertain of his future and with little to do.

When this case was mentioned to a government official his response was that youth bitterness, unemployment and lack of activities and opportunities were a fertile breeding ground for terrorists to form and for organizations such as the young patriots to thrive. After a minute passed, the official shook his head and said: "It is even the perfect ground for Al-Qaeda to recruit people".⁵

⁵ Interview for this research with a government official in Abidjan, August 2012. Due to his safety in a sensitive issue, most interviewees' names will not be disclosed.

Je ne t'aime plus mon amour

Love and hate with the former colony.

When Ivorians are asked about the nature of the turbulent relationship with the French, many comment that the problem they have is with the French government, not with the French people⁶. Yet these differences become blurred in a country that holds over 14,000 French nationals (CIA, World Fact book, 2013).

From Feb 2011 white people were attacked in the streets, their cars burned, houses broken into. Although an element of the motive for this was robbery and basic need, in great part as a result of the economic sanctions imposed by the international community, many were attacked because they were French. A British Army officer in Abidjan at the time recalls being stopped by a roadblock and being treated very aggressively, until the moment where he commented that he was British. The militia broke into broad smiles, talked about Didier Drogba and Chelsea and then sent him safely on his way⁷.

Yet towards the end of the post-electoral conflict, as Gbagbo's foot-soldiers became more desperate and it seemed as if the whole world was against them, just being foreign was enough to attract hostility and violence – the German ambassador was even dragged from his car and beaten⁸. Those of Malian or Burkinabe origin were brutally targeted by Gbagbo's people – the words ethnic cleansing were even whispered by external observers. English-speaking Africans were targeted because it was feared that they could be Liberian mercenaries. The cycle of xenophobia and Ivorité had come full circle from the days of anti-immigrant hostility. By March 2011 it was Gbagbo's Ivorians against the World.

⁶ Result of interviews done in Abidjan with groups of people in the following districts: Adjame, Youpogon, Cocody, Marcory during February-July 2011 and August 2012.

⁷ British diplomat recalled several of these experiences during interviews.

⁸ British diplomat recalled several of these experiences during interviews.

Was the road to peace poorly paved?

The events described earlier, such as youth used as a de-facto militia, land disputes and exacerbated xenophobia with political motives, were problems known and targeted by NGOs at a small scale as early as 2010. The major challenges on the road to presidential elections could have been foreseen earlier than November 2010 in order to avoid major escalation of conflict. Was the UN too slow? Was the post-electoral crisis foreseen? Was the International community patronizing regarding peace?

Conflict is still ongoing nowadays in Ivory Coast, even though technically there is peace. As mentioned before tensions between groups are present and many Ivoirians do not discuss politics out in the open for fear of retaliation.

Ivory Coast was to hold elections on November 28th 2010 under a charter for UN certification and international monitoring. It should have shown the world it could close a bitter chapter in its history with democracy as the key element in restoring peace. But the population resorted to a violent resolution of the political impasse, perhaps conditioned to violence as a cultural norm. Where did the UN go wrong?

The conditions that were established in agreements back in 2002 in order to achieve peace, were not met in the period leading up to elections, such as the reunification of the country , a proper and effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and reunification of the country's militia and army among others (Mbeki,Thabo 2011)

It appears that the UN's rush to hold elections blinded it to the fact that these agreements and pre-conditions had been established as a result of long experience and deep-seated knowledge and understanding of the political tensions, cultural idiosyncrasies and social or cultural norms within Ivory Coast. It was more expedient to hasten elections even though

the country was clearly not ready for them. This may have been through fear that if Gbagbo was allowed to postpone elections yet again, he would never stand down; or that the UN was under pressure to reduce the huge cost of its operation in Ivory Coast and to draw down its forces – which could only occur after elections had been held. But for whatever reason, the UN allowed elections to go ahead without the conditions having been met. It could be argued that after years of activity in the country, with experts and specialists analyzing the political architecture, even a basic analysis of demographics should have made it clear that the run-off second round of the election between Gbagbo and Ouattara was always going to be close, and that a disputed result was almost inevitable.

R2P: Excuse for intervention or a new area of humanitarian protection?

