

The West Must Learn to Listen
Cultural Diplomacy News
Shamsiah Ali
12 November 2008

Former Indonesian Foreign Minister and President of the United Nations Security Council, Professor Kishore Mahbubani talks about R2P, Darfur, and UN Security Council Reform.

You have identified a lack of political will amongst the P5, but how do you address this?

The permanent members need to be held accountable for their actions. Following the genocide in Rwanda, for example, the UN General Assembly should have convened to discuss the performance of the P5.

The governments of the UK, France, Russia, China and the U.S. have to make their citizens aware that they have taken on an international responsibility and must act or face censure. At present there is no such responsibility, the P5 can simply sit back and watch as events unfold. It is clear that the concept of intervention has gained ground, as illustrated by the Responsibility to Protect summit in 2005.

The responsibility to protect, however, has not been successful in the case of Darfur. Will major powers only act when their national interests are at stake?

This is why the permanent members need to be held responsible.

When I was with the Security Council we went on a mission to Burundi. Whilst in the air our pilot told us that we ought to land as sunset was approaching and this was when the rebels began to shell the city. We did, and on this occasion were fortunate to avoid injury.

When we were back in New York, Gareth Evans, Head of the International Crisis Group, came to have lunch with the Security Council ambassadors. You now know how fragile and serious the situation is, he said, what will you do if a crisis breaks out? Will you intervene or stand by as you did in Rwanda?. To his disappointment the ambassadors responded that they had no national interest in Burundi, and would not therefore intervene. Mr. Evans was genuinely shocked.

But what specifically could tie the P5 to action?

A legal obligation. Once you create a legal obligation, it's more difficult for them to stand back.

Source: <http://www.culturaldiplomacynews.org/index.php?aid=1188>