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DO WE NEED TO MAKE WAR ON BEHALF OF HUMAN RIGHTS?

By Jonathan Power

Human rights- of a kind-have been around for a long time. A citizen of ancient Rome, if condemned to die, could choose to be beheaded. A non-citizen would be tortured to death, or crucified.

In more recent times, England's Bill of Rights in 1689, the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789 have been seminal influences on modern institutions. Lord Acton believed that the "Declaration of the Rights of Man made by the revolutionary movement in France had a more powerful impact on European history than all Napoleon's armies." (Yet we must never overlook that the French Revolution's ideals were played out during the Reign of Terror and the roll of tumbrels carrying ever more victims to the guillotine.)

In the post-war history two watersheds stand out in the river of contemporary political events. The first was the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, codified in 1947 under the influence of its presiding genius Eleanor Roosevelt. The second, perhaps more controversial, was the determination of a U.S. president -Jimmy Carter, in the late 1970s, to make the issue one of the centre points of his presidency.

I have no reason to quibble with what Mr Carter told me in Vienna in 1994: "There is no way that Amnesty International, for all its wonderful work, can play the same role as the President of the United States can play."

What was missing, however, from the end of that sentence were the words "if he wants to". That certainly applied to Carter himself who was, to say the least, inconsistent in his application of his human rights norms. Even in his final speech as president before the Democratic Party Congress, he almost exclusively lambasted the Soviet Union for its falling short, ignoring the many parts of the world where the U.S. gave tacit support to unsavoury regimes for geo-political reasons.

But he did lay down, particularly within the Democratic Party, precepts by which the actions of future presidents could be judged and which could be used by organisations like Amnesty International to hold the politicians to account.

Nothing perhaps illustrates more sharply the gap in thinking between those who try to integrate human rights into everyday geopolitical thinking and those such as Amnesty who stand apart from day to day political compromise and insist on an untarnished standard, than the debate over the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. NATO claimed it was a crusade to forestall the ethnic cleansing of the Albanian people of the province of Kosovo. But, in fact, the bombing turned out to be nothing less than the precipitating event in the ethnic cleansing which, contrary to NATO propaganda, did not occur on a massive scale until after the bombs began to drop.

Amnesty, although critical of the bombing at the time, did not issue its blockbusting press release until thirteen months after the event. It had taken that long for its thorough checking processes to be completed. But once Amnesty's secretary-general,

Pierre Sane, had taken the final decision to go public in May 2000, it became quickly apparent this was the essence of Amnesty's long tradition: to stand apart from government, even democratic ones, and to question means as well as ends. On June 7th the Amnesty press release went out, with a copy sent simultaneously to the U.S. State Department, the foreign ministries of Britain, Germany and France and NATO headquarters in Brussels. The New York Times' Steven Erlanger began his dispatch: "In an extensive report that has infuriated NATO leaders Amnesty International said that NATO violated international law in its bombing over Yugoslavia by hitting targets where civilians were sure to be killed. Amnesty accused NATO of war crimes, of "breaking the rules of war", and said that those responsible "must be brought to justice" and asked the UN criminal tribunal on the former Yugoslavia to investigate these allegations.

Ironically, this perhaps showed that the Pentagon generals who, five years ago, had waged a bureaucratic war against President Bill Clinton to water down and, in the end, oppose the creation (which initially he had strongly favoured) of a permanent International Criminal Court for trying war crimes, had focused their antennae in the right direction. Their intuitive alarmism, which many thought at the time was overdone, turned out to be essentially correct. The human rights lobby has its tail up and is going about its business in a way that raises the stakes by the year. Over the last decade, it has won world-wide ratification of the Genocide and Torture Conventions, the creation of a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the establishment of ad hoc War Crimes Tribunals for ex-Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone and not the least, the arrest and detention in Britain of General Pinochet of Chile and the handing over of Milosevic to the ad hoc Yugoslavian war crimes court.

Standing at NATO's doorway, it will not be long before Amnesty will be on the steps of the Pentagon itself. The reason Pentagon gave to President Clinton for opposing an International Criminal Court: other nations would not allow the U.S. to write into the Treaty language that would in effect give cast-iron guarantees that U.S. troops could never be arraigned before it- now can be seen as prescient. It will be deeply ironic if the human rights cause, which an American president in the 1970s gave so much a fillip to, should progress to the point where it is hoisting the U.S. on its own petard.

But that, indeed, is what the human rights lobby is up to. Case by case, the logic of its own mandate is leading it more and more into a head on clash with the liberal democracies. Contrary to the current widespread opinion, given voice by such diverse personalities as David Holbrook, the former U.S. ambassador to the UN, the Canadian writer, Michael Ignatieff and the Oxford don, Timothy Garton Ash, the pursuit of human rights is not particularly well served by military action. War is war, even if it is launched in a "good" cause and human rights are too often the loser, however stringent the control exercised by democratically elected politicians of their fighting machine.

The war in Afghanistan has provided yet one more example. While anger at the atrocities of Bin Laden's AlQaeda movement moved a large portion of humanity, it remains clear that America and Britain's decision to go to war was not the best answer to this particular kind of terrorism. More innocents, including many women and children, were killed in the bombing than died in the attacks on New York and Washington. Al Qaeda, instead of being concentrated in one area of one country, has now dispersed to the four corners of the planet. The U.S. and the rest of the

international community should have decided to pursue bin Laden with the same decade-long perseverance that Israel once hunted down the Nazi exterminator-in-chief Adolph Eichmann and then brought him to trial before the International Criminal Court. With quiet police work, not noisy war work.

Indeed, if the preservation of human rights is really the first and paramount purpose of policy, the whole approach to the kind of political impasses that lead to war becomes very different. Simply put, one avoids the recourse to war and leaders are compelled to search for alternative ways of dealing with the situation. Naive? Although the issue has not been exclusively human rights, one can see an example of how such an approach could work out in practice with U.S. policy towards North Korea, an uncompromising dictatorship.

In this case, Clinton had to find an alternative to war- just as Bush is being compelled to right now- because the U.S. fears that if it chose the military option, North Korea might well retaliate against a U.S. / South Korean ground invasion with the two or three nuclear weapons it is supposed to possess. Apart from the devastation this would cause in South Korea, it might lead to the loss of over 50,000 American troops.

