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OXFORDFORUM

ISSUETWO SUMMER 2005

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the best ideas are common property

RWANDA, CHECHNYA, BOSNIA, Iraq. Some parts of the world have ceased to be defined by their geographical location. When compiling this second edition of the Oxford Forum it was frustrating to think that just two decades ago the above list would have generated little beyond innocent confusion (and perhaps an embarrassed search for an atlas) even from astute followers of current affairs. How quickly a place can become transformed into a horror story.

In many respects, though, it is more troubling to contemplate a different array. Mention the likes of Colombia, Nepal, Lebanon or Uganda today, and most informed individuals will be aware that they are – or are on the brink of becoming – war zones. Some might even be able to recite an idiot's guide to the hostilities – courtesy, perhaps, of some 'special report' in a Sunday newspaper, perused at an idle moment. Yet precious few will be able to proffer a detailed analysis of what is going wrong in these regions; precious few will be able to pontificate to the same degree so many can on those first four conflicts. An alarming question keeps cropping up: does it necessarily take a genocide, a secession or superpower involvement for us to want to be experts on a region?

If so, the outlook for the future is bleak. It is all very well to talk of 'learning lessons' every time a crime against humanity is committed, but if we aren't prepared to provide ourselves with the knowledge needed to apply these lessons elsewhere, any study of past horrors is doomed to remain a morbid curiosity. Expertise is worthless if it cannot be applied broadly.

So the purpose of much of this edition is to provide expertise of value. Within our 'Conflict' section, detailed analyses of a handful of the world's lesser-understood hotspots – from Tibet to the DRC – are interspersed with personal accounts of more infamous tragedies: those suffered by Iraq and Rwanda in particular. We hope the latter serve as a chilling warning to the potential consequences of comfortable ignorance.

Moreover, we have tried to take a constructive approach wherever possible. His Holiness the Dalai Lama uses his article to set out a vision for a world governed by non-violence and dialogue, as well as exploring more specific paths to peace between Tibet and China. Sir Marrack Goulding's piece explicitly outlines a set of ten guidelines any would-be peacemaker should abide by. Yet each piece of analysis we include has at least one eye on the future, offering proposals to address the troubles in question. We do not wish for one second that every such conclusion be treated as gospel. Indeed, part of the problem for victims of under-analysed conflicts is the fact so few feel qualified to challenge received wisdom. As ever, the purpose of the Oxford Forum is to initiate debate that would not otherwise take place; with luck it might go some small way towards preventing more places being defined by their past.

Elsewhere in this issue, conflicts of a more trivial type are addressed and assessed – conflicts between business and the environment, between government and the media, between the economy and the arts. John Simpson, meanwhile, explains in an interview why he fears an obsession with simplifying global conflict is amongst a number of developments undermining his profession.

We hope the militaristic focus on does not come across as sensationalist. Some theorists claim hostilities are an inevitable product of human interaction – citing the prevalence of international and interpersonal aggression as evidence for this. Were we to concur, this edition would simply be voyeuristic.

Yet instead we take the alternate view. Conflict is a problem to be solved – an anomaly, to be studied for its causes as a matter of urgency. This Oxford Forum is an attempt to hold it up to the light.

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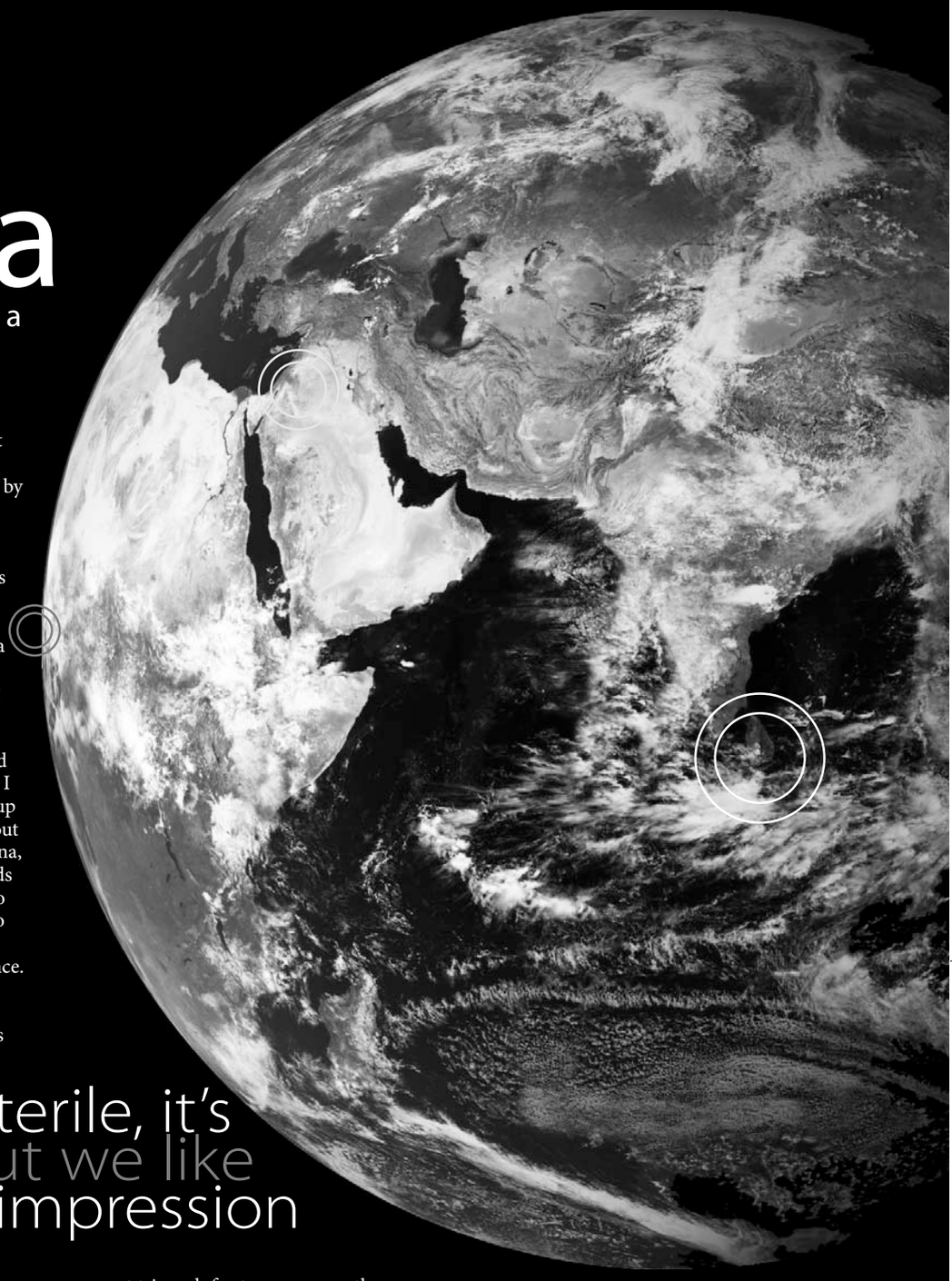
death in Ghana

MARTIN McCLUSKEY finds a Ghanaian funeral riddled with contradictions



DEATH, ALTHOUGH WE'D rather not think about it, comes to us all. Constantly, it seems, we're bombarded by images of starving children, bloodied corpses or views across dusty plains to the killing fields of the world's most recent genocide. Death is something that happens to other people, in places far from here.

The truth, we know, is quite different. I've had the misfortune of sitting in quite a few cars in funeral processions over the years; a quiet, mournful hush surrounding the entire event broken only by uncomfortable mumblings and quiet sobs.

Yet one funeral broke the mould. Instead of a silent convoy of darkened limousines, I followed a coffin from the back of a pick-up truck – part of a convoy stretching for about a mile behind me. The funeral in Wa, Ghana, of a prominent local priest attracted crowds from the town and from villages miles into the bush, many of whom lined the route to the funeral grounds.

In Africa, death is a communal experience. Most people I knew would spend their weekends during the Hot Season (when deaths inevitably increased) at the funerals of at least one or two relatives or friends.

Death isn't sterile, it's not clean, but we like to give that impression

They are public events, taking place in village squares: corpses are exposed to the mourners – often in a gruesome fashion, propped up in a chair – surrounded by their possessions. Dirges are sung and women sob, sporadically letting out piercing wails – part emotion, part symbolism.

To outsiders, the scene is disturbing and disorienting. There's a perverse fascination among Westerners with the dead. I found myself drawn to look at the corpse: this strange remnant of a human being, displayed for all to see. It was clear that I was the only one shocked at this sight. For the rest it was just like every other weekend.

This openness has a lot to teach us. Death isn't sterile, it's not clean, but we like to give that impression. The Ghanaian approach communicated the realities and, in many ways, made it easier for people to move on.

Yet the process was full of contradictions. Whilst the body lay there for all to see in an apparent triumph for transparency, the cause of death would rarely be mentioned as families tried to keep the truth from emerging. Doctors would be encouraged to sign off a medical certificate for 'Tuberculosis' – probably one of many that week – to avoid penning the letters AIDS.

This is Africa's hidden scar – a very public pandemic whose name cannot even be whispered for fear of the stigma and shame that would befall families and relatives. For us in Britain, AIDS is inextricably associated with Africa. But despite frequent national campaigns, newspaper headlines and government statements, the people don't want to talk about it. It is seen as dirty. It spells infidelity or sexual 'deviance'.

This phenomenal stigmatisation in many ways can be attributed to the Catholic Church. Condoms, they say, are wrong. While the government's A-B-C method promotes Abstinence, Being Faithful and Condom Use, the church lives in denial, refusing to admit that the children they teach about the wrongs of contraception are having sex.

In Catholic schools, AIDS is rarely mentioned. One boy told me that AIDS stood for "American Idea to Discriminate Sex". And while the West throws money at Africa to combat the problem, the director of the small church-run AIDS project in Wa told us how she could no longer deliver the food aid that was piled in warehouses surrounding the regional Catholic headquarters.

Money can be thrown at this problem time and again, but only once the social mindset shifts from stigma to acceptance – and the church allows that shift to take place – can the problem be solved.

[Photography NASA]

the great Leveller

JILLIAN RAY reports on the long process of reconstruction in Seenigama, Sri Lanka

THE TSUNAMI HIT the village of Seenigama without discrimination on 26 December 2004. It did not distinguish between wooden beach shack and solid brick home, between man and woman, fisherman and teacher. Everything in the path of the wave was destroyed.

The stretch of coastal villages nearby is as bad as I have seen on the south coast of Sri Lanka. Yet Seenigama is in a unique situation compared to its neighbors. The village is the ancestral home of philanthropist Kushil Gunasekera, who took it upon himself five years ago to improve the plight of his village. Kushil built the 'Foundation of Goodness', which comprised a community centre attached to his holiday home. He also happens to be manager of Sri Lanka's superstar spin bowler Muttiah Muralitharan.

The Foundation of Goodness has now taken the lead role in rebuilding Seenigama. Just hours after the event, Kushil was organising relief to the area, after saving himself in the waves and hitchhiking to Colombo by night. Three months later, the charity has undertaken a huge number of programs and even built its first new home.

a panicked mass of people runs inland as a false tsunami alarm is raised

Reconstruction decisions invariably cause tempers to flare. The community is stricken with grief, terrified and living in conditions totally foreign to them. On a weekly basis a panicked mass of people runs inland as a false tsunami alarm is raised. Moreover, the complex social structure that has existed for generations further complicates matters.

Take the example of the De Silva* family. The De Silvas are friendly, warm people that I got to know whilst in Seenigama. They were clearly wealthy by village standards – they had a brick home, decent jobs and were able to educate their children to a high standard. However, like so many other families they have now lost their home, all possessions and, tragically, several family members.

I was initially shocked by a conversation I had with my friend – a member of this family – a few days after the tsunami. She appealed to me to help her. Yet she didn't ask for water, food or medical attention – she was most deeply concerned with the loss of her gold, her saris and her handbags: "Now I have nothing," she cried.

My immediate reaction was standoffish. I couldn't believe she was worried about these trivial items when her village was lying in rubble around her and she had even lost family members. It wasn't until I thought about my own actions after the tsunami that my friend's response made sense.

Around lunchtime on December 27th I was collected by an Australian High Commission vehicle after spending only one night in a camp. My safety and comfort were immediately ensured, and over the next few weeks I spent spare moments shopping for clothes, shoes and jewellery to replace what I had lost. I got my insurance payout and all was well in my privileged little world.

I felt guilty for questioning and judging my friend's 'needs'. I realised we are all a product of our place in the world, each seeing our needs through our own unique prism.

The Foundation of Goodness answers to a representative body of the Seenigama people, not vice versa. However, it is interesting that in early February this body agreed to give the first rebuilt home to one of the poorest women in Seenigama.

Nandanwathi, the recipient, was widowed only three weeks before the tsunami, and previously lived in a tiny, dark, wooden hut. She has four children who will share her new home. When I spoke with her it was clear how overjoyed she was with a place far more comfortable than her previous dwelling.

It makes you wonder. Before the horrors of last December Seenigama was a beautiful, happy place to live. But as for Nandanwathi, perhaps it is possible that the tsunami could actually be a gift – the opportunity to make Seenigama better than ever.

* Name changed for privacy reasons.

Jillian Ray is the Australian Youth Ambassador for Development at the Foundation of Goodness, Seenigama, Sri Lanka

city in Shock

NISRINE JAAFAR looks back on the day Beirut's peace was shattered

WHEN I FIRST heard the blast, I ran without looking back until I hit a wall of astonished students, staring at the billowing smoke now chocking the sky above. I turned around and thought the explosion must have targeted the American University of Beirut I had been visiting. The screams of onlookers and the sound of shattering glass pierced the air, evoking memories of war; chaos and confusion returning to in a city that has been battling its violent past.

Fifteen years after the civil war ended, a massive explosion in Lebanon's capital proved that the hearts of its inhabitants were still vulnerable and that old scars were still raw. In the midst of the turmoil, when news of what had actually happened came, it was a case of total shock. Supporters of the late Prime Minister Hariri's policies despaired. As the tears welled in people's eyes, questions were already forming in their minds. Who? Why? How?

The graphic media reports seemed too horrendous to be true, yet the press was clearly as over-awed by events as the general public. The television stations – at first cautiously, then more firmly – repeated the same words of mourning. People congregated by the seashore, where the explosives had been planted. Some were driven purely by curiosity, others by despair – but all exhibited the same sense of utter hopelessness, facing the future of their wounded nation.

In a matter of hours, everything closed down. From shops to bars, every corner of the devastated city observed a self-imposed curfew, which led angry individuals to the streets. Spontaneous demonstrations appeared on the streets, where distraught individuals wept for their deceased and swore to avenge them at any price.

Yet the burden of a darker future somehow fueled a return to the patriotism and brotherhood of old. Standing firmly hand in hand, men and women relinquished conflicting religions, sects and political affiliations in favour of a common identity, chaperoned by the cherished Lebanese flag.

At the heart of Beirut that night, searches for the dead did not stop. Only candles survived the ferocious cold of one of the cruelest Valentine's Days Beriut has ever seen.

11-M one year on

MATT VAUGHAN looks at the continued impact Europe's worst terrorist attack is having on Madrid

IT IS HARD not to be affected by the effects of the March 11th 2004 train bombings in Madrid when you spend a year in the city. It is more than twelve months now since those rucksacks packed with explosives were detonated on various suburban trains in and around central Madrid, killing almost 200 civilians and injuring more than a thousand, and yet the emotions aroused by the most brutal and horrific terrorist atrocity in western Europe still hang in the air like a chill mist. Ever since I arrived here I have been struck by the liveliness – joie de vivre, to use a hackneyed phrase – of the inhabitants of the city and the amount of horror and disbelief that they still feel when they try and come to terms with the horrendous deaths of so many lives is all too evident.

These emotions are displayed in different ways, of course. The memorial events this year were notable for several reasons: firstly, a new section of the Retiro park was opened (the "Bosque de los Ausentes" or "Wood of the Missing") containing 192 young trees, one for each of the dead. Silences were held all across the country, footballers wore black armbands, candles and flowers were piled high at Atocha station as relatives tried to find some way to mark the death of their loved ones. Yet the relatives of the victims of the attacks were almost all absent, claiming that their grief had been hijacked by politicians for political gain. The Association for the Victims of Terrorism broke off relations in February with Gregorio Peces-Barba, the government-appointed representative for people affected by this and other atrocities, and are still refusing to speak to him, such is their anger and feeling of betrayal. Other people try to vent their rage by daubing walls and public areas with political or racist graffiti: "11-M: thankyou, Partido Popular" was one I saw in Sol a few weeks ago, or the more straightforward "Putos moros" on a bus, helpfully translated into English for anyone who doesn´t know what "F****** Arabs" means. Just this morning on the way to school I saw a man twist his fingers into the shape of a gun and point it at two women wearing headscarves who were standing next to me, mouthing something to them that I couldn´t catch. Almost all of the children I teach at school had a personal story about 11-M: their friend would have caught the train but there was a train strike which saved his life; her father would have been on it but overslept; their aunt knew someone from work who was two carriages down from the bomb and was cut by glass, and so on.

All this is difficult to take in. The meaningless death of one person murdered by fanatics bent on a global Islamic revolution is horrific enough, but the slaughter of nearly 200 of them in packed commuter trains is hard to come to terms with. The bombings ended 192 lives, changed an entire government, brought Spanish troops out of Iraq, soured relations between Spain and the USA, and threw a capital city into a shock so massive that it is still struggling to come out of it. The bombings have vanished from the news, the first anniversary has been and gone, but the legacy of the 192 dead is still haunting the city today. Madrileños are tough people, and for all the horror of the bombings, life for the rest of the city goes on, albeit with a stronger sense of the real value and treasure that is human life.

The first anniversary has been and gone, but the legacy of the 192 dead is still haunting the city

Safe and Sound

PATRICK FOSTER visits Israel expecting a war zone, but instead merely encounters an abundance of weapons

ENTERING A COUNTRY that, so we are told, is constantly in some state of conflict, I wondered exactly what I could expect to see.

