

**Recent U.N. Actions Show Policy Shift, Analysts Say** New York Times Dan Bilfsky 6 April 2011

The unusual military strikes by the United Nations against military bases of the Ivory Coast's strongman, Laurent Gbagbo, represent a seminal moment in which an organization generally disinclined to intervene forcefully in the affairs of member states is showing a new willingness to take bold action to save lives, diplomats and analysts said.

After weeks of the United Nations' equivocating, Alain Le Roy, head of the organization's peacekeeping operations, on Monday night framed the decision to intervene both as a moral choice and military and legal imperative: Mr. Gbagbo should be stopped from using mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns against civilians and international peacekeepers. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also said intervention was necessary to protect lives, even as he sought to emphasize that the United Nations was not a party to the conflict. (...)

(...)They said Libya had at least temporarily eclipsed some of the divisive debates of the past about whether humanitarian intervention could be viewed as a guise for imperialism. In stressing the United Nations' supporting role, Mr. Ban chose his words carefully for fear of feeding into a claim by Mr. Gbagbo, that Alassane Ouattara, the man who beat him in elections last year and is battling to assume the presidency, is a tool of the French. (...)

(...)Yet Mr. Birnback said that the Ivory Coast action showed the extent to which the United Nations' legal and moral commitment to protect civilians now held sway over key permanent Security Council members, including France, Britain and the United States. Diplomats noted that even Russia and China, which in the past have avoided interfering in the domestic affairs of sovereign nations, were persuaded to support the resolution on the Ivory Coast and also did not veto military action in Libya.

The emerging consensus to take action to prevent violence against civilians should be viewed against the backdrop of a resolution adopted in 2005 to help the United Nations intervene to stop genocide. The resolution held nations responsible for shielding citizens from atrocities and established the right of international forces to step in if nations did not fulfill this "responsibility to protect."

The resolution was supposed to overcome debates within the organization between those who argue that the international community has the right to intervene to prevent atrocities and those who say the concept of state sovereignty, recognized in the United Nations Charter, is sacrosanct.

“There is a new trend in the Security Council in which the responsibility to protect principle is gaining a new hold,” said Stéphane Crouzat, spokesman for the French mission to the United Nations. Invoking past conflicts in Rwanda, Darfur and Bosnia, he added: “There is a desire to intervene before war crimes or ethnic cleansing can take place.”

See full  
[article](#)