There have been any number of reasons why over the last eight years America could have decided to get tough with a country that gave many indications that it had serious ambitions not just to build a nuclear bomb but also to develop a long distance missile to deliver it. Even today North Korea is the arch-demon for those who advocate the necessity of building an anti-missile shield to "protect" the U.S. from nuclear attack from a "rogue" country.

Yet, contrary to many of its basic instincts, the Clinton Administration used the soft glove rather than the mailed fist. For some years now North Korea has been the main recipient of U.S. aid in Asia. The U.S. supplies free much of the country's fuel oil needs and a good part of its food requirements. At the same time South Korea and Japan have been building, free of charge, a state-of-the-art light-water reactor capable of supplying most of North Korea's electricity needs for years to come.

In retrospect, it seems amazing that the debate in Washington 8 years ago was almost dominated by those discussing the best way of bombing North Korea. U.S. intelligence had discovered that North Korea was about to remove spent nuclear rods in a cooling pond to recover plutonium, sufficient to make four or six nuclear bombs to add to its supposed (but never proved) stockpile of two or three. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and former CIA chief, Robert Gates went loudly public with calls for battle. The saving grace was that they ended up shooting themselves in each others' feet. Gates and Scowcroft argued that the U.S. should immediately bomb the North Korean reprocessing plant before the cooling rods could be transferred to it. This, they said, would minimize the risk of radioactive fallout.

Kissinger advocated immediate tough sanctions and unspecified "military action". But his timetable miraculously allowed time — a short three months while the rods cooled — for both a conference of the nuclear-haves and for sanctions to work. Military action should occur, he said, only if North Korea refueled its reactor or started to reprocess its plutonium from the cooling rods.

However, this seemed to ignore Scowcroft's and Gates' point about the dangers of an aerial bombardment on reprocessing facilities. Nor did any of them appear to worry that North Korea might use the two or three nuclear bombs they said the country already had to repulse an American attack.

In fact, the three of them talked themselves into the ground and made it easier for ex-president Jimmy Carter to journey to Pyongyang on a peace mission and pave the way for a deal with Kim II Sung to accept a nuclear freeze. In return, the U.S. would be committed to working with South Korea and Japan to build two conventional power-producing nuclear reactors.

In the intervening years there have been all manner of ups and downs in the U.S. - North. Korean relationship. Congress nearly sabotaged the agreement by reneging on White House commitments to begin liberalizing its trade and investment and ending sanctions. In 1998, when North Korea test fired a long-range rocket over Japan, it seemed that Pyongyang was determined to play out its role as the world's number one agent provocateur. Later in 1998, U.S. intelligence spotted a massive hole being dug suitable to explode secret triggers for a nuclear weapon. In the end, for a payment, the U.S. was allowed to inspect the hole and found that a hole was all it was. Now we face a new crisis with the revelation in October 2002 that North Korea has broken its side of the bargain- it has been trying to build a bomb by means of enriching uranium.

Not without a great deal of political contortion, the U.S. over the years has managed in the end to convince Pyongyang of its good faith. North Korea, for its part, had reciprocated by drawing in its horns, albeit often at the last moment. Most important it has honored the plutonium freeze. Even the advent of a more confrontational Bush administration, followed by the stunning revelation of North Korea's ambitions to continue to build nuclear bombs, has not so far altered the basic relationship. It is doubtful if Bush for all his "axis of evil" talk really wants to bomb N. Korea. The risk after all is a devastating war, perhaps involving nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, despite the larger political turbulence, South Korean president Kim Dae Jung — an ex-Amnesty prisoner of conscience — has pursued his so-called "sunshine policy" with the North.

The North Korean peace is one of President Clinton's rare positive foreign policy achievements. The Pentagon's influence for once was stymied by North Korea's supposed possession of nuclear weapons and, this time, willy-nilly, other less confrontational means had to be tried. Eight years of carrot rather than stick has not produced the end of narrow-minded, dictatorial communism in North Korea, but. it has averted war and the immense human suffering and dislocation that is its inevitable corollary. It may have persuaded the regime to begin to loosen up on the human rights front as the recent moves to own up to the kidnapping of Japanese nationals- and to return home those still alive- indicates. Nevertheless, it will be perhaps another eight years before there is confirmation of that in a society that has made almost a religion out of moribund political and economic activity.

The North Korea example, for all its inadequacies, is a parable of our times. It demonstrates that progress can now often be made by engagement in moving nations

out of their entrenched positions. Endless confrontation can be endlessly counterproductive. There is no conclusive evidence that isolating or cornering a nation succeeds in moderating its behaviour.

Carl Bildt, the former prime minister of Sweden, made this point more effectively than most m an icily ironic essay on Yugoslavia and the Kosovo war penned for Prospect. (Bildt, until recently the UN Secretary-General's Special envoy for the Balkans, is a man of political leanings, if elections are anything to go by, too far to the right for most of his countrymen.)

"The Baby Bombers", as the editor mischievously headlined the piece, was a wake-up call for the baby-boomers, now in the higher reaches of Western political power, "who have never learnt about war and power the hard way" and who, with their "smart wars — high rhetoric, high altitude and high technology; smart bombs for smart politicians," believe there is a "third way in war."

Bildt wrote of meeting Gerd Schmueckle, a retired German general who was wounded six times on the Russian front during World War II, but then served in the highest positions inside NATO. Perhaps, said the general, it is a question of generations. While the war veterans are losing their hair and teeth, the new generation suddenly has a different attitude towards war.

For Schmueckle, war was associated with horror beyond imagination, leaving deep psychological scars on individuals and nations. Bombs, he said, "do not create peace: instead they breed hatred for years, perhaps for generations."

Two years on we can see the truth of this in Yugoslavia. The bombing did not forestall ethnic cleansing, it appeared to precipitate it. And it has bequeathed a cauldron of mutual hatred and a political potage that no amount of NATO and UN policing and Western economic aid can clear up, even if it were forthcoming in something like the quantities promised — another example of the wartime rhetoric that misled the public.

Aficionados of Carl Bildt had the chance to pursue his thinking, one year after the bombing, in Survival, the quarterly journal of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. This is a much more lengthy discourse on the limits of force, and looks not just at Kosovo but also at Bosnia. Its essence is to challenge what has now achieved the status of conventional wisdom- the idea of the supremacy of air power.