I was hoping for a few explosions, some sniper fire around tea time, and maybe some light artillery fire as the sun went down, something to satisfy my sadism; but in reality Israel is a lot more sedate than the media would have us believe.

The reasons for this air of artificial calm are apparent as soon as you hit the airport. In a country that is still at war with Syria and Lebanon, and has found that the only way it can make its people feel secure is to fence off its borders, the security goon is king.

The scary thing is, it works.

Never once did I feel uneasy or unsafe. Annoyed, yes, lots. The second I walked off the plane I was sussed by security as some sort of peace activist. Apparently a scruffy mop of blondish hair, coupled with dirty jeans bearing an eight inch crotch rip is the de rigueur look for budding International Solidarity Movement activists. No matter how many times I told them I was in Israel on a Jewish propaganda trip, they were still intent on breaking my balls.

I remember walking into a Tel Aviv beachfront café in the middle of the morning.

[Photography NASA]

The second I approached the threshold I was accosted with the now familiar words: "you have gun?" Well let's think about it mate. I'm obviously a westerner, I'm wearing a t-shirt and shorts, and I'm carrying a tourist map of Tel Aviv. What are the odds on me having a Colt 9mm shoved down the back of my pants?

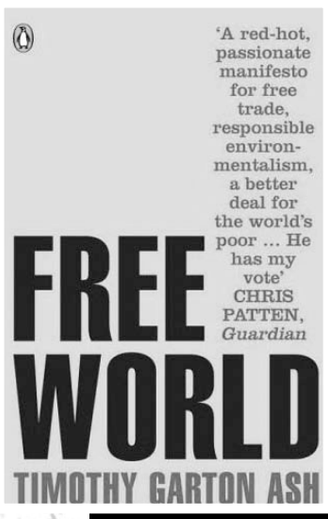
It sounds ridiculous, and when you're in that situation it does get bloody tiring. But less than a month later the front of the place next door was ripped apart by a suicide bomber, killing five and injuring fifty. Under that light, it's not hard to see why constant vigilance, backed up with constant militarisation, seems the only option.

But it's an eerie sort of calm that pervades from the barrel of a gun. Every street corner has some poxy eighteen year old on national service with an M16 slung over his shoulder.

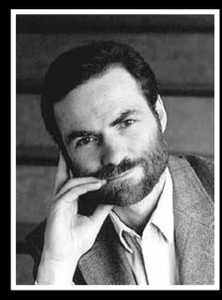
In the cities, most of the national service conscripts live at home, and take their small arsenal of weapons back with them. The result is a Tony Martin-esque gun culture where every household has a machine gun under the bed.

In the midst of all those guns, it seems bizarre that Jerusalem still has such a feral cat problem (they were introduced to solve the rat problem). So many cats, so many men with guns. It doesn't take a genius to work out the solution.

But it is all those men with guns that are the necessary obscenity if western tourists are to spend their dollars in Jerusalem. A sad rejoinder perhaps, but it is because of this that my lasting memory of Israel remains that of having my inside leg felt up by some greaseball with an Uzi.



Timothy Garton Ash
in his own words



Timothy Garton Ash is a political writer who has combined journalism with academia. His experiences with the collapse of communism in central Europe convinced him of the importance of freedom and democracy. He has recently articulated these views not only in a rigorous defence of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine but in his book *Free World*

IF YOU CALL me an idealist I plead guilty. In my experience of politics it is sometime the idealists who turn out to be the best realists. However I have always argued for a combination of idealism and realism.

If you look at the map of freedom one does have to say (and this is a purely factual statement) that more people are more free than ever before. That is a remarkable achievement; it is an amazing world to live in. The current generation of young people are naturally internationalist. There has never been a generation in the history of the world for whom the world was their oyster in the same way.

However, we face a number of very big problems – and we may find ourselves hard pushed just to defend the degree of freedom, openness and internationalism that we have at the moment.

I am profoundly convinced that the aspiration to individual freedom and basic human dignity is universal. This doesn't mean full-package western democracy for everybody, it means the stripped-down, basics of a liberal order with a great deal of cultural difference. The key question for me is not: 'Are such basic aspirations universal?' – they certainly are. It is rather: 'What are the basic common minimum standards on which we can agree and on which we must insist everywhere?'

Europeans – and I include the British very much in this – should do more about liberty and democracy. We shouldn't leave it to the Americas to define this agenda. It is our agenda and the European story over the last 30 years is the greatest story of the spread of freedom in modern history; there is nothing like it.

The real difficulty for a liberal internationalist like me, who believes in the spread of freedom and of democracy, is that George W. Bush is saying the same thing, but with different meanings. I would say that Bush gives freedom a bad name. For me it is all in the interplay between *a* free world and *the* free world. The version from Bush often sounds like *the* free world – old cold war rhetoric. *A* free world is very different.

America has never been less popular in the world. However I am struck by the fact that this second-term Bush administration has taken a reality check. Somewhere deep down America is still this puritan community which occasionally goes a bit crazy and goes off on witch hunts. It did it with McCarthyism – under a certain shock from the outside world the country went a bit bonkers, but then it self corrected.

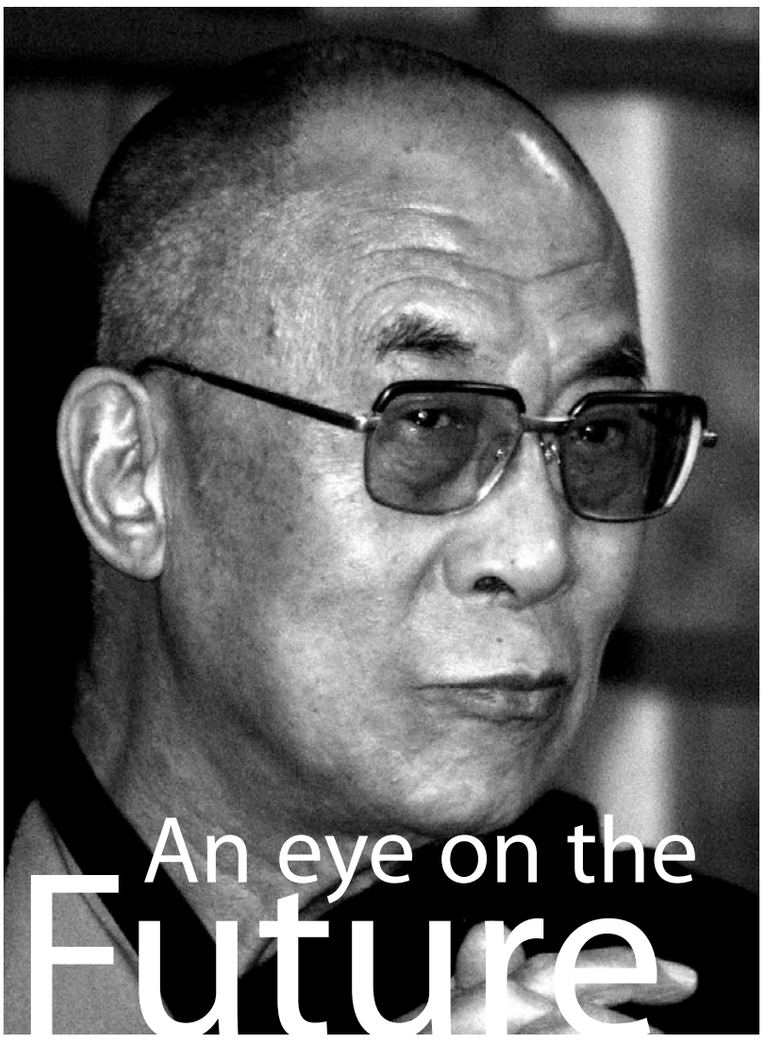
Moreover, the mechanisms of self-correction in the US are fantastically strong and they are still there. The fiercest critics of America are Americans. My hope and belief is that America will self correct – that by 2008 it will be a much more reasonable place.

China is the defining issue as far as I can foresee of the next 20 years. Much more than the war on terrorism, this really is the big one. It is fascinating the way in which China – very patiently, untroubled by democracy – exploits every weakness in its opponent's position. A democratic China would be the biggest prize in the history of freedom.

We are living in this period of a historical shift: since 1500 the western world has been top dog on the international stage. That is now under challenge and I think that we may experience one of these great shifts, where power moves decisively around the globe – and that need not be disastrous for us.

We have to change a lot, we have to go on opening up, we have to try to help others to freedom, we have to make our own society much more pluralistic, variegated, open, and comfortable with difference.

Free World *is available now, published by Penguin*



An eye on the Future

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA outlines the causes of and solutions to conflict – both in Tibet and the wider world

IN FUNDAMENTAL WAYS human beings are all the same; we all want happiness and do not want suffering. We strive to fulfil these desires as best we can. We do so personally as individuals and also together as groups. Despite the differences in the colour of our skin or the texture of our hair, in our religious beliefs or our lack of them, in the languages we speak, in the culture we uphold or even our differences of gender, we are all, basically the same human beings. Appreciating this sameness is crucial to respecting and understanding other people and to developing compassion and kindness toward them.

This idea of the basic sameness of human beings is as simple as it is true. Yet, many people find it difficult not only to believe in the equality and basic sameness of all people, but also to behave accordingly. More often it is the differences between us that we emphasise. This has its positive aspect; humanity is rich because of its diversity. Each civilisation, culture and spiritual tradition has contributed in its own way to our human needs, to our knowledge and wisdom and to our wellbeing, and many of them continue to do so today. Therefore, the loss of any of these traditions is truly a tragedy for humankind, whether it occurs in the rush toward globalisation, or the genocide that so often accompanies war, or the assimilationist policies that dominant forces impose on minority groups.

I have seen this happen in my own country. I am not so concerned about the loss of external manifestations of Tibetan culture under Chinese repression, such as how people dress or wear their hair. But I am worried about the decline of those Tibetan cultural and spiritual values that have proved to be of true benefit to human beings both in Tibet and abroad.

On the other hand, focusing on the differences between us often has a negative aspect. If someone is different from us, we easily fall into thinking that he or she is somehow inferior to us or is bad in some way. We either attempt to change them and their behaviour to fit in with our own values and way of life, or we simply oppose or pick a fight with them. However much we praise diversity in theory, we often oppose it firmly in actual practice. One of the major causes of conflict in our world, both at local and international levels, is this inability to embrace diversity. We seem unable to reconcile the manifest diversity of human society with the fact that at root we all remain the same human beings, sharing the same fundamental needs and aspirations, the same basic difficulties and limitations.

Another key source of conflict is the short-sighted way in which we pursue our own vested interests and seek to fulfil our needs. If we focus only on our own requirements, regardless of the needs and interests of others, we are likely to hurt them and provoke their hostility. This is especially true when we view happiness predominantly in terms of material possessions, wealth and power. Although, to my mind, this viewpoint is mistaken, it is widespread. Moreover, while many people are driven by greed, others act mainly out of fear of losing what possessions, wealth and power they already have.

Wars are fought, people are killed or driven from their homes and entire communities are destroyed because of human greed and fear. All over the world people no different from us see their lives ruined by someone else's desire to gain or fear of losing territory, economic resources and cultural and political supremacy – not to mention naked ideological and religious self-righteousness. This is not something that only happens elsewhere, for it is often governments that we have elected, and corporations whose products and services we buy, or whose shares we own, that cause suffering while pursuing their narrow interests. Sooner or later, the victims of such short-sightedness attempt to defend themselves and assert their own right to happiness: tension and conflict result.

Today, many parts of the world are disturbed by violent conflict. Some of these disputes revolve around ethnic differences, unjust government provokes some, and others are a response to unfair exploitation of natural resources. They all centre on people's desire, whether as individuals or groups, to gain something they believe will bring them happiness and relieve their troubles. Too frequently the response is to fear that if one side lets the other get what they want, it will prevent them fulfilling their own wishes. So, far from helping each other, they become deliberately obstructive. In no time at all the resulting hostility turns to violence.

These conflicts do not arise out of the blue. They occur as a result of causes and conditions, many of which are within the protagonists' control. This is where leadership is important. It is our leaders' responsibility to decide when to act and when to be restrained. In the case of violent conflict it is important to restrain the situation before it gets out of hand. Once the causes and conditions for violent clashes have ripened, it is very difficult to calm them down again. Preventive measures and restraint have to be adopted at an earlier stage. Clearly leaders

need to be alert, far-sighted and decisive.

Human intelligence is such that we can take the future to some extent into our own hands. However, as society involves a combination of individuals, there is no chance of introducing new ideas or of changing the community's view unless initiatives come from individuals. I believe that the essential qualities we need are compassion and forgiveness. These are the qualities that form the basis of human survival. As a Buddhist, I believe religion reflects the fundamental nature of our minds, that religion actually strengthens and increases the positive aspects of our nature. But it is compassion rather than religion that is important to us. Religion involves compassion, but compassion does not necessarily involve religion.

The 20th century was marred by conflict and war. I hope that, despite a faltering start, we can take steps to ensure that this new century will be characterised instead by non-violence and dialogue – the preconditions of peaceful co-existence. It is natural that in any human society there will be differences and conflicts, but we have to develop confidence that dialogue and the support of friends are a valid alternative to violence in all our relations. In the context of our newly-emerging global community, all forms of violence have become totally unacceptable as means of settling disputes. The practice of non-violence is surely the best way of bringing about peace, but it requires determination. For by its very nature, non-violent action requires patience.

I am quite sure that if problems can be discussed according to non-violent principles with a calm mind, keeping in view the long-term safety of the world, then solutions can always be found. Of course, in particular instances a more aggressive approach may also be necessary. But the use of force should be our last resort, not our first response. All of us have been shocked by the recent upsurge of terrorism, but even terrorism cannot be defeated by the use of force alone. Retaliatory military action may bring some immediate satisfaction, but it will not root out the underlying problem. Longer-term measures need to be taken.

If we instinctively retaliate when faced with violence against us, what can we expect other than that our opponent will also feel justified to retaliate in turn? Everyone wishes to live in peace, but we are often confused about how it can be achieved. Mahatma Gandhi pointed out that because violence inevitably leads to more violence, if we are seriously interested in peace it must be achieved through peaceful and non-violent means.

Although first and foremost I am merely a Buddhist monk, as Dalai Lama, I have certain responsibilities towards the Tibetan people. And in trying to fulfil these responsibilities I have never wavered from the conviction that a solution to our problems can only be found through non-violent means. From 1951, I tried to work with the Chinese authorities, in the perhaps idealistic hope that everyone would behave in ways that would benefit all involved. I thought then, and continue to believe, that there was no reason why the Chinese could not help us, and indeed there are many areas in which we can help them too. However, the Chinese authorities simply tried to impose their inflexible ideology on Tibetans and showed scant respect for our culture and religion. This caused the people to revolt and, in the end, I had to escape to freedom in India, from where I believed I could best serve my people.

Since 1979, I have again tried to develop a genuine dialogue with China's leaders in order to find a solution that would benefit all concerned. Trying to accommodate Tibetan, Chinese and regional interests I regard as taking a Middle Way. Despite the suffering the Tibetan people have endured, I believe that we need to find a way to live together in a manner that will allow both Tibetans and Chinese dignity and freedom. I am convinced that we could achieve this if we were to engage in genuine dialogue, each party respecting the other as equal human beings.

In a more amicable climate, there is great scope for mutual co-operation. From a developmental point of view, Tibet needs help to utilise its abundant material resources for the general good. On the other hand we also have a living culture and spiritual tradition from which many Chinese people may draw inspiration in their quest for peace of mind. China may regard Tibet as strategically important, but I believe that our greatest contribution to Chinese security lies in restoring Tibet's natural role as a zone of peace, thereby ensuring a peaceful Himalayan frontier. In an environment that encourages large economic zones and markets competing on a global level, Tibetans could benefit from participating in the Chinese economic success. Thus, we each have something to gain from being united within one state.

However, living together, united in one state, can only work if the relationship is based on a mutual respect for the way of life, the culture, the values, the spiritual traditions and aspirations of the other. Understanding each other's needs also means respecting the natural desire of a people to determine its own destiny and administer its own affairs within the framework of the larger state.

For the future, therefore, I envision a genuinely autonomous Tibet within the People's Republic of China. Tibetans would want to be fully responsible for their own domestic affairs, including the education of their children, for religious matters, cultural affairs, environmental policy and the local economy. Taking a Middle Way approach, Tibetans would accept China's responsibility for foreign affairs and defence, thus recognising the territorial integrity of the People's Republic of China and acknowledging the security and international political role China desires.

In my view, it is important that as China becomes a powerful and respectable nation she should be able to adopt a reasonable policy with confidence. The world in general, of which China is a part, is changing for the better. In recent times we have definitely been able to see a greater global appreciation of peace, non-violence, democracy, justice and environmental protection. The unprecedented response from governments and individuals across the world to the victims of the South Asia tsunami disaster, for example, reaffirms the world's interdependence and the importance of universal responsibility.

I have repeatedly reassured the Chinese authorities that as long as I am responsible for the affairs of Tibet we remain fully committed not to seek independence and are willing to remain within the People's Republic of China. I am convinced that in the long run such an approach can be to the benefit of the Tibetan people in bringing material development. It is encouraging that support we have received from various parts of the world has commended this approach as reasonable, realistic and of mutual benefit to the Chinese and Tibetans. I am particularly heartened by the recognition and endorsement that has come from certain intellectual quarters within China.

Our renewed contacts with the Chinese leadership show that our interactions are gradually improving. I remain hopeful that eventually we will be able to develop the necessary trust to resolve this long-standing issue to our mutual benefit. In seeking to resolve the problems concerning Tibet, one of the factors that sustains me, in addition to the prospect of achieving peace and justice for Tibetans, is the conviction that our success will serve as an encouraging model for others. We are not the only people seeking greater freedom and dignity through peaceful non-violent means, but every time the goal is achieved it will attract greater support for and serve as an inspiration to others who still seek it.