R2P was adopted by the UN in a World Summit back in October 2005 (Bellamy,2011) in Resolution A/RES/60/1. R2P in essence states that countries have a responsibility to their populations to protect them from genocide, ethnic crimes, and that the international community has to be prepared to intervene in order to protect a population in peril. The creation in 2004 of the office of the special adviser on the prevention of genocide shows the importance R2P has taken in the UN's agenda and how responsibility to protect was a principle that had been slowly emerging as a response to mass atrocities and human rights abuses.

The resolution mentions issues such as development, Peace and security, national reconciliation, strengthening of the United Nations among others (General Assembly, UN, 2005) and it includes prevention, reaction and rebuilding as part of the Responsibility others states have in other to protect a population.

Resolution 1674 of the Security Council in 2006 makes a direct recognition of R2P as a result of the 2005 World Summit, making it an official principle that the UN abides by.

Peace operations under chapter VII of the UN Charter⁹⁹ have had in their mandates protection of civilians as a specific issue which the Peace operation has to work on. In the case of UNOCI protection of civilians is key, with the first part of its mandate stating "To protect the civilian population from imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and areas of deployment" (UNOCI, 2012)

⁹⁹ Chapter VII deals with action regarding threats to peace, breaches of peace and acts of aggression. It compiles articles 39-51 of the UN charter.

The UN is sometimes portrayed as subordinate to the major Western Powers, and in many cases this equates to forms of Neo-colonialism, which is a major rhetoric in Ivory Coast's history. Tony Blair invoked R2P as one of the reasons to invade Iraq and this proved fatal for the reputation of this principle (Perry, Alex, 2011) . Was a R2P doctrine a legal means to an end or has its legitimacy been blurred over time?

According to Eve Massingham, R2P is a flawed concept that in many cases makes R2P a Trojan horse for intervention. She says the use of the term "protect" is too strong a word, that cannot always be delivered, especially when it comes to an intervention. In the case of Ivory Coast protection, by the French, was focused on its nationals on Ivorian soil, The UN focused on providing help for foreigners (French and non-french) as well as Ivorians, yet the situation was so critical, it could hardly help all the cases it was meant to because of the high volume of calls. The UN was consistently criticized for failing to intervene to protect the pro-Ouattara citizens in the vulnerable areas of Abidjan, and arguably it was only the publicity surrounding the killing by Pro-Gbagbo forces by opening fire to seven women during a peaceful protest on March 3rd, 2011 that prompted the UN to activate its somewhat dormant mandate to protect civilians. (Bax, Pauline, 2011)

Another argument contesting R2P is the fact that post-9/11 any conflict that has the slightest hint of a breeding ground for the war on terror gets a priority in the agenda. Would France have helped if there was no terrorist threat in the long run? It still would have had to because of its strong ties with Ivory Coast and most of all, the French community living in Ivory Coast. Yet the element of volatile politics in the sub-Saharan region (Liberia, right next door being unstable and carrying the wounds of a civil war), the Arab spring taking place in the Mahgreb and in scenarios that took place after disputed election (Kenya, Zimbabwe) that ended in power-sharing agreement made Ivory Coast a

crucial example for the rest of the region. Bringing stability to the region would send a strong message to dictators and fraudulent elections: you cannot get away with it. Potentially, by rebuilding Ivory Coast from the fragile state it was in, an ally in the war against terror would be created in a region where insurgent groups gain ground.

The crisis was ongoing but it took a major ally in New York, in this case France, to get things moving back in Abidjan. The work of several actors, such as regional organizations and the UN made the intervention under R2P controversial yet legitimate in the eyes of the outside world,

In Security Council resolution 1962, adopted unanimously in December 2010, the Security Council went as far as endorsing the outcome of the 2010 presidential election and making the results of the Ivorian Electoral Commission (IEC) not valid. While both parties were urged to restraint from violence, the definition had been made and the UN had taken sides. In order to achieve peace, conditions such as Ouattara assuming power had to be in place. The recognition of Ouattara as president was made by the African Union and ECOWAS. Dialogue was in question, but with over a million people displaced, UNOCI's mandate was extended and around 500 additional personnel from the United Nations Mission in Liberia were deployed. The mandate of Operation Licorne, was also extended (United Nations, 2011)