Bildt argues that the Dayton agreement that brought an end to the fighting in Bosnia was "far more a victory for diplomacy than for force." He certainly doesn't exclude that the NATO air operation, initiated on 30 September 1995, "had a significant psychological impact during its first few days", but the political momentum that led to the accord came about primarily because of a new diplomatic approach.

"The essential diplomatic innovation was the willingness of the U.S. to accept some of the core demands of the Bosnian Serbs; demands that the U.S. previously had refused even to contemplate. In particular the Bosnian Serbs had consistently demanded a separate Republika Srpska inside a weak Bosnian framework."

After Dayton, there was an unforgivable lull in Western diplomatic activity. Neither the European Union nor the **U.S**. were willing to launch any serious diplomatic initiatives to head off the brewing crisis in Kosovo.

Albanian opinion inside Kosovo, once more fluid and open to diplomatic options, was allowed to harden, leading to the birth of an armed insurrection and driving the population into the embrace of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

The West, misreading the lesson of Bosnia, tried to head off Serbian repression with the threat of air power. Thus when diplomacy failed-and the Rambouillet agreement demanded much more from Slobodan Milosevic than the "peace agreement" which ended the war- the West had little choice but to make good on its threats.

The air operation, however, could not prevent a major humanitarian disaster. Whether it triggered it, Bildt more cautious than I, just says it "will remain a subject of debate".

Two years on, we have to live with the now seemingly insoluble Kosovo problem handed over to the UN, to the world. Poor old rest of the world! (That was its reward for kicking up a fuss about the **UN Charter** being abused by the West's unilateral decision to bomb.). The UN is supposed to find the peace that Western bombs could not deliver, even though, in Bildt's view, "there is no agreed framework for either the internal or external order of Kosovo".

Perhaps we can pose the direction of an alternative way with a question: what would it have taken to draw Milosevic's sting in the early days of the crisis in Yugoslavia- a move to offer Yugoslavia, as it has recently been offered Turkey, a chance of entering the European Union if the peace were kept? Or perhaps it would have been sufficient to offer post-Communist Yugoslavia massive amounts of aid to effect a transition to modern capitalism, as long as human rights were respected. (Sums, which now, in retrospect, would seem modest compared with what the West has subsequently had to spend via the UN, NATO and the humanitarian relief agencies.)

Or what would it have taken to persuade the Hutu-run government of Rwanda to shelve its contingency plans for massacring the minority Tutus? Even if every member of the Hutu elite had had to be bribed with ten Mercedes each it would have been peanuts compared with what was spent in feeding the fleeing refugees both inside and outside the country. More seriously, a programme instituted even as belatedly as the early 1990s (there had been many earlier smaller scale pogroms from 1959 on to give warning aplenty of what was to come,) to deal with the underlying issues of land-shortage, lack of agricultural development, together with the ill-equipped institutions of government, in particular local administration, the courts, the police and the army, would have cost a significant amount, but then again nothing compared with later sweat, guilt and even expenditure.

In a forward to Amnesty's yearbook for 2000 Pierre Sane penned an essay with the provocative title, "Soldiers in the Name of Human Rights." It was an intellectual's demolition job on the modern clay crusader school of thought. "Are invasion and bombardment by foreign forces justifiable in the name of human rights? And have external military interventions succeeded in winning respect for human rights?" he asked.

His reply in five lines is this: "Amnesty International has long refused to take a position on whether or not armed forces should be deployed in human rights crises. Instead, we argue that human rights crises can and should, be prevented. They are never inevitable. If government decisions to intervene are motivated by the quest for justice, why do they allow situations to deteriorate to such unspeakable injustice?"

Inevitably, given Amnesty's current preoccupations, Sane pointed to Yugoslavia. The NATO governments which bombed Belgrade are the same governments that were willing to deal with Slobodan Milosevic's government during the break up of the original Yugoslavia and were unwilling to address repeated warnings about the growing human rights crisis in Kosovo. As long ago as 1993, Amnesty was arguing in public: "if action is not taken soon to break the cycle of unchecked abuses and escalating tensions in Kosovo, the world may again find itself staring impotently at a new conflagration."

A similar argument can be made for the West's other great preoccupation — the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein, defeated and driven back after an attempted invasion of neighbouring Kuwait.

It was Amnesty, which called for international pressure on Iraq in the mid 1980s, especially after the 1985 chemical weapons attack by Saddam Hussein's troops on the town of Halabja, which killed an estimated 500, unarmed Kurdish civilians.

Amnesty also drew attention at this time to Saddam's notorious conduct towards his political enemies, incarcerating and torturing their children. Yet Western governments were then full square behind Iraq as it fought a World War I-type conflict of attrition with its neighbour Iran, who America could not forgive either for its fundamentalist stridency nor for its taking hostage the diplomats of the U.S. embassy a few years earlier. The West simply turned a blind-eye to Saddam's human rights violations, whilst it sold him increasingly sophisticated weapons of war. And now Bush apparently thinks he can liberate Iraq, overthrow and kill Saddam the monster his predecessor Ronald Reagan helped create, and bring democracy to this beleaguered country. How vain! Apart from the fact that war is the worst of human wrongs when human rights are trampled right into the blood-soaked earth, there is little evidence to show that a new regime in Iraq is likely to stand for democracy and human rights. More likely a new war will throw Iraq into spasms of inter-communal violence, trigger violent turbulence all over the Middle East and perhaps even throw nuclear-armed Pakistan into the hands of the militants.

Sane is also right to question the rhetoric of Western governments. They say, when they do intervene, they are motivated by "universal values." "But why," asks Sane "is the international community so selective in its actions?" The imposition of UN sanctions on Libya or present day Iraq stands in marked contrast to the non-imposition of sanctions on Israel for refusing to comply with UN Security Council resolutions. The actions over Kosovo and East Timor beg the question why was little or nothing done in Rwanda, Chechnya, or Turkey?

This begs another question: if the motivation of governments is "peace", as they often claim, why do they fuel conflicts by supplying arms or allowing their nationals to trade in arms? Despite the recent rapid increase in wars in Africa, arms exports to the

region doubled last year, mainly small arms such as assault rifles and sub-machine guns that have been virtually ignored by those who seek controls on nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, yet which appear to be the weapons that cause most of the damage in most of the wars.