Retaliatory military action may bring satisfaction, but it will not root out the underlying problem

His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama is the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. In 1989, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

Keeping the Peace

Former UN Under-Secretary General, SIR MARRACK GOULDING discusses methods for preventative dipolmacy and peacekeeping

MIRACLES DO HAPPEN. This year's miracle may be reform of the United Nations. It has been sought many times, but the seekers have rarely agreed on what they are looking for; long reports and longer debates have produced little change, little reform. There have nevertheless been changes for the better – for instance, the evolution of the doctrine and practice of UN peacekeeping. But the changes have not been due to report, debate and Charter amendment. They have resulted from the accumulation of small changes – in the field, in the Glass House in New York, in the chancelleries of Member States – which gradually make it possible for the UN to do things differently and better.

But this year we are back in the realm of Napoleonic mega-reform, not good old Anglo-Saxon piecemeal reform. Two major reports have been produced: one by the 'High-Level Panel' appointed by Kofi Annan, and Annan's own report. They are to be debated in New York in September in the hope that a programme of reform can be approved by the Member States. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to be the outcome. The United States is in the hands of a government which has repeatedly flaunted its contempt for the UN. This has generated a high degree of resentment amongst Washington's allies and in the Third World. Consensus will be hard to achieve.

There is not space in this article to review the many issues which will feature in the debate. Instead, I will take one UN function and explore how the UN's capacity to perform it could be enhanced by reform. The function is the prevention and resolution of conflict – a function which the Charter called 'The Pacific Settlement of Disputes', and is now called preventive diplomacy and peacemaking. For the founding fathers of the UN this was the most important means of "sav[ing] succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Chapter VII, 'Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression', was the second choice, to be implemented only if peacemaking had failed.

The Charter assumed that war meant war between states. The assumption was wrong. The great majority of wars since 1945 have not been wars between states; they have been civil wars within states. The world today is plagued with them. But wars do eventually come to an end and they usually end as a result of successful peacemaking through negotiation, not because one side has defeated the other on the battlefield.

The UN has mediated many negotiations that have led to peace; it has mediated many more that have yet to succeed. Patience and perseverance are essential for peacemakers. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the fifth Secretary-General of the UN, never gave up. He would repeat the same message time and time again: "neither side can win this war; neither side benefits from it; the best option you have is to negotiate a settlement; the UN can help you do that; give us the opportunity and you will find that we are right".

Mediators come in different shapes and sizes: inter-governmental organisations like the UN or the European Union; ad hoc groups of states (eg, the 'Contact Group' which negotiated a plan for peace in Namibia); individual states (eg, Norway); non-governmental organisations (eg, the Catholic Sant'Egidio which mediated an end to the conflict in Mozambique); or

[Illustration Tom Rayner]

distinguished individuals (eg, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter). Whatever the shape or size, the budding mediator has to fulfil ten conditions, which are detailed opposite, if he or she or it is going to succeed – these are listed on the right.

The conditions given essentially constitute a catalogue of practices and techniques that the UN and other international mediators have developed in the field, especially during the 16 years since the Cold War ended. They have not been formally adopted by the Security Council or the General Assembly. They are customary practices whose legitimacy comes from their repeated use by the Secretary-General in the implementation of mandates entrusted to him by the Security Council or the General Assembly.

There are, however, two fields in which reform is needed if the UN is to enhance its peacemaking capacity.

The first relates to sovereignty. The primacy of sovereignty is a major obstacle both for peacemakers and for the providers of humanitarian relief. The UN Charter is relentless: "Nothing in the present Charter shall authorise the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state". Even Pérez de Cuéllar declared, towards the end of his Secretary-Generalship, that international law must keep pace with change; perhaps, he said, a balance was being established between the rights of states, as in the Charter, and the rights of individuals, as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But it is inconceivable that the General Assembly or the Security Council would vote to dilute the primacy of sovereignty; it is too precious to governments. So reform has to come not in Napoleonic mode but in pragmatic Anglo-Saxon mode, through the accumulation of precedents. That has begun but it will take a long time, and meanwhile sovereignty will remain an obstacle for peacemakers.

The second field is one relating to all UN activities. It is the complexity and inefficiency of the UN's administration. When I was in charge of the UN's peacekeeping operations, I often violated regulations and other standing orders. This was not because I did not know the rules or was in rebellion against them. It was because I knew that if I meticulously followed the rules, I would not be able to carry out the tasks entrusted to me, via the Secretary-General, by the Security Council. Nor were my administrative colleagues to blame for the complexity. That complexity resulted from micro-supervision of the Secretariat by the member states. Their distrust of us simply made us more inefficient.

That is an area of reform which needs urgent attention if the United Nations is to meet the demands of the 21st century.

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Mediation

The ten conditions for negotiation success

1 To get the two sides to accept mediation. Mediation cannot be imposed; it can function only if the parties give their consent. Winning consent can take a long time, which is why Pérez de Cuéllar so tirelessly repeated his mantra advocating perseverance. Consent is particularly difficult to obtain in civil wars because one of the parties is an internationally recognised government and will regard third party involvement as a violation of its sovereignty.

2 'Integration of the mediation', by which is meant that there must be only one mediating individual or institution. Otherwise wires get crossed and the parties can play off one mediator against another. This can be a particular problem for the UN Secretary-General if, as happened in the Western Sahara, he or she is mandated to mediate jointly with a regional organization, thereby creating institutional jealousy and duplication.

3 The mediator must be strictly impartial. When one side is cooperating and the other is not, it is tempting to be nice to the good guys and nasty to the bad ones. But the temptation must be resisted; public criticism of the Khmer Rouge by the UN very nearly derailed implementation of the Cambodian peace settlement.

4 The two sides accept that they are political equals in the negotiation. This is always difficult: one side insists that it is the legal government and its opponents are a gang of criminal outlaws; how can they be spoken of as political equals? Again the mediator has to ask the government whether it really thinks that continuation of the conflict is better for it than making this concession. This can take a long time – more than a year [check] in the case of El Salvador.

5 The parties agree to negotiate face-to-face. Shuttle diplomacy can work in the preparatory phase but not when issues of substance are under discussion. But it is often difficult to get the parties to cross this bridge. One of the happiest moments in my UN career was when, in an ill-lit corridor in an hotel on the outskirts of Mexico City, I spotted two familiar figures in conversation behind a potted palm; they were the leader of one of the five parties in the Salvadorian rebel movement and the military member of the government delegation.

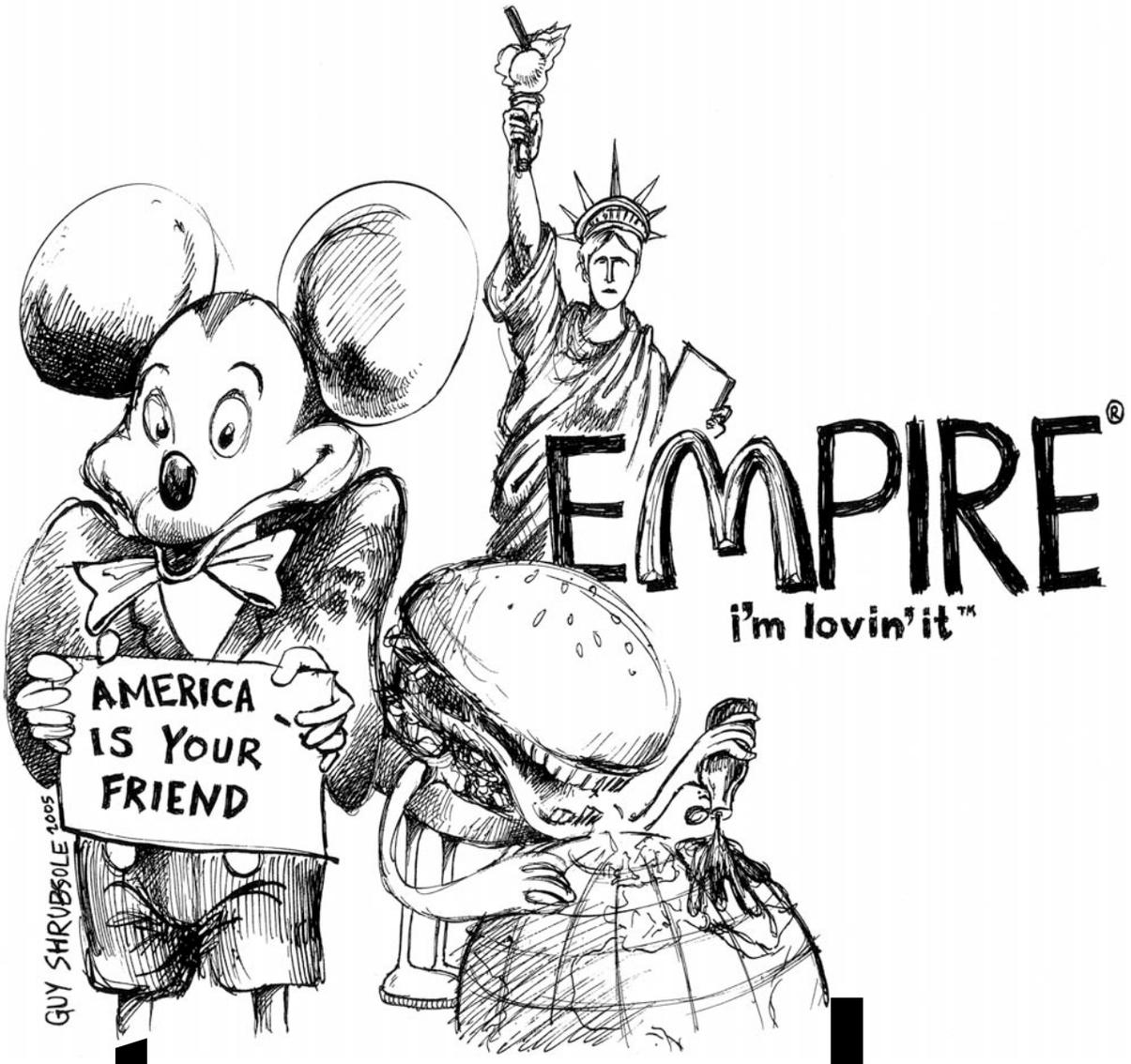
6 To be realistic about cease-fires. The Bush-Sharon doctrine that there can be no negotiation unless there is a complete cessation of violence is folly. It puts the peace process at the mercy of one lone terrorist. Nor is it the norm: all the successful peace negotiations that I know began when the fighting was still going on and in some cases, eg Angola, the fighting continued until the eve of signature of the settlement.

7 Before going into action, the mediator should have studied the conflict in some detail and formed clear ideas about what the main ingredients of the settlement should be. But the mediator must be ready to adjust those ideas as the negotiation proceeds and he/she acquires a better understanding of the issues and the parties' needs and ambitions.

8 To ensure that the settlement under negotiation addresses the root causes of the conflict, not just its symptoms. This can take a long time and produce a complicated set of inter-related agreements. This was necessary in Guatemala where the root causes were long-term discrimination against the indigenous people, the economic and social consequences of that discrimination, and brutal law enforcement. The implementation of complex settlements of this kind can prolong the international presence and turn local gratitude into local hostility towards the mediators.

9 Patience is not only a virtue, but vital. The mediator must try to keep the process moving forward but without putting pressure on the two sides. They need time to consult their constituencies and persuade them that concessions are better than continuation of the war. Thoroughly negotiated and well understood settlements are more likely to succeed than sketchy and ambiguous ones, as the UN learnt to its cost in Western Sahara, where the conflict remains unresolved almost twenty years after the parties accepted a flawed settlement proposed to them by the UN.

10 To build international understanding and support for the mediator's efforts. Here too Pérez de Cuéllar blazed the trail in Central America. When the UN began to mediate a settlement in El Salvador, he asked a few well-disposed countries to become "Friends of the Secretary-General". In that capacity they were asked to intervene with the parties, individually or collectively, if – but only if – they were so requested by the Secretary-General. This has on the whole worked well in several negotiations. But the Secretariat has to be fiercely watchful to make sure that no Friend puts proposals to the parties unless so requested by the Secretary-General.



tread Softly

JOSEPH NYE asks whether the US has lost track of what really matters

POWER IS THE ability to influence others to get what you want. Nations need power because without it they have a difficult time advancing their goals. But there are ultimately three main ways for a nation to wield power: by using or threatening force; by inducing compliance with rewards; or by using 'soft power' – attracting followers through the strength of a country's values and culture, and the inclusiveness of its policies. When a country can induce others to follow by employing soft power, it saves a lot of carrots and sticks.

Soft power is based on culture, political ideals, and policies. Historically, Americans have been good at wielding soft power. Think of young people behind the Iron Curtain listening to American music and news on Radio Free Europe or of Chinese students symbolising their protests in Tiananmen Square with a replica of the Statue of Liberty.

[Illustration Guy Shrubsole]

Many American values, such as democracy, human rights and individual opportunity, have proved deeply attractive when they were backed by sound foreign policies.

American soft power has diminished in recent years, particularly in the wake of the invasion of Iraq. Polls showed dramatic declines in the popularity of the United States, even in countries such as Britain, Italy and Spain, whose governments had supported the US. America's standing plummeted in Islamic countries around the world. Yet the cooperation of these countries is essential if the US and its allies are to succeed in a long-term struggle against terrorism.

The United States went to war in Iraq for three major reasons. The first was to prevent Saddam Hussein from developing weapons of mass destruction. Post-war inspectors concluded that although Saddam had the knowledge and intentions to acquire such weapons, the threat was not imminent. The second reason was the belief that Saddam was supporting al-Qaeda, but intelligence agencies concluded that while there may have been some contacts, it is unlikely the Iraqi regime supported the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001. More importantly, the intelligence agencies now say that the net effect of the war in Iraq has been to strengthen whatever relationship existed before the war. Indeed, the war has proven to be a major source of recruitment for al-Qaeda, not only in Iraq, but throughout the Islamic world.

The third reason for the war was to transform the Middle East. *The Wall Street Journal* expressed the common view that "The Road To Jerusalem Goes Through Baghdad". Spearheaded by the United States, regime change and democracy in Iraq would solve the Middle East's larger problems. The roots of terrorism were seen as growing out of the undemocratic nature of the regimes in the region. As the first two arguments were diminished, the Bush Administration put more emphasis on the third.

It is still too early to judge the merits of this argument. A full assessment of the Iraq War and its effects on the war against terrorism will take a decade or more. The January 2005 Iraq election was a positive both for Iraq and for the region. As Walid Jumblatt, the Lebanese Druze leader, said, "it's strange for me to say it, but this process of change has started because of the American invasion of Iraq". As the columnist David Brooks observed, "if there is one soft power gift that America does possess, it is the tendency to imagine new worlds". The invasion of Iraq and subsequent increase in the rhetoric of democracy to justify it may have changed frames of reference about the status quo and the context in which events are perceived. Democracy is more than just majoritarian elections. It will also require the development of attitudes of tolerance for minorities and individual rights, as well as the development of effective institutions for the resolution of political conflicts in divided societies in the region. If this occurs, however, it may provide some post hoc substantive legitimisation for a war that many people regarded as lacking in legitimacy on procedural grounds.

At the same time, in the short run, the invasion of Iraq created an insurgency that has become worse. The presence of foreign troops creates a stimulus for nationalist and jihadist responses. Official estimates put the number of insurgents in Iraq at 5000 in 2003: today the official estimates are that 15,000 have been killed but the remaining number has grown to 20,000. In the words of a Lebanese Sunni Jihadist interviewed by *The New York Times* on November 2nd 2004, "I decided on jihad because I wanted to stop the occupation". His anger was fuelled by "almost daily scenes on television of Iraqi women and children dying, not to mention Palestinians suffering the same fate".

Traditional world politics was typically about whose military wins. But politics in an information age is equally about whose story wins. This is particularly true in the struggle against transnational terrorism. A Pentagon advisory committee has just reported that the United States is being outflanked in that "war of information".

Soft power skeptics say not to worry – popularity is ephemeral and should not guide foreign policy in any case. Foreigners may grumble, yet they have little choice but to follow. The US does not need to cultivate permanent allies and institutions. It can always pick up a coalition of the willing when it needs to. As Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld is wont to say, the issues should determine the coalitions, not vice versa.

Some analysts go further and say that anti-Americanism is an inevitable reaction to America's position as the world's only superpower. The United States is the big kid on the block, and its disproportionate military power is bound to engender a mixture of admiration, envy and resentment. But those who dismiss the recent rise of anti-Americanism as simply the inevitable result of America's size are mistaken in thinking nothing can be done about it. The United States was even more pre-eminent at the end of the Second World War than it is today, but it proceeded to pursue policies that were acclaimed by allied countries. Similarly, American leadership was welcomed by many at the end of the Cold War, even though no country was able to balance American power. But it also paid more attention to multilateralism, alliances, and international institutions. It matters if the big kid on the block is seen by the others as a friend or as a bully.

It is a mistake to dismiss the recent decline in US soft power so lightly. It is true that the United States has recovered from unpopular policies in the past, as in the years following the Vietnam War. But that was during the Cold War, in which other countries still feared the Soviet Union as the greater evil. Failure to attend to soft power can undercut hard military power. The widespread international perception that the US was determined to go to war in Iraq regardless of the views of other countries has forced the US to shoulder more of the burden of policing and reconstructing Iraq. Contrast that with the Persian Gulf War of 1991, when allies paid for most of the reconstruction of Kuwait.

Traditional world politics was typically about whose military wins. Politics in an information age is equally about whose story wins

It is in this context that the United States finds itself engaged in a war of ideas for the hearts and minds of moderate Arabs. To overcome its current disadvantages and win that war, the US will have to become far more adept at wielding soft power throughout the Muslim world.

American efforts since September 11th have fallen short, though the Bush Administration seems to be taking soft power more seriously in its second term. The United States spent a paltry $150 million on public diplomacy in Muslim countries in 2002. The combined cost of the State Department's public diplomacy programs that year, including international broadcasting, was just over a billion dollars – about the same amount spent by Britain or France (countries one-fifth the size). It is also equal to one-quarter of one per cent of the military budget. The United States currently spends 450 times as much on hard power as on soft power. If it transferred just one per cent of the military budget, it would mean quadrupling the spending on soft power.

If the United States is going to win its struggle against transnational terrorism, its leaders are going to have to do a better job of aligning its values with foreign policies. It will need to seek a political solution in Iraq, promote the Middle East peace process, and pay more attention to allies and international institutions. Then it will be in a position to combine soft power with hard power.