While the role of judge taken by the UN was a breakthrough in diplomacy, the situation in Libya, as Bellamy noted, set another landmark for R2P. Declaration 1973, issued in March 2011, authorized protection of civilians whether the host state agreed or not (in this case, intervention because the host states failed to protect its civilians) (Bellamy, 2011)

ECOWAS and the AU were active in talks and in sanctions providing an active role that matched the interests of the UN and France. The AU kept a low-profile after the initial dispute but recognized Ouattara as the legitimate president in its headquarters in Addis Ababa, a decision made by the AU's Peace and Security Council. (Associated Press, 2011)

The African Union and ECOWAS agreed on the recognition of Ouattara as the legitimate elected leader thus giving legitimacy and facilitating talks within the Security Council, with little resistance from its members. This move – giving an African voice to the anti-Gbagbo calls - was crucial in undermining Gbagbo's rhetoric of a western plot to destabilize the country.

ECOWAS, on the other hand, keep pressuring both sides of the conflict for talks in December 2010 and The central Bank of West African States (BCEAO in French) closed in January 2011 its headquarters in Ivory Coast , (Jeune Afrique, 2011) leaving Gbagbo with dwindling reserves to pay his military and civil servants. This particular sanction, carried out by a West African institution accelerated the end of the crisis, with significant impact on the Ivorian population. Without this measure, Gbagbo could have clung to power for much longer than he did, proving how actions taken from the political and negotiation level worked.

During an extraordinary session during Christmas 2010 ECOWAS threatened to use force to oust Laurent Gbagbo when negotiations were going nowhere. The African Union had to give a green light in order for the military intervention to be legitimate (France 24, 2011). Yet the African Union did little to address the issue, with the Libyan war raging in the

Maghreb. By January 2011, the African Union declared in its summit in Addis Ababa it was “unlikely” to use force to oust Gbagbo. ECOWAS by the beginning of 2011 was focusing on diplomacy rather than a military solution, fearing member states would protest a military intervention, not providing troops for such an operation. (Davidson & Cohen, 2011)

UNOCI was strengthened by deployment of helicopters (Bellamy, 2011) showing a willingness to raise its game in Ivory Coast after dismissing the Ivorian constitutional council’s decision to name Gbagbo as the winner of the 2010 election.

Even though humanitarian protection by all means was a pivotal instrument and duty for UNOCI and its mandate, UNOCI appeared to limit itself to investigations of human rights abuses and little was done to prevent the fighting at night when a curfew was imposed in Abidjan, despite being the main inter-state organization, along with ECOWAS, to recognize Alassane Ouattara as legitimate president, thus acting as a judge rather than a mediator.

Ivory Coast was a key test case regarding democracy in the rest of the continent. A power sharing coalition was out of the question. Post-electoral disputes were not new in Africa, yet there was pressure that Ivory Coast should not allowed to become the template for democratic meltdowns and autocrats looking to power-sharing agreements as a way to remain in power. (Chitiyo, Know, 2010)

The ongoing atrocities and deterioration of security in Abidjan and the rest of the country made the French and UNOCI take a bipartisan approach. UNOCI had done so since the elections, but the French operation in Ivory Coast had kept itself on the sidelines, wary of

possible attack and focusing primarily on its mission to prevent harm to French national interests. With little agreement on what should be done and ECOWAS and AU efforts to reach an agreement going nowhere, Force Licorne's operational planners saw the likelihood of intervention as very high. On March 17th, 2011 a mortar attack on a market killed at least 25 people. The attack was attributed to forces loyal to Laurent Gbagbo and the UN was quick to condemn the attack calling it "a crime against humanity" (NPR, 2011)

This series of events show the growing need at the time to intervene in order to avoid further bloodshed in Ivory Coast.

The crisis was framed under humanitarian protection rather than intervention.

The word genocide was whispered in the international media and angered African experts who were fighting stereotypes of "yet another African war". Ivory Coast was not genocide but a political crisis that exacerbated political and ethnic difference to achieve its goal. The narrative of guilt within the international community after its inaction in Rwanda had set a precedent in humanitarian intervention and with no regional body opposing a move to oust Gbagbo, Resolution 1975 was passed.