In the case of East Timor, two of the major powers that argued for international intervention —the U.S. and the UK- were also the major suppliers of arms to the Indonesian government, whose security forces were responsible for widespread and systematic violations of human rights in East Timor.

The history of the last few years has demonstrated vividly that those who seek to do well by military intervention find, more often than not, it's a double-edged sword. Failure is more likely than success.

In Kosovo, many months after the Nato air strikes, violence is being committed on a daily basis against Serbs, Romas and even peacekeepers. Organised crime calls many of the shots.

In Somalia, 10 years after a UN military intervention- in which, in fact, the U.S. army acted as an autonomous agent- there is no functioning government and no judiciary. Continued fighting, especially in the south, imperils hundreds of thousands of people already suffering famine. The UN forces themselves committed serious human rights abuses. And the unsuccessful attempts of the U.S. Rangers to arrest one of the guerrilla leaders diverted them from the ostensible purpose of their mission. They killed and arbitrarily detained hundreds of Somali civilians, including children.

I do not try to argue against intervention in all and every situation. I know how disastrous it was in Rwanda when the UN pulled out its forces as the mass killings began, and up to one million people died in the ensuing genocide.

Yet if we have our wits about us and not just our reactive impulses, we will observe that none of the human rights tragedies of recent years were unpredictable or unavoidable. A year before the genocide in Rwanda, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions warned of what was to come. Amnesty, for its part, repeatedly exposed the Indonesian government's gross violations of human rights, not just in East Timor, but also in Acel, Irian Jaya and the rest of Indonesia. Sane concludes his argument, "We fear now that our pleas for action on other countries are similarly being downplayed. When some human rights catastrophe explodes, will we again be expected to see only military intervention as the option?"

All of which brings me back to my main point: prevention. Prevention work may be less newsworthy and more difficult to justify to the public than intervention in times of crisis. It requires the sustained investment of significant resources without the emotive media images of hardship and suffering. It's the hard day-to-day slog of human rights vigilance-using diplomatic measures to persuade governments to ratify human rights treaties and implement them at home. It means ensuring there is no impunity and that every time someone's rights are violated, the incident is investigated, the truth established and those responsible brought to justice. Not the least, it means supporting the establishment of the International Criminal Court

It also means that governments must be prepared to condemn violations of human rights by their allies as well as their foes. It demands a halt in the sale of arms to human rights violators. It means ensuring that economic sanctions do not hurt the wrong people- in Iraq where it is estimated that 40,000 children die every year because of tight sanctions on essential foods, medicines and hospital equipment.

Sometimes we have no choice but to stand apart from the clamour for armed action even in the face of immediate suffering. We have to be careful that "human rights" might be usurped to justify the military ambitions of powerful states. And why should the human rights movement be forced to choose between intervention and inaction? Why should we be forced to choose between two types of failure when the successful course of action is known? The best we can do is to ensure that whatever route is chosen, we do what we can to contain the suffering and let the powerful know our anger. Prevention of human rights crises is the correct course. The problem, 1 believe, is not lack of early warning, but lack of early action. Only by protecting human rights everywhere, every day, will we render the debate over humanitarian action obsolete.

The human rights movement is at a major turning point. It has questioned the orthodoxies —even the liberal ones of our age with a daring that could not have been even contemplated forty years ago. In challenging NATO's engagement in what, in the West, was a fairly popular war with Yugoslavia and in arguing that most of the efforts of the international community led by the West to use force to uphold human rights is often counterproductive, it has staked out what has been described as an extreme position.

Extreme today? The conventional wisdom tomorrow? Amnesty, in fact, is testing the waters. The Danish philosopher Kierkegaard wrote, "We have to live life forwards but we can only understand it backwards." Indeed, it is impossible to decide if Amnesty's judgment definitely is correct and its timing right by peering into the future. Yet a look backwards, at least to the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and, better still, further back, gives a rather clear picture that there is enormous momentum in the human rights cause. Moreover, many things related to it, from the number of military conflicts to the health of young children, have improved sharply for the better. We live in a world which, on balance, despite all its many wars, poverty, refugees, weapons development, arms sales and human rights abuses is actually improving for the better at a rate quite unprecedented in human history. Human rights activists have been both part-instigator and part-beneficiary of this tide. What is needed at this time is men and women with the necessary insight to seize the moment: to take the rising tide and push the boats even further out to sea; to be demanding of our institutions, systems and traditions; above all, to challenge our orthodoxies.

The signs are mostly, though not in every case, propitious, whichever way one looks at it, political, military, economic or social. Is such a conclusion naive? Won't historians be able a hundred years hence to look at the end of the twentieth century much as we now look at the end of the nineteenth and say, 'unfortunately the peace and prosperity of that moment was but an interlude before the bloodiest century in mankind's history?' Will they conclude, as Aldous Huxley did, that "Every road towards a better state of society is blocked, sooner or later, by war, by threats of war,

preparations for war. That is the truth, the odious and unacceptable truth?"

The pessimists of our day have grist for their mill- in 2002 President Bush announced he wanted the largest rise in the military budget since the end of the Cold War build-up under Ronald Reagan; the conundrum of how best to contain and restrain Iraq and North Korea continues; civil wars that target civilians more than soldiers are all over the place; Israel and Palestine are at war; nuclear weapons are proliferating to states that don't have the secure command and control systems of the old nuclear powers; and the Americans plan to build a national missile defence, even though abrogating the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty could mean de-stabilising relations with not only Russia but with China and India too.

Yet despite these ominous developments, including the terrorism of the Al Qaeda movement, the big picture is good, arguably far better and more inherently stable that it was in 1899. Major war, involving the most powerful industrialised states, those capable of massive destruction far and wide, is much less likely than it has ever been. Unlike in previous ages neither economic, religious nor ideological forces point us or push us in the direction of war. War, in the age of nuclear and high-tech weapons, is a loss-making enterprise. Virulent religious strife, once the cause of so much bloodshed in Europe, is now limited to former Yugoslavia- and even there with the fall of Milosevic an end may be in sight. Communism in Europe is practically dead and the credo of the West, democracy, does not lend itself to wars of conversion. War, moreover, has lost most of its glamour. Honour and heroism, the old virtues for every war from the time of the Iliad to General Douglas MacArthur got lost in the jungles of Vietnam.