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Mine field

ROWENNA DAVIS asks whether global conflict is becoming more environmental than ideological

IT IS BY NO means controversial to say that resources matter in international relations. Few of us would deny that a desire for land and basic materials played a role in Britain's decision to undertake colonial expansion, in Hitler's quest for *Lebensraum* or Bush's invasion of Iraq. However, what is controversial is to argue that primary resources – specifically oil, water and agricultural land – are not just influencing patterns of conflict around the world but are actually *determining* them. Many contemporary conflicts are described as being political or cultural by nature, but, under the surface, they are often better explained as environmental. As the population expands, global conflicts are increasingly likely to be determined by the scarcity and distribution of resources, with profound implications for the way we should pursue global security.

It is common knowledge that since the demise of the Cold War, 15 years ago, most conflicts have occurred within states rather than between them. Increasingly, these internal conflicts are starting over primary resources – those in Africa being the paradigm. It is no coincidence that this continent, which has the smallest utilised resource base to population ratio (and thus the scarcest relative availability of the most basic means of survival), also experiences the highest levels of civil conflict. Looking at a map, you can see the extent to which conflicts coalesce around the few areas of resource exploitation. Rebel groups frequently take control of these resource hotspots, granting concessions to them in return for territorial control. The prolonged viability of UNITA in Angola and the RUF in Sierra Leone; the violent gangs of the Nigerian Delta and the successful rebellions of Laurent Kabila in Zaire and Denis Sassou-Nguesso in Congo were all assisted by seizing control of the area's resource base.

These conflicts are often portrayed as the result of ethnic and religious divides – but simply blaming longstanding cultural traditions doesn't seem to explain why conflicts on the continent appear to be escalating. Looking at the increases in population proves more helpful. As the population grows, people become more dependent on the few resources available to them. Coalescing into groups is one way of channelling tensions and pushing out competition. If the population resource ratio fails to improve, Africa is unlikely to escape its present, Hobbsian state of perpetual conflict.

Let's be clear about one thing; to say that conflicts are increasingly being resource driven does not mean to say that those living in the developing world are incapable of fighting over ideas, values or culture. The Middle East is a case in point. It would be ignorant to dismiss the religious and political components of the conflict, but it would also be ignorant to dismiss the environmental dimension to the problem. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is, after all, ultimately a struggle for national territory: a struggle for land, perhaps the most basic resource of all. It is no coincidence that the two most contentious areas on the arid Arab Peninsula – the West Bank and the Gaza strip – contain two-thirds of the region's water, or that the Golan Heights – another key water supply – is a constant flashpoint of controversy between Syria and Israel.

Contrary to the opinions of free marketers, increased resource exploitation has often failed to provide security in the face of scarcity. In fact, rapid resource utilisation has actually served to promote conflict rather than eliminate it. The rapid and unregulated exploitation of oil in the Middle East has brought unprecedented changes throughout the region, but the increased wealth associated with it has too often served to benefit a minority, stimulating old rivalries and fostering new hierarchies. We are faced with the fascinating paradox that it is not just too few resources that generate conflict but also too many too quickly. Without fair, regulated development that benefits the country as a whole these conflicts are likely to remain unresolved.

Resources may, for one reason or another, be beginning to determine patterns of conflict in poorer regions – but what has this got to do with the West? Globalisation answers the question: it's got everything to do with us. If 9/11 taught us one thing, it taught us that the security dilemmas of poorer countries are security dilemmas for the globe.

No longer can we segregate ourselves from the problems of broken states; the 21st-Century world is so interdependent that even the most powerful nations are vulnerable to the poorest and underdeveloped. If a state fails to achieve sufficient economic development we loose on debt defaults and the opportunity cost of foregone trade. If a region fails to achieve political stability or democratic accountability then we are threatened by the proliferation and accumulation of WMD, and if a population is restless, or desperate, then we are threatened by a potential breeding ground for terrorism. It seems that helping to secure sustainable development for these nations would not only be just, but would be entirely aligned with our self interest.

However, although states torn over resource issues do have an adverse effect on our security and prosperity indirectly, we are yet to witness a case where resources fully determine a western nation's decision to undertake military intervention. Although many would argue that oil played some part in America's decision to invade Iraq, few would hold it up as the determining factor that took us to war in 2003. However, this does not mean that this will always be the case.

It is no coincidence that the two most contentious areas on the arid Arab Peninsula contain two-thirds of the region's water

International relations has a tendency to look at states as static actors that exist independently of resources, invading others to increase their resource bases rather than to sustain them. But the fact is that states can only survive with a perpetual flow of primary goods: America's daily consumption of 19.65m barrels of oil per day is what keeps its economic cogs turning, enables its military complex and permits the sustainability of its political order. Since America cannot sustain this consumption domestically it is forced to look abroad to meet demand.

Given that most of our energy supplies are finite (the more optimistic estimates predict oil supplies to last another 60 years) and that developing countries need an ever-increasing amount of their resources to sustain their own populations it seems that we are faced with three options. The most popular course of action is to rely on technology to 'get more out of less'; the second is to make our current lifestyles more sustainable by reducing overall consumption levels and, if these options fail, the only other option open to us seems to be securing resources by military force.

As world consumption and population rates continue to rise exponentially primary resources will continue to become an increasingly important source of conflict. Acknowledging the environmental dimension to global conflict has profound implications for global security. It means that fair, regulated and sustainable development is an essential component for building a peaceful world. In the words of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, "Freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy, natural environment – these are the interrelated building blocks of human and therefore national, security".

The sarajevo I knew

GORCIN DIZDAR looks back to the Sarajevo that he left behind in 1992 and reflects upon the role that Bosnia should play in the 21st century

MY PARENTS WAVING from the station, my brother and grandmother next to me in the coach, a vague feeling of sadness, no tears: that is how I remember leaving Sarajevo on April 2nd, 1992. Little did I know, at the age of seven, that I was not going to see my parents for the next three years. Little did I know that it was the last time I was seeing Sarajevo the way I knew it. 'Little Yugoslavia', they used to call it, because in its ethnic and religious composition it symbolised the whole country: Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians living not 'peacefully side by side', but actually together in a way unknown anywhere else in the world. Less than eight years had passed since the Winter Olympics had been held in Sarajevo and its citizens became proud that the world would associate Sarajevo with more than the shot that triggered the beginning of the First World War. Yugoslavia, a socialist country independent from Soviet Russia, enjoyed economic standards greater by far than those of the Eastern bloc; the people were free to travel wherever they wanted. We were very proud of our country.

Looking back now, however, I cannot understand how my parents – like most people from Sarajevo – did not really believe there would be a war even on that April 2nd, three days before the failed invasion of the city took place. A brief lesson on the recent history of former Yugoslavia: After nationalist parties took power in the first free elections in 1989, it was clear that Yugoslavia in the shape it had existed for the past 45 years had to be changed. No agreement was reached, so in 1991 Slovenia declared independence, soon followed by Croatia. There were no problems in Slovenia: 95 per cent of its population were ethnic Slovenians and the Yugoslavian army, controlled by Serbia, withdrew almost without any fighting. Croatia, however, was home to some 450,000 Serbs, who did not like the idea of suddenly being a minority in a Croatian state after being members of the dominant nation in Yugoslavia. Some regions with a Serbian minority, assisted by the Yugoslavian army, declared autonomy from independent Croatia and started taking over large territories populated by Croatians as well as more liberal Serbs. The world's attention was finally caught when the Serbian army started bombing Dubrovnik, a beautiful medieval city on the Croatian coast protected under international laws as a Unesco World Heritage site. All eyes were turned to Bosnia now: the federal state whose population consisted of roughly 50 per cent

Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks), 30 per cent Serbians and 20 per cent Croatians. At a referendum held in 1992, the overwhelming majority of Bosniaks and Croatians voted for independence from the rest of Yugoslavia, most Serbs refused to vote. In 1992, the UN recognised Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent country.

Although the multiethnic population of Sarajevo did not believe it could happen, the Yugoslavian (by now reduced to Serbia and Montenegro) army started 'protecting the Serbian minority' using methods borrowed from Nazi Germany. After taking over a town or an area, the army would usually assemble its leading citizens and kill them. As we found out from our Serbian neighbours who stayed in our area during the war, my father, as a distinguished journalist, was one of the first ones on the list, together with his family. Luckily, we had left three days earlier.

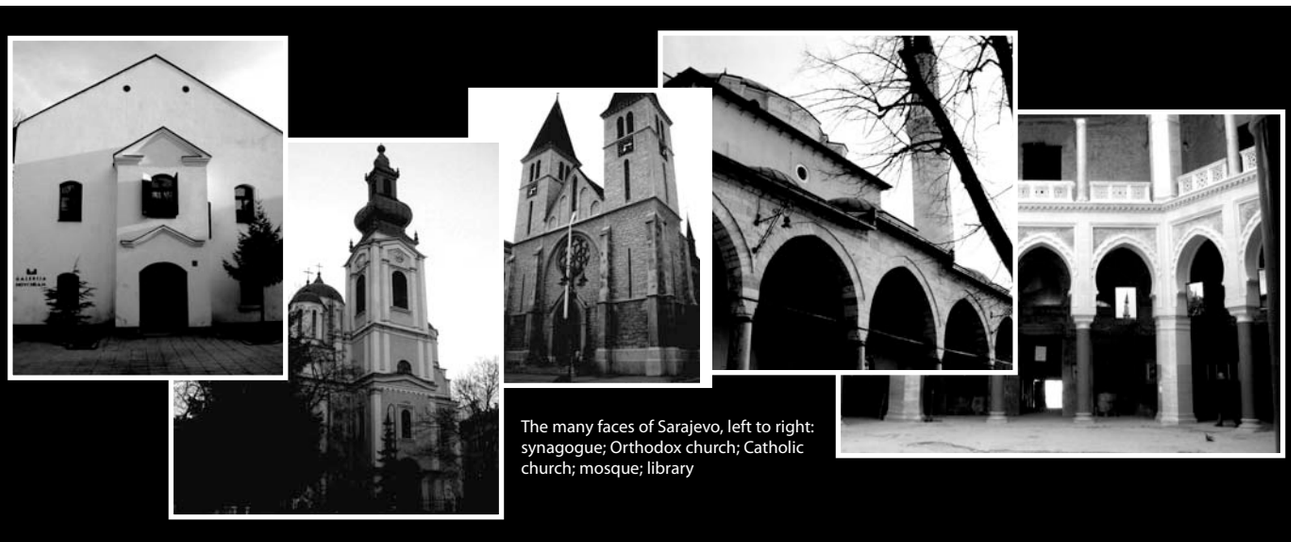
That is when the series of disastrous decisions made by the UN began. To respond to the escalating violence, the General Assembly decided to put an embargo on the import of weapons to Bosnia. Before the war, the Yugoslavian army was one of largest in Europe. The Bosnian army did not even exist. It seems difficult to avoid one of the two possible conclusions: either the UN acted very stupidly, or it acted very intelligently, predicting that the easiest solution would be to allow a quick Serbian victory. But somehow, the Bosnians managed to defend themselves. Not just the Bosniaks: particularly in Sarajevo, many ethnic Serbians, showing great courage, decided to fight for Bosnia and against their own people and their fascist plans. But the war was very difficult, particularly in Sarajevo. The city was completely surrounded and exposed to constant bombing and sniper shots from the surrounding mountains, the front line sometimes being as close as 500 metres from the city centre. The first bombs were aimed at the National Library: more than a million books and documents were lost in the fire in 1992. The only possible way out of the city was through the airport, controlled by the 'Blue Helmets' – the grotesquely lightly armed forces of the UN. At the very beginning of the war, the UN guaranteed a safe passage for our vice president, Hakija Turajlic. The envoy was stopped at a Serbian checkpoint, however. The Serbian soldier walked past the UN soldiers, opened the vehicle and shot Turajlic. The UN didn't have the permission to shoot back: forced to be strictly neutral, they were only allowed to shoot when attacked. Acting according to the same principle of neutrality, the Blue Helmets would shoot any civilian who would try to cross the airport in a desperate attempt to escape the city. In 1993, there was a glimmer of hope: John Major was visiting the city amidst rumours that he might authorise a military intervention after seeing the catastrophic humanitarian disaster that was taking place there. Despite being celebrated as the savior of Sarajevo, he declared that according to statistics, Sarajevo was only the 20th most dangerous place in the world.

The people of Sarajevo managed to survive by digging a tunnel under the UN-controlled airport that was the only channel between the occupied city and the rest of the world for almost four years. It was to be the longest siege of a city in modern history. But in the end, the people of Sarajevo won. Srebrenica, a Bosniak town deep within Serb-controlled territory, was not as fortunate in correcting the mistakes of the UN. In 1995, Blue Helmets moved into the city, took the weapons of the local population and declared it an internationally-protected 'safe zone'. When the Serbian army attacked, the Blue Helmets surrendered without any fighting. The helpless population was divided systematically: women and children on one side, men on the other side. On that day, the Serbian army killed more than 8000 men. Most of the bodies were thrown in mass graves that have still not been found.

After the war had finished, Bosnia was divided into two 'entities' – the Bosniak and Croatian Federation and the Republika Srpska. Instead of the ethnic mixture that characterised all parts of Bosnia before the war, it is a country deeply divided along ethnic lines today. Srebrenica is in the Serbian part of the country. The majority of the people do not want to live in the same country as the two other nations. And that is the biggest problem of Bosnia today: either three nations have to be forced to live together against their will, or the country must be divided, thereby necessitating ethnic cleansing and all the associated horrors of the war. The UN has opted for the first option, and rightly so, I believe. The way it is being done, however, is wrong and cannot work. Bosnians are being asked collectively to forget that the war has ever happened. The country is full of propaganda posters: one example contains a fork, a spoon and a knife, telling us that "differences can be an advantage". But even worse than that, this war has no winner. Every side believes that they were right and therefore the underlying reasons for the conflict still remain. On a smaller scale, it is as if in 1945, the Jews had been asked to forget what happened and live in Germany without blaming the Germans for the Holocaust.

There are people in this country who think that 'they' – the UN, the international community – are the most responsible for this war. Although I was very critical of the way the UN has handled the situation in former Yugoslavia, I am not one of them. The blame lies with us. I still cannot understand what could lead anyone suddenly to fight against his former neighbour. I deeply believe, however, that under certain conditions people could do the same thing in any part of the world today; we are not some primitive Balkan tribe, who would inevitably tend to war. Yet the world can still learn from us. In the centre of Sarajevo, within 200 meters, there is a mosque, a Catholic cathedral, an Orthodox church and a synagogue and no harm has been done to any of them throughout the war. Bosnia is the only country in Europe where there is not one, but three dominant nationalities. In these times of cultural paranoia and increasing xenophobia in Europe, life is not easy for a small country with a very young democracy. But I remain optimistic, and I hope that Bosnia and Sarajevo will once again be an example of tolerance and openness to the rest of the world in the near future.

Every side believes that that they were in the right and so the underlying reasons for conflict remain



The many faces of Sarajevo, left to right: synagogue; Orthodox church; Catholic church; mosque; library

Republic of Anarchy

IBRAHIM AL-MARASHI argues fear may partly explain the problems of post-Saddam Iraq, but may also preclude the country's progress

EVER SINCE THE first Gulf War, I have been asked questions about Iraq. First they were directed to me as the descendent of Iraqi immigrants living in the US and later, during the second conflict, as an expert on Iraqi affairs. Even after years of researching Iraqi politics, I always try to relate questions about the country to my personal experiences. Prior to the 2003 war, one question I was consistently asked was: "How does Saddam manage to hold onto power?". It always brought to mind a recurring nightmare I had as a teenager, in which I was entering Iraq for the first time in my life. Even though I was an American by birth, as soon as I set foot on Iraqi soil Saddam's secret agents would arrest me for my parents' "crimes against the state" and incarcerate me in one of their notorious prisons. The guards would then torture me in a variety of ways until I would wake up sweating.

That recurring dream is tied to one of my most vivid childhood memories. After I had angered my mother for stealing a candy bar from the grocery store she told me there was a God, who would punish me for my sin and I would end up in hell with the devil and his helper – a man by the name of Saddam Hussein. My parents imbued me with a sense of fear for this man – a fear that entered my subconscious and manifested itself in my worst nightmares. My parents, like countless other Iraqis, fled this nightmare. Nevertheless, thousands of miles away in the US, I still lived in fear from Saddam's reach – even though I had never set foot in Iraq.

This fear explained how Saddam had managed to stay in power. The many ways he manipulated it to control his regime was detailed in the book *The Republic of Fear*, written by the Iraqi author, Kanan Makiya. Saddam created such an all–encompassing sense of fear that even after he went into hiding after the 2003 war, Iraqis were reluctant to co-operate with the occupation authorities, certain he would return.

I first read *The Republic of Fear* in 1989, when I was 16 years old. It sparked in me a perverse fascination with Saddam's regime, and it was this book that defined my academic interest in Iraq. I wanted to know what elements in Saddam's regime were responsible for this 'Rebulic of Fear'. My doctoral studies at Oxford focused on Saddam's security apparatus: the institution in Iraq that infiltrated society at every level. As an Iraqi, you never knew who was an informant. It could have been anyone: a taxi driver, a neighbour – even your own child.

This security network, along with the Party, were two key pillars of Saddam's rule, and they incorporated all facets of Iraqi public life into the state, to the point where all elements of civil society were absorbed into a monolithic political structure. Any political activity outside of this structure was deemed subversive and grounds for imprisonment or even execution. It was this system that the US dismantled overnight by 'decapitating the regime' – or in other words, by marching on to Baghdad and causing the collapse of the old political order. However, the US did not have a clear strategy for establishing a new political system, and instead opened up a Pandora's box of rival political factions that had been kept in check in the past out of fear of the previous regime. During my first visit to Iraq in September 2003, one Iraqi summed up the country's dilemma in a single sentence: "We went from a Republic of Fear to a Republic of Anarchy in one day."