Was the responsibility to act in an African conflict that loomed as a growing humanitarian crisis part of the Obama Doctrine? Highly unlikely.

Obama, back in March 2011 said in a speech "our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are. Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different..." (Dickinson, Elizabeth, 2011) A new era of humanitarian intervention and involvement was foreseen by optimists. But as Dickinson stated, the USA

is highly sensitive to military intervention in the surgical form as was needed in Ivory Coast . A no fly-zone would not have ended the bloodshed and troops deployed would have been needed, at a point in which both sides were committing atrocities in neighborhoods in Abidjan, turning neighbor against neighbor. The US did not confront a major terrorist threat in Ivory Coast. Instability in the Cocoa market was not an issue to lose sleep over, unlike Libya, with its aftershocks still felt today.

Resolution 1973 ordered protection **of** civilians without host state consent, Resolution 1975 , recognized Alassane Ouattara as legitimate president and authorized UNOCI to use all necessary means to protect the population giving a follow-up to the final decision for intervention (Bellamy, 2011)

Who was behind pushing the agenda in New York with a plethora of uprising and conflicts that were leaving the International Relations experts puzzled? France. Without France, despite the term genocide being melodramatically and incorrectly used by media outlets such as TIME, little would have been done in the time the sanctions were implemented. France, from 2002 onwards, made sure UNOCI had a robust mandate to avoid attacks against civilians and the French population. In 2010 France with Nigeria drafted the resolution passed to the Security Council. Without an influential actor such as France, international attention would still have been focused, but Ivory Coast would not have been a top priority in the global agenda.

While Ouattara's forces were seizing towns in the southern parts of the country, France pushed for action that would oust Gbagbo once and for all out. The increasing fear of another horrific episode like the one the French population lived through back in 2004 kept the Quai d' Orsay anxious (Willsher, Kim,2011), there were ongoing rumours of attacks

on the French population and French centers, such as the Lycee Francaise d' Abidjan, that none of the members of the diplomatic corps took lightly.

The UN Security council was the tool to legitimize French bilateral intervention that proved to need international approval and support, yet France carried out all the work on its own – or rather, with minimal military engagement by ONUCI and a cautious cooperation with the Forces Nouvelles.

France pushed the agenda, the United Nations called for actions, sanctions and a regional body called for intervention. But ECOWAS showed itself unwilling and incapable of undertaking the task of practical military intervention – a fact which incidentally has major repercussions today, with ECOWAS having deployed thousands of troops into Mali for instance, ahead of schedule and at great political cost – with Ouattara as the leading influence as the Chairman of ECOWAS, perhaps scarred by and wanting to almost avenge ECOWAS's failure to intervene in his own crisis.

France was there to protect its citizens and in doing so it ended up protecting a great deal of the expat populations, including rescuing the German, Japanese and British diplomatic corps. Attacks on foreign diplomatic missions, and a foolish attack by Gbagbo's militia on the French Embassy itself, gave France the excuse to step up its military operation and take on Gbagbo's military directly. Without French intervention it is likely that the conflict would have played out for months as an attritional guerrilla war in Abidjan, with immense humanitarian cost.

And last but not least, ousting Gbagbo was key for African democracy by giving would-be dictators and power sharing governments a clear message: your tactics won't work.

The whole international community from regional bodies, from Addis Ababa to Washington gave a green light to the only country willing to risk its army and spend money and resources in ending the conflict in an efficient way. If it was not for France, it is highly unlikely Susan Rice and her team in New York City would have stepped up their diplomatic game in order to oust Gbagbo.

The issue of self-determination and sovereignty is a thing of the past. Ivory Coast and its post-electoral crisis have set the ground for a new era of intervention – following a successful intervention that prevented more bloodshed and reestablished democracy. France set out clear political and diplomatic objectives that avoided a massacre after over a decade of tension.

This was not war for its own sake, but rather a last resort option that prevented a full-blown war that could have lasted months if not years.

Conclusion

Direct violence was stopped by the French and further bloodshed was prevented in great part thanks to the intervention. But the underlying problems – nationalism, nationality, land ownership, religious divisions - remain. The path to peace is rocky and unclear.