The state no longer is made by war for the purpose of making war. The modern industrial state is, par excellence, an economic institution. Democracy, not so long ago an uncertain, precarious achievement, is today deeply embedded in all the most advanced economies. And democracies do not seem to go to war with each other either. Elections, increasing political and economic transparency, the separation of powers, a watchdog media, the urge of young men to make money not war and, in Europe, not least, the formation of the single currency, make serious all out war a remote possibility.

But this sense of common security is, of course, confined to Europe, North America and Japan — and, it should be added, South America which, for all its historic tendencies towards bravado, is, over the last two centuries, the continent that has least gone to war.

In the Middle East, all the old-time ingredients of war making are present- greed over a scarce resource and religious fervour, combined with the new-time ingredients of modern weapons. Still, combative though many of the countries in the region tend to be, they lack the capacity to wage major war in the World War sense. Outside the Western world only China and Russia could do that. And it is these two states that hold in their hands the peace of the 21 century, to make it or break it.

Russia claims a sphere of influence in the territory of the former Soviet Union; China in the South China Sea. Yet neither is in any real sense preparing for major war. Both are essentially inwardly preoccupied and neither is committed, as were their orthodox communist predecessors, to the violent overthrow of present day political, military and economic arrangements. China's ambition to incorporate Taiwan can be settled in

a measured, slow and dignified way, if both sides are committed not to ratcheting up dangerous rhetoric.

"The practice of war, once the prerogative of the strong, instead is increasingly the tactic of the weak", argues Michael Mandelbaum in the quarterly journal, Survival. His argument, eloquently developed at length, is that "the great chess game of international politics is finished, or at least suspended. A pawn is now just a pawn, not a sentry standing guard against an attack on a king." We'll still have our Kashmirs, Iraqs and Rwandas but, over time, they are becoming less numerous and the stakes for the rest of the world are lower. Even the worst of scenarios-nuclear war between India and Pakistan- would not lead to another world war. It would be a local affair, causing immense suffering for those involved, but with a limited impact, other than horror, on the world outside.

That doesn't mean that this new century won't have some bad wars. Doubtless, there will still be plenty of those. But major war, involving a clash of the best-armed gladiators, with convulsions on a scale that twice consumed the young men and the innocents of the twentieth century, could be in abeyance.

Nevertheless, even if the point about large-scale inter-state war is accepted, many would argue the number of ethnic wars is on the increase. The media certainly work on the assumption that tribal and nationalist fighting is rising on a frightening scale. But they are wrong. The modern era of ethnic warfare peaked in the early 1990s.

Every year for the past decade, the authoritative Stockholm International Peace Research Institute **(**SIPRI) has monitored the course of world conflicts and every year since the end of the Cold War the number has fallen each year, from thirty-five down to twenty five. Gone into the history books, in all likelihood, are such conflicts as The Chittagong Hill Tracts dispute in Bangladesh, a long-running local sore, and Somalia, that managed in its momentary severity to sabotage a new era of UN peacekeeping. If it wasn't that the number of wars has been rising in Africa the worldwide fall in conflicts would be even more dramatic.

Confirmation for the analysis made by SIPRI comes from a major study curried out by the Minority at Risk Project at the University of Maryland. Professor Ted Gurr, the project leader, wrote in Foreign Affairs in early 2000:

"The brutality of the conflict in Kosovo, East Timor and Rwanda obscures the larger shift from confrontation towards accommodation. But the trends are there, a sharp decline in new ethnic wars, the settlement of many old ones, and a pro-active effort by states and the international organizations to recognize group rights and to channel ethnic disputes into conventional politics."

It was only a few years ago that U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, commenting on the outbreak of ethnic strife in countries as Somalia, Zaire and ex-Yugoslavia, asked, "Where will it end? Will it end with 5,000 countries?" It was a gross misjudgment. Two thirds of all new campaigns of ethnic protest and rebellion in the last fifteen years began between 1989 and 1993. Since 1993, the number of wars of self-determination has been halved. During the 1 990s sixteen separatist wars were settled by peace agreements and ten others were checked by cease-fires and

negotiation. Even the most bloody of them, the war in Sri Lanka, is now being negotiated away.

Governments and media have been culpable in cultivating a weary cynicism about the inexorable growth in ethnic conflict. They have misled us. Concerted effort by a great many people and organizations, from UN agencies to Amnesty International, from Medicines Sans Frontieres to religious groups, from Sweden's small, private, Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research to the large intergovernmental Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to the Norwegian government have helped bring about a sea-change.

The list of the countries where the problems of ethnic conflict looked until quite recently potentially ominous but which are now vastly improved is a long one. Baltic nationalists have moderated their treatment of Russians. Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania are no longer under threat. Croatia's new moderate government is respecting minorities. Likewise, conflicts between the central government and India's Mizo people, the Gaguaz minority in Moldova and the Chakma tribal group in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hills have all diminished. Nationalists willing to continue fighting for total independence, such as the rebel leaders in Chechnya and East Timor, are fewer and far between. Central governments, for their part, appear to be becoming more flexible and sensible about devolving power. One of democratic Russia's most important but least-noted achievements has been its peacefully arrived at power sharing agreements with Tatarstan, Bashkiria and forty other regions. It is important to know that the large majority of these conflicts were brought to successful conclusion without outside military intervention.

A list almost as long can still be made for ethnic disputes unsolved. But what we learnt the last few years is that the pool of ethnic conflicts is not infinite; that the ultra pessimism of just a few years ago was misplaced; and that human beings can settle for less, as long as the dominant party recognizes the underdog's integrity and gives it enough room for manoeuvre.

Side by side with these developments over war and conflict has been the remarkable spread of democracy in recent years.

Every December the New York-based Freedom House publishes its annual survey of democratic trends. Last year it concluded "There were major gains in liberty in 2001 and that there now exists the largest number of politically free countries in the history of mankind." Contrary to popular western belief there are more people in the Third World living under democratic governance than there are in the West. What is more, thanks to transformation in Nigeria and Indonesia, the majority of the world's Muslims is now living in countries that practice democracy.

This end of century survey finds that only 36% of the peoples of the world live in countries that are not free- the overwhelming proportion of those are in China. Two thirds of the world's countries, 120 of them, have achieved democratic rule.

Yet still the argument continues: is the glass half full or half empty? That, in fact, it's nearly full seems to be ignored by most of our active political class, who seem to

believe they thrive personally if they can paint the world blacker than it is, with only the prowess of their own country able to sort it out.