I was repeatedly asked after the 2003 war, especially by American audiences, why the Iraqis didn't welcome the US as liberators following the war. After explaining my doctoral research to an Iraqi family friend once, he retorted: "Let me tell you about Saddam's regime. Saddam is a CIA agent." His argument was based on Saddam's longstanding relationship with US: since America had covertly brought the anti-communist Saddam into power in 1968, and sided with him during the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam orchestrated the 1990 invasion of Kuwait to give his allies a pretext for deploying military forces to the Persian Gulf, and thus enabled them to protect their vital oil interests. My friend then brought up how President George Bush had encouraged the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam after the 1991 Gulf War, and then when the Iraqis revolted, the American President failed to deliver any American support. According to my family friend, this was the most blatant demonstration of how the US wanted Saddam to stay in power so that the Islamic Republic of Iran would not emerge as the dominant power in the Gulf.

While I thought such an argument to be absurd at the time, upon travelling to Iraq I heard it repeated on numerous occasions.

[Photography Brent Stirton/Getty Images]

Many Iraqis, even among the educated elite, argued that Saddam had merely handed over the 'keys' of Baghdad to the Americans in April 2003, and they argued that he was not in an Iraqi prison but moved to the US for protection as evidence. Such conspiracy theories are abundant in Iraq, and while outside observers may be quick to dismiss them, they do reveal an important insight into the Iraqi mindset. Why would the Iraqis welcome the US a liberators if they believed the oppressive dictatorial rule of Saddam was a creation of American foreign policy?

My uncle from Baghdad came to visit my family in California in 1993, during the period when UN sanctions were imposed on Iraq. I had expected to receive the same good-spirited, well-fed man I remembered from my childhood, but the man I picked up from the airport was alarmingly thin and disheartened. What I remember most about the visit was his fascination with overweight Americans. Whenever an obese person came into his view he would stare in total amazement and venture a guess as to their weight. His awe was a product of his own hunger: he could no longer remember a time when there was enough food for obesity to even be a possibility. Despite his hatred of Saddam's regime, it was the US he blamed for the UN-imposed the sanctions on the Iraqi people and their prolonged misery. A few years later his health deserted him completely; he died in Baghdad. I often wondered if he would be alive today had there been no sanctions in place prohibiting the import of medical equipment. Again, why would the Iraqis welcome the US as liberators when the majority can remember the last decade of suffering under the sanctions?

So exactly who is responsible for the violence in Iraq? Is it primarily foreign fighters? My grandfather was a young Shia cleric in the Iraqi town of Najaf when the British invaded southern Iraq in 1920. The British, like the US decades later, declared that they were liberating it from centuries of 'Ottoman oppression' Later, the inhabitants came to realise that the British had interest only in liberating the oil that lay beneath their feet. The British cobbled together the three former Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra and formed today's Iraq. My grandfather had had little contact with those who lived in the Mosul province, most of whom happened to be Kurds, or the Sunni Arabs who resided in the Baghdad province. He had little concept of what it meant to be an 'Iraqi', as he had always thought of himself as a Muslim from Najaf who happened to be a citizen of the Ottoman Empire. He had no love for the Ottomans, yet he was equally

Many Iraqis argued that Saddam had merely handed over the 'keys' of Baghdad to the Americans

distrustful of the British. He was furious to see 'foreign fighters' enter his town and act as if they owned it. My grandfather joined the growing number of 'Iraqis' who were disenchanted with the occupation and willing to sacrifice their lives to expel the British. Ironically, it was out of hatred for the occupiers that he found common ground with those Kurds and Arab Sunnis with whom he had had no contact in the past. He proved to be an inexperienced rebel and soon fled to the East African island of Zanzibar.

My grandfather's experience conveys a timely message: while many Iraqis chafed under Ottoman rule, they believed British 'rule' would be no different. Today, although many Iraqis suffered under the rule of Saddam they are equally distrustful of the US. Just as in my grandfather's time, some Iraqis now see violence as the only means to end an undesired occupation. Many of the US war planners in the Department of Defence did not plan on insurgency erupting – another example of the adage that those who fail to study history are doomed to repeat it.

Whilst those who planned the war are responsible for failing to understand these complexities, partial blame must be placed on the foreign policy elite in Washington for enforcing the notion that US troops would be welcomed as liberators. This elite produced many of the overnight experts who dominated the airwaves prior to March 2003, many of whom probably could not even point to towns like Fallujah on a map before the war. These armchair experts continue to portrayed themselves as experts on Iraq, despite never having set foot there. Although I had devoted my academic career to studying the country, it was not until I risked my life to visit the it after the war that I realised my knowledge of the nation in fact was very limited. I fear that many of the armchair experts are willing to dispense advice and commentaries without having seen the real state of affairs, thus contributing to a misinformation campaign about the country.

The misinformation campaign produced by this American foreign policy elite brings me to another question: will Iraq collapse into civil war, ushering in the break-up of the country into a Kurdish north, Sunni centre and Shia south? While I was travelling through the Shia south, where my family originates, I was not welcomed with open arms by my fellow Shia. Indeed, many were angry with me, declaring that my family had betrayed their countrymen by living comfortably in the US while the Shia in Iraq suffered under Saddam's discriminatory policies. Ironically, the warmest reception I received was in Sunni towns such as Tikrit, the birthplace of Saddam Hussein. I recall talking to a young man, a Sunni Arab who asked where I was from. I informed him that I was an Iraqi Shia from Najaf raised in the US. I immediately expected a negative reaction from him, considering I was from the US as well as from the Shia sect. Instead he declared his happiness that one of Iraq's lost sons had returned, and his fellow townspeople also expressed similar views. I realised he saw me first, not as a Shia or even as an American citizen, but as an Iraqi.

During my visit to the North of Iraq, I had met many Kurds. As I travelled through the area, I picked up some basic greetings and phrases in Kurdish. After using these phrases on one occasion, I remember a Kurdish youth who made a point of letting me know: "I wish more Iraqi Arabs would make an effort to learn Kurdish. I think there is nothing wrong with being an Iraqi and Kurd at the same time. As long as Iraqis like you try to learn and appreciate our culture, I don't think we will ever go back to the times like under Saddam." Prior to this visit to Iraq, I had read an opinion piece in the New York Times, by Leslie Gelb of the Council on Foreign Relations, where she proposed the break-up of Iraq so as to make it more controllable by the US. After this encounter with Iraqis who had lived under the old regime, I wondered if Gelb had ever visited Iraq before she suggested such a misguided solution. In the last 80 years as a nation, a common sense of belonging has formed between three disparate communities, including the Kurds. If Iraq was going to break up or to fall into civil war, it would have done so immediately following the collapse of the Saddam regime. The fact it has stayed together so far despite the violence indicates that if the US allowed Iraq to break up, it would only give into the goals of those factions in Iraq, such as the groups loyal to the Jordanian national Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, that have been trying to instigate a civil war to destabilise Iraq.

So can Iraq, which has gone from a Republic of Fear to a Republic of Anarchy, simply emerge as a republic? I am pessimistic. I was in an internet café in Istanbul recently when some Turkish youths sitting next to me began downloading footage of a hostage in Iraq being beheaded by a group loyal to al-Zarqawi. As the execution was carried out the youths began to laugh. I wondered if these boys realised that the victim was their fellow countryman – a Turkish truck driver by the name of Ramazan Elbu. The image of the decapitation of that man now haunts me. I realise that if I were to return to Iraq I could become a hostage as well, beheaded by the same terrorists. If I fear these terrorists while I am safe in Istanbul, how does the average Iraqi deal with daily fears of being kidnapped or killed in car bomb, or even find work or put food on the table? The Republic of Fear has re-emerged in a new form.

Ibrahim Al-Marashi is a post-doctoral Fellow at in the Politics and Conflict Resolution Program at Sabanci University, Istanbul. Unknown to him, large sections of his PhD thesis were plagiarised by the British Government in February 2003, when the Government was seeking to present the case for war against Saddam

[Photography Brent Stirton/Getty Images]

The Naked Arab

Following the Iraqi elections, FOULATH HADID looks at Arab advances to democracy

Stripped of his most basic civil rights and liberties, the Arab of today stands naked of all the necessary components that make up a modern state. If the criteria for a successful civil society were a liberal democracy with free, fair elections, not a single Arab country would qualify. When applied to 22 countries with populations of over 300 million, that becomes a very hard pill to swallow. The Arab Human Development Reports (AHDR) of 2002, 2003, and the much-delayed 2004 report, provide ample support for that fact.

How did the Arab arrive at such an abject level of development compared to the meteoric increase in the standard of living of his western counterpart? It is a question that Arab thinkers have pondered for centuries: one may even call them early AHDR scholars. Western writers have also tackled it, with books like *Oriental Despotism* arguing that Arabs had an 'Arab', non-western way of doing things. More recently, Sharansky's *A Case for Democracy* and Patai's *The Arab Mind* have fuelled neocon ideas.

At a recent meeting of Arab government officials it was remarked that despite all the criticism heaped on Arab governments for a lack of democracy, they were remarkably stable. My response was that this came at a price: that the Arab 'subject' has been brow beaten into this regime stability. He is not offered a democratic mechanism for change and has been lobotomised into thinking that any change would bring a much worse alternative. The recently-published AHDR deems a continuation of the status quo the worst-case scenario for the Arab world.

Many sophisticated Arabs decry their status but fear change, lest it bring upon them unknown army colonels (or, dare one say it, an Islamist cleric) for whose misguided aspirations they will have to pamper. Examples of Arab military leaders abound. The last to fall, Saddam (not a military man *per se* but a product of a military regime), went completely over the top by declaring a 100 per cent vote of approval for his regime, months before being toppled.

An analysis of the 'Arab' state of affairs is far too complex to be attempted in a short article such as this, although the long-awaited (and finally published) AHDR will help shed more light on the subject. What can be said for certain is that there has been an imposed regime change in Iraq. I am an Iraqi Sunni and, unlike most Sunnis I know, I voted in the recent elections – not because I knew who to vote for (that was made into an unnecessary mystery for most voters) but because I felt that it was my inalienable right to vote. I voted for democracy.

The US is now speaking of a domino effect taking hold in the region, citing the Palestinian elections, the sea change in Mubarak's Egypt and the famous 'will of the people' in Lebanon forcing a Syrian pull out – all novelties in democracy-starved Arab lands. Yet only time will tell whether this does indeed herald the long-awaited democratisation of the area.

American Presidents do have had a good track record in this field. Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' had a seismic effect in Arab lands liberated from the Ottoman yoke in 1918; Jimmy Carter unleashed a torrent of human rights that, by the 1980s, had resulted in people demanding, and getting, their democratically chosen governments. Now George W. Bush has embarked upon the ultimate experiment: democracy through imposed regime change.

So will the US succeed in imposing democracy in Iraq? Will Iraq be able to repeat the Japanese/German experiences?

Two vital matters must be resolved before anybody is going anywhere in the grand 'Arab democracy' scheme. First, the complete failure of the traditional democratic and secular parties, such as the Communist Party, the National Democratic Party, or the new democratic Pachachi Party, and the emergence of religious parties as the leading groups, confirms the tectonic shift of power in the Arab world. The test, like anywhere else, is whether governments in the region can bring into the political process all competing parties (especially the Islamic ones), via fair, honest and non-violent elections. More importantly, those not winning have to accept defeat. If the Sunnis are not brought into such a process, democracy in Iraq would have lost the essential component of inclusiveness.

Second, the present resistance/insurgency in Iraq must end – through dialogue or the capitulation of either side (the rebels or the US coalition). America failed in Vietnam because the Viet Cong did not capitulate. The rebels in Iraq have not yet reached the status of the Viet Cong, but until the present resistance capitulates or it is brought into the political process all bets are off.

However, both sides agreeing to an immediate ceasefire could resolve the conflict. It is rumoured that back-channel negotiations are taking place to that effect: US forces could withdraw to specified bases outside the cities so that at least the country loses the feel of an occupied nation. A semblance of sovereignty may even begin to emerge. A transparent, honest reconstruction program should be launched; the favouring of US corporations such as Bechtel and Halliburton should stop. The US and its allies should agree to a planned pull-out within a specified time frame. The army and civil service should be rehabilitated with their former cadres. All those ideas of 'de-Baathification' have brought nothing but chaos to the country and are the result of the confused thinking of Paul Bremmer III. When asked at his farewell party from Baghdad what advice he would leave his Iraqi successor, he replied to a bemused audience: "de-Bremmerfication".

The man may have left a mess behind him in Iraq, but at least he had a sense of humour about it.

Foulath Hadid worked on his D.Phil (**The Failure of the Democratisation Experience in Iraq*****) at St Antony's College, Oxford, where he is now an Honorary Fellow. He has also edited a forthcoming memoir of his father, who founded the democracy movement in Iraq.***

rebel assault

As part of *The Oxford Forum*'s focus on Colombia, MALCOLM DEAS explains why taking on the FARC guerrillas has won President Uribe so many votes – and argues it's high time Europe lent weight to the campaign

A YEAR AFTER September 11th 2001 President Alvaro Uribe informed the UN General Assembly that every year the direct victims of fighting in Colombia amount to some 3,000 – about the same number who died that infamous day in New York. Despite the dimensions of the conflict – by far the most violent in the Western Hemisphere – it is little known and understood. Coverage in the European media, with the single exception of *The Economist*, is patchy and sensationalist. Television reporters cannot resist counter-narcotics helicopters. *The Daily Telegraph* correspondent always falls back on the shorthand simplification of calling the guerrillas 'Marxists' and the paramilitaries 'right wing'. An excellent article, 'Who knows how to govern Iraq?', in the *London Review of Books*, speculates that the future of that country might be "something like Colombia" – well, yes and no. It is common to see references to "Colombia's 40-year civil war".

The following, then, is a brief characterisation of Colombia and her conflicts that will try to be more objective and complete.

Colombia has not known complete peace in the last four decades – or five or six for that matter – but the term 'civil war' is misleading. It fits better the sectarian political conflict between Conservatives and Liberals in the 1940s and 1950s, which was ended by truce and power-sharing at the close of that last decade. Some guerrillas from that era persisted, much encouraged by the Cuban revolution, but their numbers were tiny, the threats they posed remote; by the mid-1970s they appeared to have no future. But they survived and for various reasons – their own tenacity, encouraging developments in Central America, new sources of income from oil, drugs and more systematic kidnapping and extortion – they grew. At their height the two major guerrillas, the FARC and the ELN, together numbered over 20,000 in the ranks – many of them very young – with a larger tail of supporters, willing and unwilling. Against them emerged some 10,000 paramilitaries. Numbers of both have recently declined. The guerrillas have

lost territory and influence under more effective military pressure: desertions are up and recruiting is more difficult. Government control of the parts of the country where most Colombians live and which contain most of the economy has much improved. There is still a long way to go in the peripheral parts, which contain most of the guerrillas and most of the coca.

Yet all this has still not constituted a civil war in the usual sense of that term. Colombia has a population of some 42 million, and three quarters of that population is urban. It has a democratic and legitimate government. The country is not 'polarised' in the normal sense of the term (as Chile was polarised under Salvador Allende or Venezuela has been recently under Hugo Chavez) between supporters of the government or supporters of the FARC or ELN. The guerrillas on a national and even on a regional or departmental scale have never enjoyed any substantial popular support. Opinion surveys, which are frequent and many of them highly professional, rank their approval in low single figures – way below the institutions that enjoy the most popular confidence: consistently the Church and the Armed Forces. The FARC are not interested in popularity – that will come when they take power. Colombian cities have seen marches against kidnapping and violence with turn-outs of millions: Europeans take note when such demonstrations take place in Madrid, or even in Kiev, but not if it is Bogotá or Medellín. President Uribe, who is a hard-liner in confronting terrorism – no negotiations without a cessation of hostilities – has for three years maintained a favourable standing in the opinion polls of 60–70 per cent, a feat no other recent leader of the country has achieved. His detractors claim the polls are too urban, but his rural popularity is probably even higher. He has more support than that enjoyed by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, and the reason for it is clear enough: the promise and delivery of greater security.

Why then has the conflict persisted? It fits in many aspects into the 'greed' category of the alternative 'greed or grievance' conflict explanations, and exemplifies the correlations revealed in Paul Collier's World Bank studies: an immense country, much of it mountainous and jungly; porous frontiers; primary exports which subversives can extort (not only drugs, which became an important source of guerrilla and paramilitary resources from the mid 1980s, but also oil, gold, coal and bananas); a population pyramid that contains too many youthful rural unemployed; a past history of conflict. Then the FARC and the ELN are very conscious of their history: 40 years of struggle and survival and, until recently, growth are not lightly given up. Colombian guerrillas are militarily and logistically experienced. They are also autonomous: despite the presence of foreign ideologies – Moscow-line Marxist, Cuban, Maoist, even Albanian – no outside powers can exert leverage on them, a contrast with the much more dependent guerrillas of Central America.

The doctrine of the FARC leadership still remains Maoist-Leninist, and aims at the conquest of national power through "the combination of all forms of struggle". This embraces peace negotiations only in so far as they favour that end, which is obviously not something that the democratically-elected government of the country can negotiate. The FARC have shown no interest in any partial programme. To expect a Colombian government to negotiate on such terms is no more reasonable than to expect the Italian government to negotiate with the Red Brigades. Despite its peasant and rural origins, the FARC have abandoned any vital concern with agrarian reform. In matters of specific policy the line is to sidestep the questions: 'the people', when the FARC have taken power, will make their desires known, and the armed might of the FARC will ensure that their desires are fulfilled. The more nebulous and utopian such a movement's programme is, the more it signifies that it intends to go on fighting.

All such organisations are necessarily militarist and authoritarian, and negotiating peace, or even truce, is a hazardous prospect for them. Fighting is what maintains the authority of the leadership, order in the ranks and the flow of resources – a truce means no more kidnapping, no more gun-running, and every man or woman then begins to think of the uncertain future; morale and discipline break down. There is little trust in the government or in the guarantees it offers.

