

Ban a champion of U.N.'s role to protect  
The Daily Yuimiori  
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10 March 2009

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One of former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton's parting gifts to the international community was the selection of Ban Ki Moon as U.N. secretary general. Among the chief qualities that Bolton was interested in in a candidate was a man of modest ambitions and talent to match in order to bury the conceit of liberal internationalism. Ban may yet surprise us all.

A bit more than a year before Ban took office, a summit of world leaders, meeting at the United Nations in autumn 2005, unanimously adopted the **responsibility to protect** commonly referred to as **R2P** as a powerful new global norm.

Former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan described **R2P** as one of his most precious achievements. Ban has not been shy of adopting

**R2P**

as his own cause, confident enough of his own worth not to worry that he will merely be advancing his predecessors' legacy. ( )

Interestingly, Ban was the only candidate to refer to **R2P** during the yearlong campaign to seek Annan's office. After Ban took office, his task was complicated as many countries saw him as Washington's choice. The problem was compounded by choosing American Ed Luck as his special adviser, one with little professional background on the subject. ( )

Drawing on Luck's wide-ranging consultations and reflections, on Jan. 12 Ban published his report on implementing the **responsibility to protect**. It rightly takes as a key point of departure not our original 2001 report, but the relevant clauses from the 2005 outcome document. It clarifies and elaborates that once as the last resort does not mean we have to go through a sequential or graduated set of responses before responding robustly to an urgent crisis. ( )

The new report is effective and clever in repackaging **R2P** in the language of three pillars: The state's own responsibility to protect all peoples on its territory; international assistance to help build a state's capacity to deliver on its responsibility; and the international

**responsibility to protect**

. If the metaphor helps to garner more widespread support, all praise to Ban and his team. ( )

More seriously, the report goes over the top in elaborating on the metaphor by insisting that the edifice of **R2P** will tilt, totter and collapse unless all three pillars are of equal height and strength. This is simply not true. The most important element—the weightiest pillar—is to be the state's own responsibility. And the most critical is the international community's response to fresh outbreaks of mass atrocity crimes.

Mercifully, and contrary to what many of us feared, the report does not retreat from the necessity for outside military action in some circumstances. But it does dilute what was the central defining feature of **R2P**. The commission was called into existence to deal with the problem of brutal leaders killing large numbers of their own people. In this it built on the landmark Lakhdar Brahimi report of 2000 that noted the United Nations cant be neutral between perpetrators and victims of large-scale violence. Were all happy to assist the good guys build state capacity; the challenge is what to do with the bad guys, those intent on grave harm who use sovereignty as a license to kill with impunity. ( )

On these key issues, we are no further ahead today: We seem to be recreating the 2005 consensus instead of operationalizing and implementing the agreed collective responsibility. The use of force by the United Nations against a states consent will always be controversial and contested. That is no reason to hand over control of the pace, direction and substance of the agenda of our shared, solemn responsibility to the **R2P** skeptics.

Source: <http://english.siamdailynews.com/today-in-world/ban-a-champion-of-uns-role-to-protect.html>