The Russian election that confirmed Vladimir Putin in power or the Turkish election that threw out the old style politicians who were running the country into the ground should be a salutary reminder of how the democratic pulse works: overturning the debilitating practices that accrete to any working body politic and breathing new life into those hackneyed words, "a new mandate." Maybe, after all, insiders, once given the vote, have a better feel of how to correct the course of their country than the realpolitik politicos in foreign parts.

The atmosphere HAS changed for the better. Democracy has been throughout the century a slow, uncertain but in the end, steady cumulative process and now it is a hard thing for anyone to block, at least for any length of time. While one can worry, and sometimes despair, about the homogenised uniformity brought about by many aspects of globalisation, one can only rejoice in this phenomenon.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were only *55* sovereign polities. (There are now 192.) Not one enjoyed fully competitive multiparty politics with universal suffrage. A mere 12.5% of mankind lived under a form of government that could be described as somewhat democratic, although suffrage was generally limited to males.

Even as recently as mid-century there were only 22 functioning democracies and a further 21 restricted democracies. They accounted for a mere 12% of the globe's population. Meanwhile, totalitarian communism had spread to govern one third of the world's people.

But the last quarter of a century in particular has seen a tremendous acceleration in democracy's spread. One doesn't have to be too gullible an optimist to imagine that the first decade of this century could well see the dawn of a near totally democratic world. To say democracy and its handmaiden liberty are now only western constructs is as foolish as saying that rice is only an Asian food. Any long view of history, with rather more time-span than the life of McDonalds, will realize that the cultures of the world have been cross-fertilizing each other for thousands of years.

Of course, democracy has had some high moments before, but then regressed; as in pre-war Europe with the rise of fascism and subsequently the spread of Communism

In Iran, in the early twentieth century, democracy was the constitutional order but then the monarchy reasserted itself and since then Iran has never known, until the last couple of years, real democracy. Even today, an elected parliament and president are circumscribed by the independent, and constitutionally superior, power of the chief religious leader.

In Egypt in 1923 there was universal suffrage and a parliament with considerable power. But it didn't last long and, was made abundantly clear in Egypt's recent controlled elections. Egypt shows little sign of being able to shed the military's

totalitarian grip.

There is a powerful, if pessimistic, school of thought that argues that democracy will never take real root in the Muslim world. Yet we can see a significant and widespread pro-democracy ferment in much of the Muslim world and important steps towards democratic reform underway in many Islamic countries. Five out of 42 predominantly Muslim states now have democratically elected governments: Albania, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mali and Turkey. In fact if one takes into account these five Muslim democracies, add in Nigeria where half the population is Muslim and the Muslims who live in Europe, the Americas and India, a majority of the world's 1.15 billion Muslims live under democratically elected governments.

In several Arab states, the passing away of old monarchs has led to reform. In Morocco, under the new king, there is a much greater tolerance of opposition parties. In Jordan, under its new king, press laws have been relaxed and there have been competitive elections at the municipal level. In Lebanon, although still under Syrian domination, there have been relatively pluralistic elections. In Kuwait the national legislature (albeit elected by exclusively male suffrage) has wide legislative authority and the emir's decrees are subject to its approval.

Qatar, an oil-rich state on the Persian Gulf, may itself have only progressed to the point which it allows open elections at the municipal level. But it is the home of the Al-Jazira television station, which has become a major source for the spread of the idea of openness and democratic practice. It includes regular debates on theology, democracy, and human rights and allows wide-ranging interviews with dissidents and political exiles from throughout the Arab world.

In 1984 Iran's representative at the UN said the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "represented a secular understanding of the Judaeo- Christian tradition." Saudi Arabia abstained in the vote on it in 1948. The Saudi delegate to the UN said that the provision for religious liberty in the Declaration violated Islamic Law. But he was answered by the delegate from Pakistan who argued that Islam supported freedom of conscience. And today the delegate of Iran to the UN can be heard speaking of the desirability of democracy for his country and the full observance of human rights.

Islam, as Christianity before it, is evolving at a rapid pace. Many Muslims today, including many of its most informed religious leaders, argue that many so-called "traditional" Islamic practices, the forms of punishment and the attitude to women and non-Muslim minorities are not Islamic at all, or at least not mandated in all circumstances. Most Muslims indeed understand their religion's essentials as a message of tolerance, compassion and social justice.

It came as no surprise that at the UN Conference on Human Rights in 1993, meant to review and renew the commitments made in 1948, the Islamic world was split.

In the end, however, there was an overwhelming endorsement of resolutions that reaffirmed the validity of the original Declaration, and indeed extended its scope. Even China and Saudi Arabia felt compelled to cast their vote in favour of the consensus. The African and Latin American countries in particular had fought hard for such a meeting of the minds. The universality of human rights was reaffirmed. The final declaration states that "The universal nature of these rights is beyond

question. All human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated." Thus, the entire spectrum of human rights was endorsed without division, an amazing, if underreported, step forward for mankind.

The Vienna Declaration also stated "the human person is the central subject of development." Human rights were reaffirmed as including not just civil and political rights, but the broader range of economic, social and cultural rights, together with the Right to Development. The first set of human rights was seen as guaranteeing freedom from fear; the second set dealt with freedom from want.

In retrospect, it is surprising that the two sets should have been seen as somehow contradictory. Even up to the middle of the Vienna Conference the U.S. was arguing that social and economic rights were not so important.

Yet the progress we have witnessed in the last fifty years in civil and political rights has come about, in part, because of advances in economic, social and cultural rights. The two have a symbiotic relationship. The swift advance of political rights is so much easier where the standard of living is rapidly rising. The rise of authoritarianism is more likely where there are either great disparities in incomes or a general, widespread, economic malaise. Contra wise, democracy is more likely to provide the climate for economic advance and steps towards a more benign distribution of income.

Proponents of so-called "Asian values,"- the Chinese, prime minister Mahathir of Malaysia or ex prime minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore-dispute this. They attribute growth in Southeast Asia to the Confucian virtues of obedience, order and respect for authority. "The exuberance of democracy leads to indiscipline and disorderly conduct which are inimical to development," says Mr Lee. (Yet it was only a generation ago that observers of the Confucian ethic blamed it for much of Asia's economic backwardness.) They claim that the suspension or limiting of human rights is a sacrifice of the few for the benefit of the many.