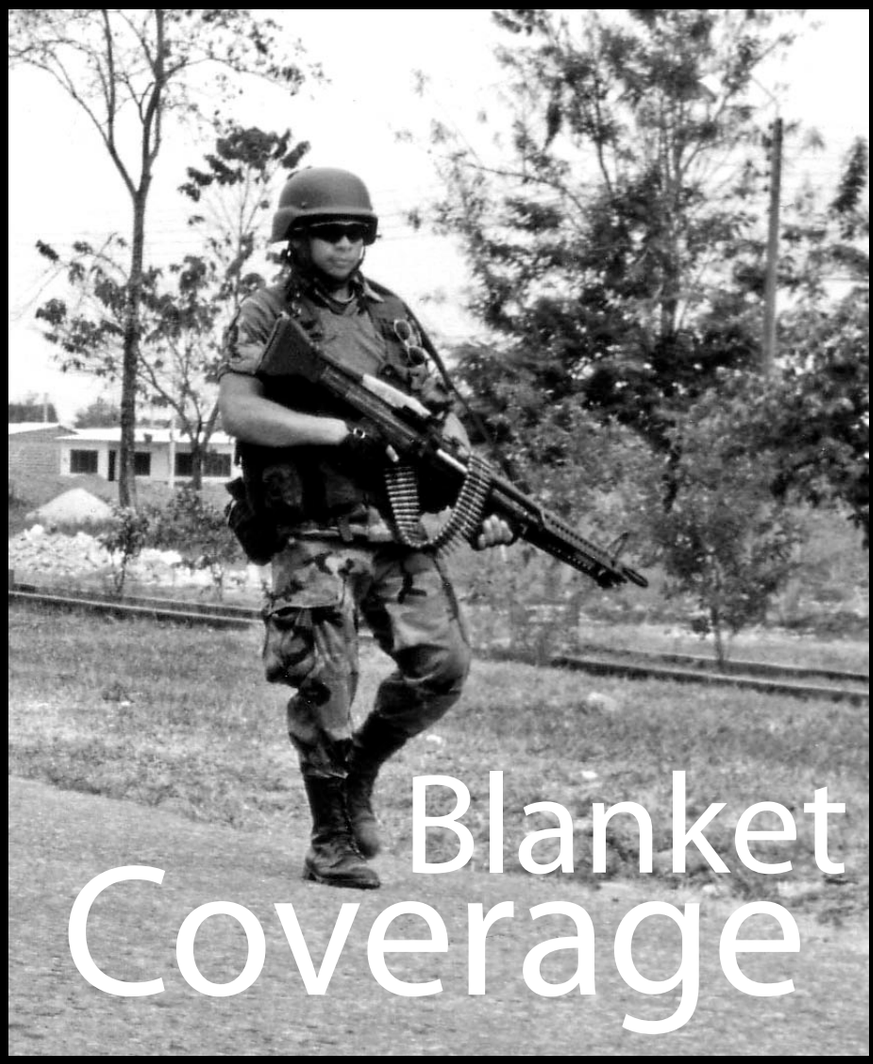
A further explanation of why conflict has continued is the nature of successive administrations' responses. Colombian has no authoritarian or militarist tradition – no more than five years of military rule in 175 years of independent history. The army is subordinate to the civilian government: though its human rights record is not perfect, it has never been able to carry out the drastic sort of rural counterinsurgency campaigns that have taken place in some other Latin American republics. Neither the army nor the police have been sufficiently numerous or sufficiently equipped to meet the tasks facing them. Colombia has devoted (by world and regional standards) a low proportion of its budget to security. This began to change significantly from 1998, partly with US military aid under Plan Colombia – sizeable, and technically important, but not the massive militarisation its critics maintain. The annual sum is a couple of days of the Americans' bill from Iraq, and not that much in military terms – a Blackhawk helicopter, depending on the specification, costs anything between 10 and 20 million dollars. Prior to the change in policy and in opinion that has come with the Uribe government, policy towards the guerrillas for 20 years oscillated between peace negotiations and half-hearted military containment. Uribe's policies may in the future be modified in some aspects, but his success in improving security and giving the country renewed confidence means that the pendulum is unlikely to swing back far.

Colombia is firmly aligned with the United States and the Bush administration, and that alignment is in the present interests of the country. There is no other source of significant assistance. Given that the drug-consuming nations – which include the Europeans, who consume getting on for half of the drugs that come from Colombia – are not going to change their policies in the near future, US policy is broadly appropriate, effective, discreet and well informed: Miami is, after all, only a couple of hours away. Colombians are not anti-American – during a visit from Rumsfeld last year not a single stone was thrown or wall painted. Relations with immediate neighbours vary, but the Uribe government is not isolated. Co-operation with Brazil, which has large and growing drug-related problems, has much improved, and this has also been the case with Peru. Venezuela under the erratic populist Hugo Chavez remains a problem: he has from time to time inclined to neutral postures that favour the FARC, and makes arms purchases that it is hard for Colombia to ignore.

And what of Europe? The Colombian government has received consistent support from the UK and Spain – countries familiar with terrorism – but the rest, and particularly the EU, usually appear as distant and partial moralisers, manipulated by NGOs bent on discrediting President Uribe. After a lecture in Berlin, Paul Collier was asked by an earnest member of his audience: "What could Germany do to help?" I recall his concise reply: "Put your own house in order by controlling money-laundering and the sale of precursor chemicals, stop sympathising with groups that do not deserve your sympathy, and consider a modest programme of military aid." It was greeted with astonished silence.

The EU appears a distant and partial moraliser, manipulated by NGOs bent on discrediting Uribe

Malcolm Deas is a Fellow of St Antony´s College, where he was one of the founders of the University Latin American Centre in the early 1960s. He has been the Director of the Centre, and has written extensively on Colombian and Latin American affairs



Blanket Coverage

GARRY LEECH argues there is more to Colombia's troubles than meets the eye

SINCE COLOMBIA'S PRESIDENT Alvaro Uribe launched his Democratic Security and Defence Strategy shortly after assuming office in August 2002, the mainstream media in North America and Europe have mostly lauded his successes. Yet whilst President Uribe's strategies have diminished kidnapping and killings, they have also resulted in a dramatic increase in forced 'disappearances' and arbitrary detentions. Under the Uribe administration, human rights abuses by state security forces waging a counter-insurgency war against the country's largest leftist guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), have risen alarmingly.

Despite repeated claims to the contrary by the Colombian and US governments, the Colombian military has made little headway against the FARC on the battlefield. In fact, claims by officials in Washington and Bogotá that the rebels are on the defensive are contradicted by figures that show the FARC launched more attacks during President Uribe's first two years in office than during any two-year period under former President Andrés Pastrana. According to the Bogotá-based defence think tank Fundación Seguridad y Democracia, the FARC attacked Colombia's security forces an average of twice a day in 2004.

That the reality of the country's conflict is rarely reflected in the mainstream media is largely due to the way journalists operate in Colombia. Foreign reporters mostly cover the country's civil conflict from the safety of the capital Bogotá, rarely venturing into dangerous rural zones except on press junkets organised by the Colombian military or the US embassy. Consequently over the past two years – since rebels kidnapped two foreign reporters for eleven days in January 2003 – journalists have become hyper-dependent on official sources, which has resulted in an increasingly distorted coverage of the conflict.

The mass media has mostly parroted the official Colombian and US lines, primarily trumpeting the decreases in kidnapping and killings under the Uribe administration. Meanwhile, it has repeatedly ignored evidence that the fall in kidnappings has been offset by shift in strategy by the guerrillas that has resulted in an almost corresponding increase in extortion cases – according to the Colombian NGO País Libre.

Government officials and the mainstream media also rarely mention Colombia's disturbing upward trend in forced disappearances. More than 3,500 people were 'disappeared' during Uribe's first two years in office – more than the total number of Colombians disappeared during the previous seven years combined. According to the Association of Family Members of the Detained and Disappeared (ASFADDES), right-wing paramilitaries and state security forces are responsible for a huge majority of the disappearances.

The situation is little better with regard to forced displacement. The Bogotá-based Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES) recently announced that 287,581 Colombians were forcibly displaced by violence in 2004 – a startling 38 per cent increase over the 207,607 the previous year. These statistics suggest that, while urban residents might feel more secure, the lives of rural Colombians continue to be ravaged by violence; an average of 780 people a day are forcibly displaced from their homes.

The mainstream media often echoes official claims that the FARC has lost its ideological motivation and are simply terrorists – a convenient label that has been added since 9/11 to the equally useful moniker narco-guerrillas. While it is true that the FARC has utilised strategies such as kidnapping and reckless bombings that have alienated sectors of Colombian society, the rebels still retain widespread support in rural areas that have long been under their control. Most media reports and government statements claim that Uribe's high approval ratings are evidence that he has widespread public support and that the FARC's low ratings illustrate the rebel group's marginalisation. But these reports often fail to point out the flawed methodology used in the polls. Virtually every opinion poll taken in Colombia is conducted by telephone with some 500 people in the country's four largest cities: Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Barranquilla. Logically, the likely respondents are members of Colombia's middle and upper classes who support Uribe, despise the guerrillas and constitute about 30 per cent of the population. The results are thus clearly not derived from a random sampling of the Colombian population: most urban shantytown dwellers do not have phones. Indeed, the methodology used tellingly illustrates that the opinions of the rural poor still don't count for much.

This is not to suggest that the majority of Colombians support the FARC, but the rebels do possess significantly more backing than that acknowledged by the opinion polls, government officials and the mainstream media. In regions where the FARC has been present for decades, such as Caquetá, Meta and Putumayo, the rebel group functions as a de facto government that has developed and maintains close relations with local communities. In fact, it is clear in these

[Photography Garry Leech]

communities that local residents are at ease with the guerrillas and that their greatest fear is of the Colombian military. The military is often the only branch of the state with which the peasants have had substantial contact, and that contact has usually consisted of aerial bombings. Just last year in a small remote FARC-controlled village in Caquetá that lay in the path of the Colombian military's ongoing 'Plan Patriota' offensive, two eight-year-old boys told me they were fishing in a river the previous week when army helicopters began machine-gunning and bombing nearby.

In these regions, the FARC has implemented its own judicial system and has carried out agrarian reforms. A rare investigative piece that was published by the Washington Post in October 2003 reported that during the previous two years the FARC had broken up ten large ranches in southern Meta and redistributed the smaller parcels of land to subsistence farmers. The guerrillas have carried out similar programs in Caquetá, Putumayo and other regions. The FARC has also implemented a national tax system whereby the income from kidnapping, extortion and the taxation of wealthy landowners and businesses is used to fund military operations. The revenue from taxes imposed on local communities in FARC-controlled regions, however, is turned over to municipal leaders. According to sociologist James J. Brittain, who has conducted extensive research in southern Colombia, this revenue is used to fund local social and economic projects.

In contrast to those areas that have long been in FARC-controlled territory, many Colombians living in regions where the FARC only established a presence during the 1990s remain suspicious and fearful of the rebels. In these areas, the FARC has primarily focused on military operations, thereby failing to win the support of local communities. Most residents in these regions are distrustful of all the armed groups: the leftist guerrillas, the military and the right-wing paramilitaries. This is the case, for instance, with the indigenous Embera in the Chocó region of western Colombia. Many Embera villages, located deep in the rainforest and only accessible by river, have been victimised by all the armed groups, although members of one community admitted it is the Colombian army that they fear the most. The army accuses the Embera of being guerrillas and has imposed an economic blockade in the region that prevents sufficient food and medicines from reaching indigenous communities.

According to a 2003 UN report, the direct involvement of the Colombian military in human rights abuses has increased since President Uribe assumed office. This has been evidenced in the dramatic escalation of forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, often resulting from mass arrests of unionists, human rights defenders, social workers and others critical of the government's policies. The actions of the military clearly reflect the attitude of President Uribe who, in September 2003, publicly accused NGOs of being "spokesmen" for the guerrillas actively "politicking in the service of terrorism".

There has been little change in the level of politically-motivated killings in rural Colombia; a reduction in crime-related murders has accounted for much of the statistical drop in violence under Uribe. In the past 15 years, according to international human rights organisations and the US State Department, more than 70 per cent of the country's human rights abuses have been committed by right-wing paramilitary groups closely allied to the Colombian military. The 'dirty war' component of the Colombian military's counter-insurgency campaign has been conducted by paramilitary death squads in order to give the Colombian government a degree of plausible deniability with regard to human rights violations.

The mainstream media often echos official claims that the FARC guerrillas are simply terrorists

This strategy was clearly evident in Putumayo, which was ground zero for the US-backed 'Plan Colombia', launched in December 2000. Paramilitaries announced their arrival in the long-time FARC-controlled region in 1999 by committing numerous massacres that killed hundreds of civilians. As one local peasant told me: "They kill innocent campesinos just because they might be guerrillas." These paramilitary death squads worked closely with the Colombian army during the implementation of Plan Colombia, which targeted both the FARC and coca cultivation simultaneously. The $1.3bn Plan Colombia aid package made Colombia the third-largest recipient of US military aid in the world, after only Israel and Egypt. Washington supplied the Colombian military with more than 60 Blackhawk and Huey helicopters to be used by a 3,000-strong counter-narcotics brigade created, trained and armed by the US Army Special Forces. These US-trained troops, as I personally witnessed, soon began working in collusion with the paramilitaries responsible for conducting the dirty war in Putumayo.

The current military situation in Putumayo, however, contradicts the official claims and repeated media accounts that the Colombian military has the FARC on the retreat in southern Colombia. Over the past two years, the guerrillas have methodically recaptured many of the small and medium-sized towns in Putumayo that the Colombian army and its paramilitary allies had seized during the early years of Plan Colombia. The Colombian military's current priority in Putumayo is not the protection of rural residents caught in the conflict, but rather to safeguard the oil infrastructure used by foreign companies that signed deals with the government after Plan Colombia's militarisation had secured the region. Lieutenant-Colonel Francisco Javier Cruz, commander of the Colombian Army's Ninth Special Battalion in Putumayo, made it clear to me when explaining his mission: "Security is the most important thing to me. Oil companies need to work without worrying and international investors need to feel calm." During the past two years, however, along with retaking numerous towns, the FARC has also increasingly targeted Putumayo's oil infrastructure – carrying out a record 144 attacks in 2003 – to protest the exploitation of Colombia's resources by multinational corporations that have benefited from neoliberal economic reforms.

Uribe's approval ratings of over 60 per cent among much of the urban population is mostly due to his 'democratic security' policies that have protected the urban population at the expense of rural Colombians. In sharp contrast, the approval rating for his handling of the economy is a mere 34 per cent. Uribe's continuation of the neoliberal, or 'free trade', policies launched in the early 1990s has contributed significantly to 64 per cent of Colombians now living in poverty – up from 57 per cent in the late 1990s. The government's refusal to negotiate its neoliberal economic agenda was a contributing factor to the failure of the recent peace process with the FARC.

Over the past several years, millions have taken to the streets of Colombia's cities to protest economic reforms implemented by the government at the behest of the IMF. The government has responded to such criticism by labeling those opposed to President Uribe's economic policies as subversives, or terrorists. As has historically been the case during Colombia's long civil conflict, it is the rural population and those fighting for social justice that have been the principal victims of the violence, much of which has been perpetrated by the Colombian military and its paramilitary allies. In the past, it was relatively easy to generate international criticism of authoritarian regimes in Latin America – they were headed by army generals adorned in military uniforms. But as ASFADDES spokesperson Gloria Gómez points out, in Colombia, "our authoritarianism wears a suit and tie and was democratically elected".

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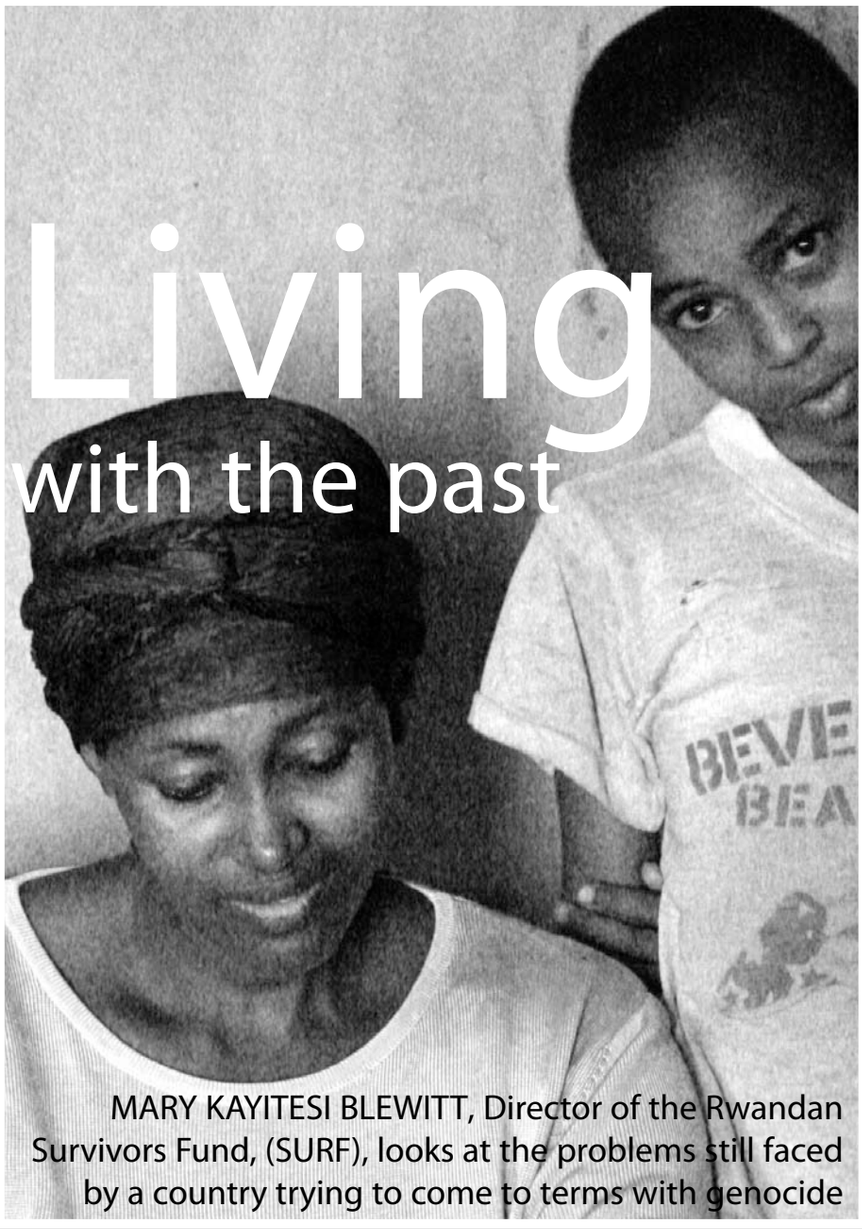
Living with the past



MARY KAYITESI BLEWITT, Director of the Rwandan Survivors Fund, (SURF), looks at the problems still faced by a country trying to come to terms with genocide

IN APRIL 1994, Rwanda suffered one of the most concentrated acts of genocide in human history. Up to a million people were massacred in just one hundred days.

