



Alex Vines, Director of Regional and Security Studies at Chatham House in the UK explain two different case studies of the use of R2P in Côte d'Ivoire and East Congo respectively.

- Mr. Vines, how did R2P come about in the case of Côte d'Ivoire?

In Côte d'Ivoire a UN peacekeeping mission had been deployed to oversee the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Accords of January 2003 and its mandate included to use 'all necessary means' to protect civilians. This UNOCI force was also mandated to oversee long-postponed elections - which were to have marked the end of the conflict but in November 2010 reignited conflict as the principal parties disputed the results. Concerns of the potential for mass atrocities was evident when in December, the Special Advisers to the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide and R2P issued a statement of 'grave concern'. This was reiterated several times. As the situation deteriorated in early 2011, on 30 March the Security Council passed Resolution 1975, which recognized Mr Ouatarra as present and authorized UNOCI to 'use all necessary means' to protect civilians.

- Why was it necessary to deploy R2P and to 'use all necessary means' in this particular case?

There were real fears that significant numbers of civilians were at risk in Côte d'Ivoire following the dispute over the election results. The regional economic community also backed action although in March the use of force in Abidjan by UN peacekeepers and French troops blurred what was civilian protection and what became regime change - resulting in differing interpretations on what 1975 represented. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has defended that the UN only acted in self-defense, once it came under attack or needed to conduct operations to protect civilians.

- What impact does neighboring countries play (and regional institutions)?

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) played an important role and for much of this crisis was ahead of the UN Security Council. Although there were some divisions, including with the African Union, by March 2011 there was a common position which encouraged Russia, Brazil, China and India on the Security Council to support resolution 1975.

- What lessons can we learn from the Côte d'Ivoire experience with regards to R2P?

The importance of Regional bodies like ECOWAS and allowing these processes to take the initial lead. ECOWAS led this process and the UN Security Council only caught up in March 2011. The UN Secretary General played an important role, including encouraging a convergence of the AU and ECOWAS position and defending the importance of civilian protection. A lesson from resolution 1975 is that the drafts should not leave room for competing interpretations.

- In the case of Eastern Congo, why wasn't R2P applied?

The UN had and continues to have a mandate to provide civilian protection in eastern Congo. MONUC (renamed MONUSCO - United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo - from July 2010) has put a strong emphasis on protecting civilians, common planning, and the conditionality of its support on respect of human rights by the national army, FARDC. But bringing peace in the east requires more than just military force.

It is telling that in 2003 the EU responded to a direct request to the then UN Secretary General (via France) for military support in the DRC - Operation Artemis, but not in December 2008, when Ban ki-Moon requested the EU to dispatch a bridging force prior to UN reinforcement because rebels of the CNDP advanced on Goma in Eastern Congo, displacing up to 300,000 people: the Congolese army went on a spree of looting, rape and killing in that town.

This was due to the politics; Artemis offered an opportunity to build up relationships with the UN after Operation Allied Force intervened in the Balkans without a UN mandate. While in late 2008, the UK, France and Germany all worried about cost, and mission creep. Britain who at the time was technically responsible for a EU standby battlegroup was in reality overstretched by Afghanistan commitments and had little surplus capacity for such a mission.

- So what can we learn from this case, regarding R2P?

Responsibility to protect is not just about military force. Subsequent events in 2009 in eastern Congo and the arrest of the CNDP leader Laurent Nkunda suggest that EU boots on the ground would have made little difference and that a political response was the correct one in this case. The central point of the events of late 2008 and early 2009 is more widely applicable, that state power is perhaps more suited to persuasion or coercion of other states than to the involvement in the detailed and frequently slow-moving milieu of local conflict resolution. Such action demands careful consideration of regional dynamics, and the likely reaction of states subjected to it; it may not always be successful, and may indeed do harm. In many cases the best policy is not to engage militarily. The chairman of the EU Military Committee, General Bentegeat, reflected shortly before his retirement: 'In fact, when one looks with hindsight, our unintended absence [in eastern Congo in 2008] facilitated the Congo Rwanda accord which they reached. As it is military intervention is not always the best solution'.