Yet anyone who has visited Japan or Taiwan will know it's perfectly possible for Asian societies to embrace modernity without discarding the virtues of respect, order and obedience.

Besides, if one looks at the Western world with a broader view than focusing in on say, San Francisco, there are a lot of so-called Confucian values at work in the West. Family values are certainly enormously strong in Italy and Spain. Collective obligations are taken more seriously than possibly anywhere else in the world in Scandinavia. (And you can see how both strands in European culture have been transported to parts of America.).

Democracies, in fact, tend to make economic reform more feasible. Political checks and balances together with open debate on the costs and benefits of government policy give the public both a sense of involvement and a stake in reform. One reason India never has been overwhelmed by unexpected famine as China and Ethiopia have is the free press. In India the press has always alerted the central government to what was going on in the distant countryside long before the cautious bureaucrats got round to filing their grey reports. (And when India under Indira Gandhi introduced a state of emergency suspending parliament, the electorate, mainly uneducated peasants, took the first opportunity to throw her out.) India now seems poised to become the greatest economic success among the larger Asian developing countries, overtaking China.

All countries in the end come up against the reality that nearly all the world's richest countries are free, and nearly all the poorest are not. If dictatorship made countries rich, then Africa and Latin America would, by now, be economic heavyweights. (The fact that countries such as China and South Korea progressed rapidly on the economics front under dictatorship probably owed itself to the Confucian work ethic rather than dictatorship. But even that seems to work better- in Hong Kong and modern day South Korea- if there is room for democracy.)

A study made by Surjit Bhalla, formerly of the World Bank, examined ninety countries over the period 1973-1990. It found that civil and political freedoms promote growth. Other things being equal- in particular economic freedom- an improvement of one point in civil and political freedom raises annual growth by approximately a full percentage point.

More recently, after extensive research, Freedom House concluded in a study published in 2001 that there "is a high and statistically significant correlation between the level of political freedom as measured by Freedom House and economic freedom as measured by the Wall Street Journal/Heritage Foundation survey". This study effectively answered the old conundrum of whether the large number of prosperous countries are free as a consequence of their prosperity and development or whether prosperity is a consequence of basic political and civic freedoms. Economic growth is certainly possible in an unfree political culture, but political freedom accelerates it. Repressive countries with high and sustained growth rates, such as China, are the exception rather than tine rule.

In the long run even the most apolitical capitalist learns to appreciate a political structure that will protect his property, both material and intellectual. A dictatorship, however benign, is always more vulnerable than a democracy. It can be more easily overthrown and its policy simply reversed. Democracy and the freedoms that usually go with it-an independent judiciary, freedom of expression, the enforcement of contracts and the inbuilt pressures of free trade- give the businessman what he wants for the long run, while offering the educated classes an outlet for their opinions and the workers a safety valve for their grievances.

The economic and social advance of the so-called Third World, in the round, has been spectacular. The poorer countries have covered as much distance in human development during the past thirty years as the industrialised world did in over a century. A child born today in a developing country can expect to live sixteen years longer than a child born thirty-five years ago. The mortality rate of children under five has been halved. The proportion of children enrolled in primary school has risen from less than a half to more than three quarters. The percentage of rural families with access to safe water has risen from less than 10% to more than 60%. The proportion of couples using modern contraceptives has risen from almost nothing to more than 50%. Average family size is falling in almost every country. Although the South's average per capita income is only 6% of the North's, its social progress has been so effective that its average life expectancy is now a remarkably 80%o of that of the rich industrialised world and its average literacy rate a significant 66%.

It is remarkable that such progress has been made despite inadequate resources, an often inhospitable international economic climate and, in many countries, not always the wisest or most responsive of governments. If this kind of momentum can be achieved in less than perfect conditions, then it is not hard to imagine the further steps

that can be made in a more democratic, socially aware and responsibly managed world.

The unmet needs are vast: 800 million people go to bed hungry every day; a billion people eke out the barest existence in perpetual poverty; 1.75 billion people are without safe water; and 1 .5 billion people have no access to primary health care. Contrary to some the claims of the "globalisation" school, the progress that has been made is not because of world-wide economic growth, it is because of the hard humdrum work of introducing better health services and the rapid growth of primary schools- and the often derided work of the aid agencies. Out of 124 Third World countries, for which there are adequate statistics, only twenty-one had a per capita growth rate of 3% or more each year between 1995 and 1998. No fewer than one hundred countries in the Third World and Eastern Europe have experienced serious economic decline over the past three decades.

It is true, however, that the remarkable U.S- led boom of the 1990s-interrupted for only a brief period by the Asian economic crisis of four years ago- enabled positive growth to spread. It is also true that it is the countries most open for freer trade that have the best record for economic growth. But now with the West in near recession the omens are no longer quite so good.

The challenge is to combine high levels of human development, low unemployment and rapid economic growth, creating a "virtuous circle" in which worker productivity rises and triggers an increase in real wages which in turn attracts more investment in human capital, in education and access to social services.

The pace setters in this kind of development are the East and Southeast Asian nations, led by Japan. Not only have they grown fastest; they also have been the most fair in their distribution of income and assets such as land and credits. Not least, they have built on growth by investing in health and education for all, however poor. South Korea has surged in a single generation from rags to riches. In 1945 only 13% of adults had any formal schooling. By 1990 the average time spent in school was 9.9 years, higher than the industrialized countries.

Still great areas of economic backwardness remain especially in parts of Africa, South Asia and South America. At the same time, there is right through the Third World more drug and alcohol abuse, the rapid spread of the AIDS epidemic, more deaths on the road and more pollution. Homicide rates around the world (the most reliable measure of individual violence) have increased very fast particularly in Africa, Latin America and China (However, Asia and the Pacific have declining rates.) Globalisation may be necessary for further progress but there can be no question that it is sharpening disparities of income, even as the proportion of people living in extreme poverty is falling.

There is an answer to the dilemma. There is no country on earth that cannot afford to do more for their poor. What is needed is a better targeting and use of the money set aside to relieve poverty. Simply to ensure that young girls get educated would make the world of difference not just to the rate of poverty and population increase, but also to the future growth of violence.