Among those slaughtered were almost all my relatives: 50 members of my family. Only my brother's wife and her two children survived.

I was lucky. I at least know where they were slain. They were at the house of my grandfather. They had always sought refuge there in times of trouble. But this time, there were no safe sanctuaries. Along with other Tutsi families, they were savagely slaughtered in cold blood.

As I was out of the country when the genocide started, I escaped the massacre. Had I been in Rwanda I would certainly be widowed or dead by now. I felt that because I was spared, I should live on to help others like me who survived. I spent eight months working as a volunteer for the Ministry of Rehabilitation in Rwanda – a programme working to reunite families and search for the dead. Yet when this work was over I still couldn't escape the duty I felt to those hundreds of survivors in the UK who had no support whatsoever. So I set up the Survivors Fund (SURF) to help my people.

The aim is to ensure that the memories of the genocide are kept alive and that the victims are never forgotten, especially those still living under the legacy of the Rwandan genocide ten years on.

It is vital that the voices of survivors continue to be heard. Voices that tell the whole truth, voices that warn us of the atrocities of which man is capable, voices that remind us of the suffering that must never again be permitted to happen to anyone, anywhere in the world.

Bridgette Sheema is just one of the survivors given a voice. Bridgette was only 15 when the Interahamwe came to her house one early morning in 1994. She recounted the story of what happened next:

"My parents were terrified, with a look of despair and helplessness. Even they could not protect us. I escaped and climbed in a tree. As I sat trembling, struggling to stay still, my mother was brought out of the house alive, begging for mercy, she was chopped to death. To this day this is the only memory I have of my mother … The killers left taking with them our belongings. I gathered my mothers 'remains' warm from the hot sun, and put her back in the house. My father and four brothers were dead. I walked aimlessly all night, in deep shock. Many people were walking in different directions. I eventually got stopped at a roadblock, men pulled off my clothes and gang raped me. I was kept there for weeks."

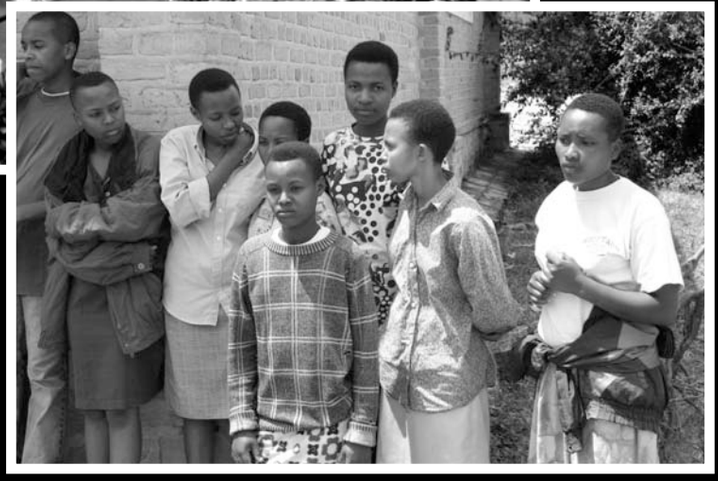
She now lives with an aunt, but every day is forced to confront the people who intended, planned and, to a grave extent, executed those heinous crimes against her. Hers is a common fate. She can never escape the past. She lives in a state of perpetual insecurity. Every day she must battle depression, poverty, economic hardship and, worse still, AIDS. Like almost all of the 25,000 female survivors raped and deliberately infected with HIV during the genocide, Bridgette cannot afford medical treatment. She has been left to cope with the trauma and stigma of being HIV-positive without support.

To help women like Bridgette, there is now an initiative for free antiretroviral treatment for female survivors of the Rwandan Genocide. The initiative intends to lobby the international community to do more to help this most vulnerable group.

To put the need in perspective, it would cost only $12m a year to buy the antiretroviral treatment (ARVs) needed to help all 25,000 HIV-positive women survivors: a paltry sum compared to the annual budget of $178m that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) enjoys each year.

True, Rwanda is struggling towards reconstruction and reconciliation. But

[Photography Donald E. Miller]



because the Government lacks the resources to help women like Bridgette, justice remains but a remote possibility. The fact that thus far the ICTR has convicted only 20 people – and that those standing trial receive free anti-retroviral treatment, shelter and food – has not helped.

Victims, like Bridgette, remain ignored and neglected. However, it is critical to enable these women to become economically active again. Doing so helps reduce the cost of medical care and frees up hospital beds. Many of them are responsible for orphans, but without treatment do not have the means to support their adopted families. More importantly though, it gives some hope and a sense of justice to these women, many of whom have nothing left to look forward to except death.

Rwanda is struggling towards reconstruction and reconciliation, but for Bridgette justice is remote. In the courtroom she must recount the last moments of the lives of her loved ones. Even if imprisoned, the perpetrators receive food, shelter, medical care and international solicitude. But fewer than half of the killers are in custody. The rest are free.

Thankfully, the British Government has taken the lead in supporting the female survivors, having granted £4.25 million to fund care and treatment for 2,500 of them over the next five years. This is an incredible boost to a country in which more than ten per cent of the total population of six million are HIV-positive, but (at present) fewer than 5,000 are able to access ARVs. It is an even bigger boost for the women that lived through the genocide, only 99 of whom are currently on a treatment programme. It can only be hoped that other governments will follow this precedent.

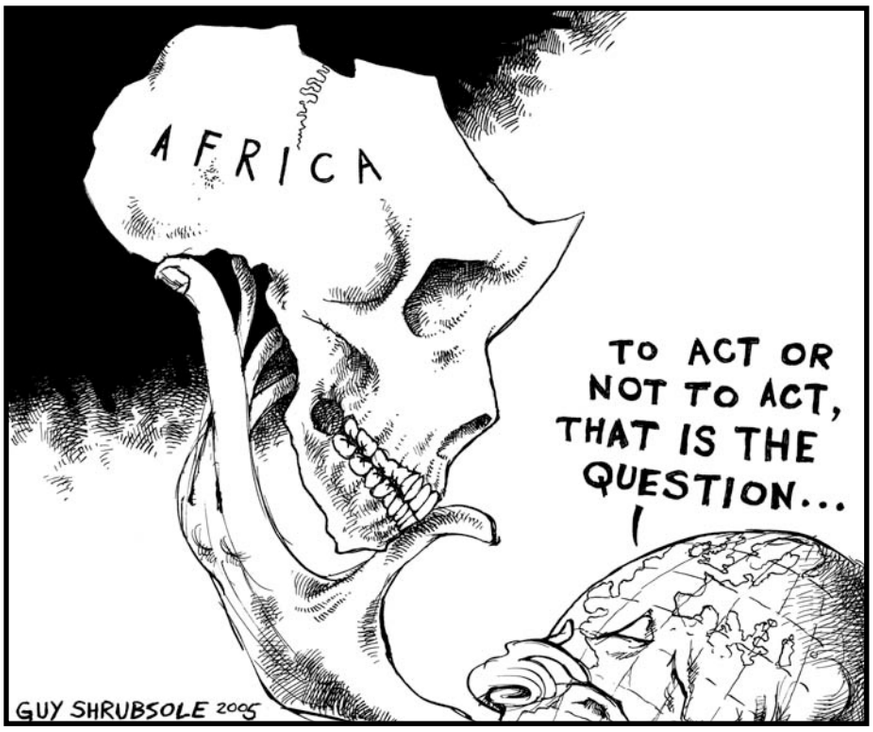
Yet despite our suffering, lessons have not been learnt. I watch in despair as women in Darfur suffer sexual violence as a weapon of genocide all over again. The anxiety, fear and helplessness of these Sudanese women mirrors exactly the feelings of survivors I speak to. Sadly, the genocide did not stop when the killing ended. It continues to this day. The lack of action perpetuates a culture of impunity, which in turn results in crimes against humanity. But we all have a responsibility to act to stop human suffering. Each one of us must play their part, and make their voice heard too.

The theme for the Survivors Fund 'Eleven Years On' campaign, which launched on April 7th – the UN International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda – is 'survival against the odds'. It is particularly pertinent given the recent release of *Hotel Rwanda* – a film that tells the remarkable true-life story of Paul Rusesabagina, a hotel manager of Hutu origin, who gave sanctuary and shelter to over a thousand Tutsis during the 100-day genocide, saving them from certain death.

The year-long commemoration will ensure that we remember not only those who lived through the genocide, but also those who continue to battle to stay alive today.

***Mary Kayitesi Blewitt was recently honoured as a Woman of the Year, sponsored by* Good Housekeeping. *For more information on SURF, please visit* www.survivors-fund.org.uk**

The genocide did not stop when the killing ended. It continues to this day



Scramble for the Congo

PHIL CLARK unravels the ongoing conflict in the Great Lakes region that has claimed three million lives

GOMA, THE LARGEST town in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is wedged between the volcanic Mount Nyiragongo and the humid, grey waters of Lake Kivu, still clogged with corpses from the 1994 genocide of nearly a million Tutsi and moderate Hutu across the nearby border in Rwanda. When Nyiragongo erupted in January 2002, a river of lava engulfed the ground floor of every building in Goma. Today the town remains half-buried: its inhabitants either live and work above the lava-line on the upper floors of the few buildings that survived the volcano or in new houses and offices built on the craggy surface of hardened lava, often using the black volcanic rock as a construction material. The air is permanently thick with black dust and ash. In this frontier town, smugglers, merchants, spies, soldiers, miners and scavengers converge from all over Africa to wheel and deal in Euros, US dollars, Rwandan francs and brick-like wads of tattered orange Congolese franc notes.

Goma also constitutes the nerve centre of the world's deadliest conflict zone. Since 1996, more than 3 million people have died in eastern and north-eastern DRC, the majority from disease and starvation caused by continuous violence between a dizzying array of combatants, including around 20 rebel groups and the armies of half a dozen African nations. Understanding who is responsible for the violence in the DRC and what motivates them is a fraught undertaking, as the complex web of military alliances changes by the week and much of the region is too dangerous for travel by foreign journalists and analysts. While trying to cross from Rwanda into the DRC north of Goma in February 2003, I was mistaken for a journalist and, with a Congolese soldier's Kalashnikov jammed between my shoulder blades, I was marched back to a dusty, red road and told never to return.

The DRC has become a theatre for the World War that the world forgot. Tony Blair told the Labour Party conference in October 2001: "The international community could…, with our help, sort out the blight that is the continuing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where three million people have died through war or famine in the last decade." Yet since then, the UK and international community have sat idly while armed groups from across Africa fought each other on Congolese soil, often supported by Western arms dealers and multinational corporations. The protagonists are driven by two primary motivations: ethnic hatred and a lust for control of the DRC's vast mineral wealth. The main catalyst for the decade of conflict is one event: the 1994 genocide of Tutsi in Rwanda, which continues to reverberate with volcanic hatred and violence throughout the Great Lakes region.

Currently, violence in the DRC stems from three overlapping conflicts: between rebel groups and the governments of the DRC and Rwanda in the Congolese provinces of North and South Kivu; between Hema and Lendu ethnic groups, and their various state and non-state supporters, in Ituri province in north-east DRC; and ongoing tensions between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, Burundi and the Kivus. These conflicts are highly fluid, with the same armed forces sometimes engaged in simultaneous fighting on more than one of the three main fronts. Understanding how the three conflicts arose requires coming to terms with the regional impact of three recent periods of fighting within the DRC: the so-called 'first war' of 1996–7, which involved seven African nations and various militia groups; the 'second war' of 1998–9, which involved the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda and their rebel proxies; and the three years since 2002, when genocidal tensions flared between Hema and Lendu in Ituri, fuelled by conflict between Rwanda and Uganda inside the DRC.

The first Congo war broke out in 1996 when Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi supported rebels led by Laurent Desirée Kabila in order to topple the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, then President of Zaire (which later became the DRC). In response, Mobutu called on military allies in Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe. All of the countries involved in this pan-African conflict, whether fighting for Kabila's Alliance or defending Mobutu's crumbling dictatorship, fought to attain their own short- and long-term strategic objectives, turning Zaire into a battleground for a host of competing foreign interests.

The key external players in the conflict were Rwanda and Uganda. Rwanda's involvement stemmed directly from the 1994 genocide: in the aftermath of the killing spree, around 1.5 million Hutu refugees, including many of the orchestrators of the genocide, poured into Zaire at the border crossing at Goma, fleeing the advance of the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) – the rebel force that halted the genocide and assumed control of the Rwandan government. After the genocide, armed Hutu militias, known as the 'interahamwe', fed and clothed unwittingly by Western aid organisations, continued to train in the refugee camps and made several incursions into Rwanda, threatening to 'finish the job' of killing all Rwandan Tutsi.

Meanwhile, Uganda sought to overthrow Mobutu largely out of support for its key ally, Rwanda. Tutsi fighters from Rwanda had supported Yoweri Museveni's rise to power in

[Illustration Guy Shrubsole]

Uganda in 1986 and, after becoming President of Uganda, Museveni supported the creation and training of the RPF, which sought to install a Tutsi administration in Rwanda. Furthermore, Uganda suffered regular incursions from Mobutu's militias and thus wanted to dethrone the dictator for its own peace and security.

Kabila's Alliance eventually prevailed in May 1997, forcing Mobutu into exile, ensconcing Kabila as President and scattering the interahamwe and Mobutu-backed militias throughout eastern DRC. Celebrations were short-lived, however, as the Alliance quickly disintegrated, plunging the region into a second Congo war and even greater chaos. Kabila was angered by the refusal of Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda to leave eastern DRC. These countries instead stayed and pillaged the region's gold, diamond and coltan (a rare mineral used in the manufacture of mobile phones) through military proxies such as the Rwandan-backed Rally for Congolese Democracy-Goma (RCD-Goma). Kabila turned against his former benefactors and began arming the interahamwe and local militias known as 'Mai Mai' in an attempt to drive the foreign forces, their proxies and Congolese Tutsi out of the DRC. The Rwandan government responded by attacking Goma, Bukavu and Uvira in North and South Kivu in August 1998. Kabila called on the governments of Angola and Zimbabwe to help repel Rwandan, Burundian and Ugandan forces in exchange for a small share of the DRC's mining riches. The barely concealed greed that motivated the invaders of the DRC was most evident when Rwanda and Uganda came to blows in August 1999 in the southern city of Kisangani, a centre for the DRC's diamond trade, destroying an alliance between the two staunch allies that has never been repaired. Between August 1998 and August 2000, as Hutu-Tutsi animosity and a desire for control over DRC's mineral wealth kept the conflict raging, nearly two million people died in eastern DRC, either as a direct result of violence or through related disease and deprivation.

The third and most recent period of violence in the DRC centres on the north-eastern province of Ituri and violence between local Hema and Lendu ethnic groups. Traditionally, the Hema, like the Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi, are pastoralists and the Lendu, like the Hutu, are cultivators. In 1999, a land dispute in Djugu district of Ituri sparked a violent confrontation between Hema and Lendu which, stoked by Ugandan support for the Hema, flared into widespread conflict. Uganda has long employed the Hema as a business partner in the plunder of natural resources from Ituri. In August 2002, Hema combatants and their Ugandan allies attacked Lendu militias and civilians in Bunia, the biggest town in Ituri, massacring hundreds and inciting revenge killings by Lendu militias. Both sides are suspected of using rape as a tool of war and, in some instances, of committing acts of mutilation and cannibalism against their victims. During an escalation in the Ituri conflict in May 2003, human rights groups accused both sides of committing genocide.

The regional dimension of the Great Lakes conflict is apparent in Ituri: Uganda created the rebel group the Union of Congolese Patriots (UCP), only to see the UCP switch allegiances to Rwanda, which, despite its vociferous denials, is now accused of having an active presence in Ituri, through its government forces and the proxies of RCD-Goma and the UCP. Rwanda's primary objective appears to be to defeat Uganda for a greater share of the province's gold, diamonds and oil. The conflict Ituri therefore follows the pattern of other recent conflicts in the DRC, involving rapidly changing alliances between rebel groups supported by regional actors, with ethnicity and greed the protagonists' primary motivations.

Whilst the three current conflicts in the DRC are essentially regional African affairs, the international community plays several roles in them, with varying effectiveness. Its main role is maintaining a peacekeeping presence in the Kivus and Ituri. Two months after the escalation of violence in Ituri in 2003, the UN Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) received a Chapter VII mandate from the UN Security Council, transforming it from a peacekeeping into a peace enforcement mission. The strengthened mandate now permits MONUC troops to fire on combatants in order to protect civilians – the first time a UN force anywhere in the world has been granted this capability. Yet so far MONUC has generally failed to prevent the massacres of civilians in the Kivus and Ituri. Further complicating MONUC's mission, some of its own peacekeepers have recently been accused of committing sexual crimes against the local population.

The international community plays a crucial economic role in the conflicts in the DRC

The international community plays a crucial economic role in the conflicts in the DRC. Western governments, particularly the UK and the US, provide vast amounts of foreign aid to Rwanda and Uganda, much of which has been funnelled into the war effort in the DRC. Rwanda receives more foreign aid from the UK than any other developing country and consequently the UK carries major diplomatic clout there. In all-too-rare instances of this country wielding its influence over events on the ground, the UK successfully convinced the Rwandan government twice in 2004 to withdraw its troops from the border near Goma after Rwanda threatened to invade the DRC to track down interahamwe, whom the Rwandan government claimed were hiding in the jungles of North Kivu and preparing again to massacre Tutsi in Rwanda. Concerted diplomatic pressure from the UK and the US could have a significant impact on many of Rwanda's and Uganda's practices in the DRC.