France's intervention in Ivory Coast reminded Africa, and the world, that France remains an expeditionary military power and a force to be reckoned with in Africa. The subsequent intervention in Mali in 2013, despite exposing some frailties in French military capability, has now left two African countries, former French colonies, with a huge debt of gratitude to France. France is reaping the benefit in terms of trade, sales and contracts. Nobody disputes the validity of the interventions but France has still benefitted hugely in political and economic terms. Is this just *Realpolitik*?

The circumstances were ideal. Gbagbo was not allied with any government in the P5 so the members could have not disagreed regarding ousting him (although there were tense negotiations with Russia and China, traditional opponents of intervention in national issues). The narrative in Africa for the international community and humanitarian protection and intervention is linked to the massacres in Rwanda during 1994 and the lack of competency by the international community and the UN. The African Union threatened Gbagbo with intervening yet it did not want to involve itself in long term intervention or a surgical military intervention.

Ivory Coast faces a less than perfect attempt at reconciliation and this should be an international community priority if further sporadic attacks and escalation of violence is to be avoided. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of former combatants is

pivotal for peace, as is a wide programme of Security Sector Reform. In late 2010 Ivory Coast was the centre of attention. In 2013 and beyond, with higher profile dramas playing out in Mali, Libya, Syria and elsewhere, will the world have the patience to see through the necessary work, or can one simply expect the next Presidential elections of 2015 to see the next explosion of Ivorian tension? R2P in its 2005 Summit was extensively talked as several areas to prevent insecurity. This principle has to be present for rebuilding the country.

Ivorians don't refer to the war as such but as a "crisis". The ongoing periods of tension between opposing sides have been something that the population has become used to over the years. The 2010/2011 post-electoral crisis posed a few questions regarding Ivorian society and its engagement with foreigners as well as to what extent was the population going to sit and watch its country destroyed. The brutality and intensity of the latest conflict leaves a major task ahead. Despite violence ending within four months, there are unsolved problems.

It would be wrong to say that the UN failed in its R2P commitment, but the route was slow. It was only when a further clarification of the resolution was agreed, authorizing UNOCI to target Gbagbo's heavy weapons, and when attack helicopters were brought in to reinforce the blue helmets, that useful and aggressive action took place. But a simple analysis of the underlying and historical issues could have identified the vulnerable areas of society, especially the key pro-Ouattara areas of Abidjan such as Abobo and Adjamé. The UN could and should have done more, been more proactive, to prevent the atrocities that took place there.

Ivory Coast provided a valuable precedent for intervention, which led to the ECOWAS engagement in Mali. Although an important difference is that France responded to a direct appeal from the Malian Government in order to initiate its military intervention.

The crisis in Ivory Coast asked serious questions of the will and ability of the UN, AU and ECOWAS to act decisively and appropriately. Even with a UN force (UNOCI) in-place before the post-electoral conflict, the UN struggled to carry out its fundamental role of protecting civilians. Elements of ONUCI proved unwilling to engage in combat when ordered; others placed severe national caveats on the limits of what they were prepared to do. The UN's inaction in many ways precipitated France's action. It is notable that even though the 2013 Mali crisis also required direct French intervention, the speed of response of the UN, AU, ECOWAS and the EU was far faster. Perhaps Ivory Coast has taught international organizations and institutions an invaluable lesson?

Glossary

COJEP: Congrès Panafricain des Jeunes et des Patriotes (Panafrikan Congress of Young and Patriots)

RTI (Radiodiffusion Television Ivoirienne) National TV station in Cote d'Ivoire.

Linah Marcoussis: Agreement signed in 2003 as a peace agreement was settled for the first leg of the civil war in Cote d'Ivoire.

UNOCI: United Nations operation in Cote d' Ivoire

FN: Forces Nouvelles (New Forces; Umbrella term for

ICC: International criminal court

PDCI: Parti Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire) Ouattara's Party.

ECOWAS: Economic Community Of West African States/

RASALAO: Réseau d'Action sur les Armes Légères en Afrique de l'Ouest; West African Action Network on Small Arms

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