Which brings us back to the need for more human rights — so that the voice of the downtrodden can be heard more easily and can carry more political weight. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, in a speech made in Tehran University in 1997,

argued against those who see authoritarian leadership as the one that can best serve the poor. "When have you heard a free voice demand an end to freedom?" he asked. "When have you heard a slave argue for slavery? When have you heard a victim of torture endorse the ways of the torturer? Where have you heard the tolerant cry out for intolerance?"

On balance, most of the world's people do live in the best of economic times. This has had a marked impact on the progress made on extending the range and practice of human rights. Equally, the advance of human rights in a political and personal sense has produced a resonance that has spilt over into its economic and social arena, pushing the leaders of developing societies to be more responsive to the needs of the poor. Ironically, one can see this process at work even in societies such as Pinochet's Chile, Suharto's Indonesia or Singapore. It was part of their justification for spurning "western human rights" that they could point to how much progress there had been made in helping the poor. (But for every "benign" dictator who cared about the poor there have been a dozen who cared not one wit, and the poor had no chance to vote them out. Only a handful of the authoritarian governments out of the hundreds that have existed have been economically enlightened.)

If we do live "in the best of times", the inevitable question is what next?

In terms of treaties and declarations the human rights lobby now has a tremendous range of tools at its beck and call. Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we now have a total of sixty seven human rights instruments embracing: The Right of Self-Determination,

Prevention of Discrimination; War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, including Genocide; Slavery, Servitude, Forced Labour, Torture and Detention; Nationality; Statelessness; Asylum and Refugees; Freedom of Association; Employment Policy; Political Rights of Women; Rights of the Family, Children and Youth; Social Welfare, Progress and Development.

This is the tremendous hard-won legacy of the post-war generation. The question now is what will the post Cold War generation do with it? One important, perhaps the most important, avenue to explore is to continue to push back the frontiers of international law.

International law offers the world the best choice of avoiding war. If law were observed, military might- and even the enforcement procedures of the Security Council- would become increasingly redundant. Yet if there is no law, all the enforcement in the world will not achieve its objective.

Many of the norms of international law, particularly on human rights, are already respected by domestic courts. Many regional institutions already operate by international law such as the European Court of Justice. The World Bank and the World Trade Organization have their own legal tribunals for arbitrating investment and trade disputes.

How far are we prepared to subordinate national loyalties before a law that transcends individual cultures and societies but is just and avoids conflicts?

A number of "good global citizen states" need to take the lead if we are to build a world of "laws not of men" in which the powerful or the cruel do not necessarily get their way and the vulnerable, the outspoken and the preyed-upon have the chance to show that nobody and no nation is above the law.

The UN Charter made a bold beginning. It established the International Court of Justice, the World Court. This "cathedral of law" may be the most imaginative of all the constructs of the UN's founding fathers. However, it is limited to hearing cases only between states. Moreover, it has jurisdiction only when disputing states agree to abide by its decisions. Too few countries give this consent automatically.

Nevertheless, with its active jurisdictional responsibility for over 400 international treaties, it has made steady if slow progress. It has ruled on such issues as the question of rights over the continental shelf affecting Tunisia and Libya, a frontier dispute between Burkino Faso and Mali, Nicaragua's action against the U.S. for mining the waters of its main port and, most recently, Nigeria and Benin's dispute over oil reserves.

Although the number of cases is relatively small, the Court's influence is far greater. A judgment can fix precedents and shape the future interpretation of principles and treaties in the whole field of international law.

So great, in fact, is the implicit power of the Court that a decision by one nation to refer a case to it can greatly exercise the mind of any other government that might be affected by the decision. For example, in 1974, Australia and New Zealand asked the Court to rule on the extremely sensitive matter of responsibility for trans-boundary radioactive pollution, citing France as the government responsible. Before the case could be heard the president of France publicly declared his government would cease atmospheric nuclear testing.

It wasn't, however, until October 1994, that the UN created a court to deal with questions of individual criminal behaviour. A Bosnian Serb, Duscan Tadic, arrested in Germany, was accused of killing, raping, beating and torturing Croats and Muslims during the "ethnic cleansing" in north-western Bosnia, and his arrest was initiated by the then recently created ad hoc war crimes tribunal on ex-Yugoslavia. Not long after the Security Council established a parallel tribunal for Rwanda. (Also in August 2000 it created a third tribunal for Sierra Leone.) Then in Rome, in June 1998, came the formal vote to establish by treaty an International Criminal Court to try war crimes wherever they occurred. Yet the U.S. remains determined to protect U.S. soldiers and officials from falling under the Court's jurisdiction and has gone into a worldwide battle to undermine the court's reach and authority. But where else, we should ask Washington, would Saddam Hussein or bin Laden be put on trial should they be ever captured alive?

William Lace, convenor of the Coalition for an International Court, an umbrella group for more than a thousand human rights groups, has argued that exempting citizens of countries that have not ratified the treaty would be counterproductive. "It would drastically undermine the effectiveness of the Court and would provide an opening not only for the U.S. to protect its officials and soldiers but also for the so-called rogue countries the court should have as its primary focus."

Amnesty's legal experts are puzzled at the strength of U.S. opposition, as the treaty gives countries whose citizens are charged with international crimes the right to try

them in their own courts, as the U.S. had frequently done in the past when U.S. soldiers are involved in criminal activity. The Court can in fact only prosecute when governments are acting to shield individuals from their national courts.

Of course, the unspoken problem is what if the court should attempt a prosecution of a case that the U.S. authorities don't consider a war crime? The bombing of ex-Yugoslavia is indeed a perfect example of what could happen. Is it enough to say the Court will be wise and cautious enough not to seek a major confrontation with the world's superpower? Or perhaps on occasion, it should. There the matter rests and Amnesty and its allies will have their work cut out to bring American public opinion around. Probably the best way to do that is to wait for the Court to show its mettle. If it can deal with some future pinochets, Saddam Husseins and Milosevics- or be seen to be deterring such kind of behaviour on the world stage- then the vigour of U.S. opposition may begin to whither.

Dictatorships were responsible for the last centuries' two world wars. Indeed, for most wars before and since. Democracies that practice the importance of human rights do not take up arms against each other. The human rights that we now battle for involve contesting the human wrongs of not just the false imprisonment of non-violent political activists, as Peter Benenson the founder of Amnesty first thought, but the human wrongs of dictatorship, war and economic disadvantage. Hint should be our struggle in the years ahead. Only continuing victory in that cause can make the world the place we want to live in.