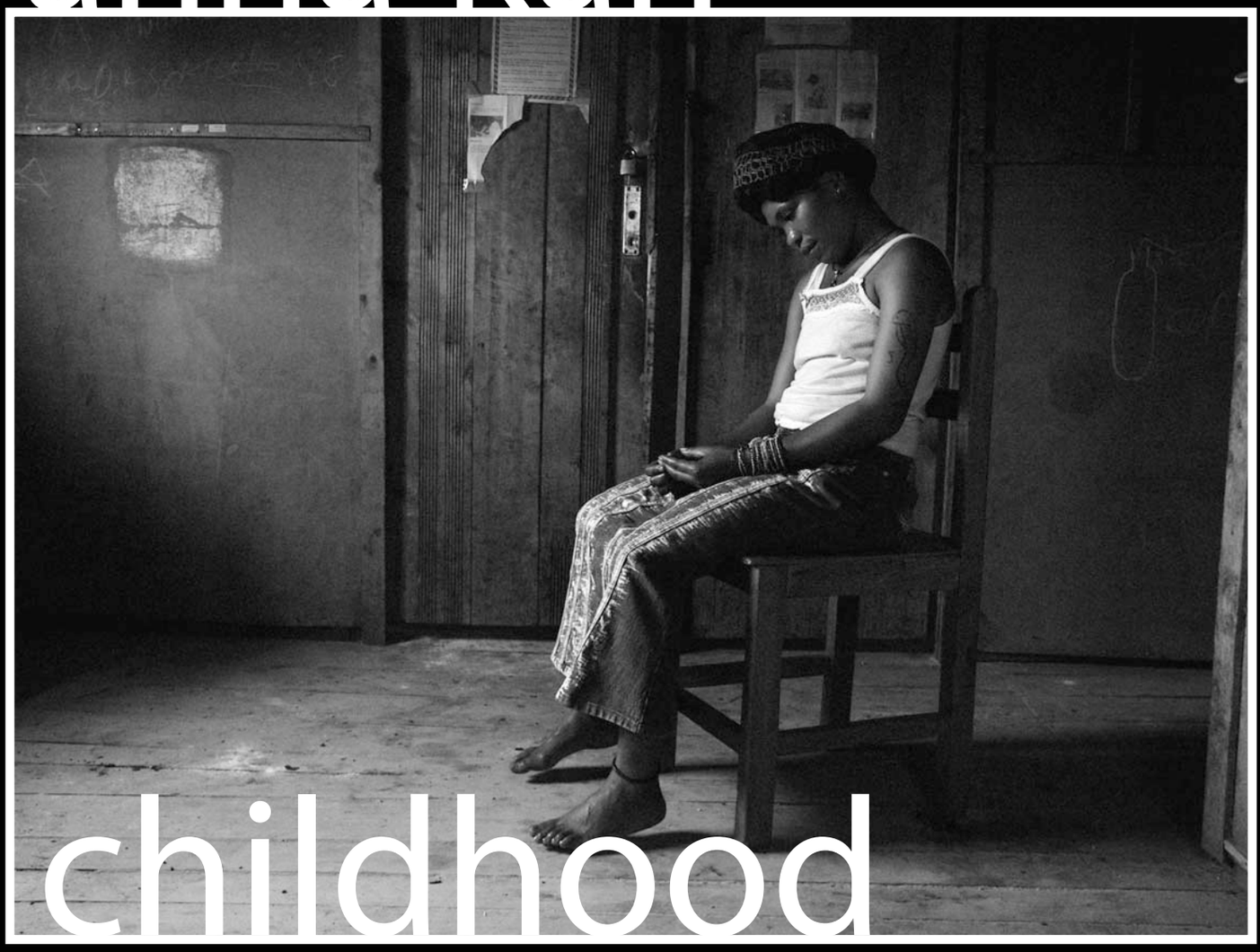
Western corporations have heavily influenced events in the DRC throughout the last decade. In October 2002, a UN report named 85 Western companies – including the British-registered Barclays Bank, De Beers and Anglo American – as having participated directly in, or benefited indirectly from, the exploitation of the DRC's natural resources. So far, only Belgium has launched an official investigation into the involvement of its national corporations in the DRC.

Finally, the international community may yet play an important role in bringing the main perpetrators of the conflicts in the DRC to justice. The first judicial proceedings of the newly-created International Criminal Court (ICC) this year concerned possible crimes against humanity and acts of genocide committed in Ituri. Speaking at a conference in Oxford in June 2004, Chief Prosecutor of the ICC Luis Moreno-Ocampo said that investigating and prosecuting crimes committed in the DRC would provide a vital first test of the Court's ability to respond to the world's most serious crimes.

While the world struggles to comprehend the overlapping conflicts in the DRC, the civilian population in Goma, trapped between the volcano and the corpse-filled lake, tries to go about its daily business. Mobutu's brutal dictatorship is long gone but in its place a new raft of ethnic tensions, many imported from the Rwandan genocide, and a frenzied scramble for natural resources have made civilian life in the DRC, and the entire Great Lakes region, perpetually uncertain and frequently perilous. As an old man said to me in the central marketplace in Goma in May 2003, when Hutu-Tutsi tensions in the Kivus were high and stories of genocide were emerging from Ituri, "We are stuck in this town because there is fighting all around us. Sometimes we think that God has forgotten us. We know that the world has forgotten us. But where else can we go? If we move, we will only find more fighting. So we stay here and hope that one day the men with guns will grow tired, they will all go home and the fighting will stop." The wait for the fighting in the DRC to stop, though, is likely to be a long and dangerous one.

Phil Clark is researching for a D.Phil in Politics and International Relations at Balliol College, Oxford. He is specialising in a study of the Rwandan genocide

anna kåri



childhood memor

ANNA KÅRI worked with Save the Children UK photographing children who had been forced to fight and work for the militant groups at war in both Uganda and the DRC

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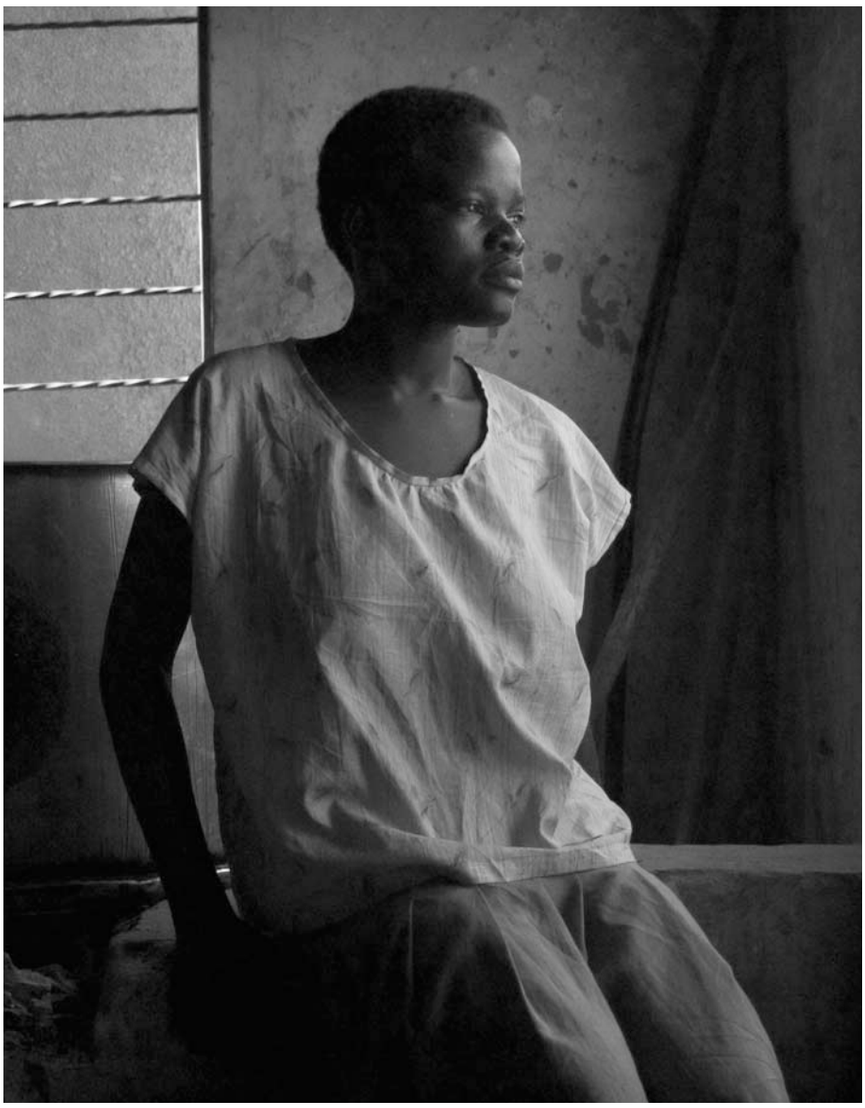
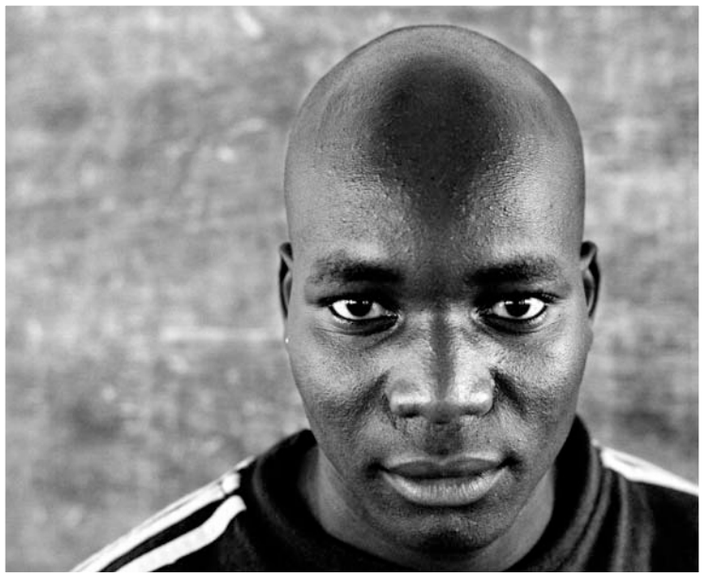


AROUND 300,000 CHILDREN are directly involved in armed groups worldwide. Some fight as combatants, but many others work as porters, cooks or guards. 40 per cent of these children are girls. They are the forgotten casualties of war. Many girls are forced to become so-called 'wives' to soldiers, and many are kept inside houses at their military camp and submitted to horrific sexual abuse.

An estimated 3.8 million lives have been claimed by the five-year war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as a direct result of fighting: mainly from hunger and disease, making it the bloodiest conflict since the Second World War. Despite the launch of the peace process in the DRC in 2003, the transitional government in Kinshasa currently has little control over many regions of the country. In the eastern DRC thousands of girls are combatants in armed groups. Many are abducted and forced to fight, while others join up because they have no access to education, their parents are poor, and working as a soldier may seem the only option available to improving their lives.

The Ugandan government has been unable to end a brutal insurgency in the north and west of the country led by Lord's Resistance Army rebels. Roughly 20,000 children have been abducted into the rebel group throughout the 18-year conflict. Estimates suggest that 10,000 have been abducted since 2002. As a result, every night, thousands of children living in northern Uganda trek miles to sleep in shelters in large towns, in order to avoid capture. They are all victims of the ongoing war on children.

Anna Kåri focuses on issues of human rights, migration, refugees and identity. She works extensively in the Balkans, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Southern Africa, on long term personal projects, as well as on assignments for charities and the media



20,000 children have been abducted into the rebel group

PAGES 32–33: all images are of children embroiled in conflict in the DRC. *Top left*: Aimerance fought for two years in the conflict; later, she was systematically sexually abused. *Top centre*: Furaa once fought for Hutu extremists; she is now pregnant and living in a transit centre for children in the east of the country. PAGES 34–5: all images are from Gusco rehabilitation centre, Gulu, North Uganda; taken in September 2004. *Top centre*: Breakfast at Gusco; the children gather together to get porridge. *Bottom left*: Just arrived from the bush, a boy at the child protection unit holds a little bottle of magic liquid. He and the others were told that it would protect them from helicopter gunships.

Clouded Judgement

DAVID GELLNER asks who is to blame for the crisis engulfing Nepal

THE FIRST OF June will mark four years since the infamous royal massacre in which ten members of the Nepalese royal family were killed and the entire line of the reigning King Birendra was wiped out. Several popular books on the massacre have come out in English. They all follow the official line that the murderer was Crown Prince Dipendra, who then turned his guns on himself. Few of them make much of the most important fact, which is that nobody outside a small Kathmandu-based elite believes the official story. Most Nepalis assume – regardless of proofs, and on the grounds of inherent plausibility – that King Gyanendra, the current ruler, and Birendra's younger brother, organised the killings. Gyanendra just happened to be out of town at the time of the massacre and all of his immediate family survived the shooting spree. This means that there is widespread dislike, even hatred, for the King, which is now feeding through into rejection of the institution of the monarchy itself. Activists of the younger generation spit on his portrait. All through 2004 students and cadres of the protesting parliamentary parties openly chanted slogans in favour of a republic in the streets of Kathmandu.

Maoist rebels, initially a small band of true-believing Marxist-Leninists brought up in the traditions of Indian communism, with links to international supporters of the Peruvian Sendero Luminoso and revering Mao's Cultural Revolution, started their armed movement back in February 1996. In nine years they have managed to export it from their western hill heartland, the home of the Kham Magar ethnic group, to the entire country. Nowhere is untouched – every village is subject to some degree of Maoist rule. Even in the cities all major businesses, all prominent persons, pay 'revolutionary taxes' to the Maoists. The Maoists have gradually destroyed all vestiges of the state which might challenge them in the countryside. First they targeted unpopular local big men and money lenders. Then they moved on to local politicians, usually of the Congress Party. Later they attacked representatives and prominent supporters of the UML (the United Marxist-Leninists, the main constitutional opposition). In 2004 they started threatening all the local government mayors and representatives appointed by the King, prompting them to resign. Once that level had gone, they extended the tactic to the government bureaucrats who had been left in charge. Anyone who opposes their rule in the villages – any remaining political figures or social workers who refused to accept their ideological line – have been killed or driven out. Only health workers and teachers are left. They are paid by the state, but surrender a both a monthly portion and irregular contributions to the Maoists. Short of the necessary weaponry and firepower to be able to conquer the capital by a frontal assault, and disappointed in their hopes of an urban uprising to match their rural stranglehold, the Maoists have decided to destroy the economy with a series of blockades and general strikes, while pinning down the army with ambushes and mines all over the country. Trucks or buses which defy their general strikes are shot at or blown up. Harrowing stories have emerged of buses driven by passengers after the driver had been shot.

> Nowhere is untouched – every village is subject to some degree of Maoist rule

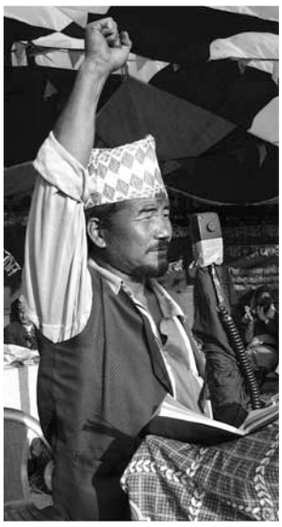
So who is to blame for the death of Nepali democracy, which was revived with so much hope and fervour in 1990? First in the rank of guilty parties are of course the top Maoist leadership, particularly Prachanda, the overall leader, and Baburam Bhattarai – PhD from Delhi University and the most learned ideologue in the Maoist ranks (and indeed the most educated member of the entire political class in Nepal). It was their decision to attack the state and gradually to undermine the 'old power' as they call it, just when it had started out on the process of becoming genuinely democratic. They, above all others, have brought about the dictatorial and oppressive situation which they claimed all long to be opposing. They have offered an intoxicating and seductive ideology – take up arms, kill, and destroy in an altruistic cause, all to produce a better world and eliminate oppression – which has proved irresistible to many of the half-educated young men and women of rural Nepal.

The second guilty party – though now an impotent bystander – is Girija Koirala, 80-year-old president of the Nepali Congress Party. Between 1990 and 2002 he led five out of the twelve democratic governments. He is the younger brother of the charismatic statesman BP Koirala, who before 1990 was the only democratically-elected Prime Minister Nepal had ever known (he was also the grandfather of the Bollywood actress, Monisha Koirala). 'BP', as he is called, led a Congress government from 1958 to 1960, at which point he was clapped in jail by King Mahendra – the father of Birendra and Gyanendra – who went on to ban parties and establish what he called 'Partyless Panchayat Democracy'.

Despite his age, Girija is still a fearsome party organiser, keeping the loyalty of Congress cadres by tirelessly visiting, speaking, listening, and joining them in anti-King protests on the streets. Brilliant as an apparachik, Girija was a disaster as prime minister and statesman: no vision, no understanding of the modern world, no conception of how to solve the Maoist insurgency. Throughout the 1990s Girija's only aim appeared to be that of occupying the prime minister's chair or, failing that, making the life of whoever else did as uncomfortable as possible – even if that someone was from his own party.

All parliamentary leaders, as well as the royal palace, are guilty of having tacitly encouraged the Maoists in their early years – the Congress Party because they thought it would embarrass the main opposition party (the UML), the UML (United Marxist-Leninists) because they did not wish to be seen to be opposing 'friendly forces on the left' (as well as because initially the targets of Maoist violence tended to be aligned with the Congress Party), and the palace because they thought that parliamentary democracy would

[Photography Kiyoko Ogura]



be undermined by encouraging the Maoists (which indeed it has been). Of all the irresponsible and corrupt parliamentarians, Girija is ultimately the most responsible, since he held power for longer and more times than any else in the years after 1990. The Nepalese political elite in general (just like the government of India in South Asia as a whole) has been guilty of failing to take the insurgency seriously until it was far too late.

The third guilty party, ostensibly now the most powerful person in the country and the one calling the shots, is the present king, Gyanendra. (Some point to the power of the army behind him; others sneer that he has been reduced to being nothing more than the Mayor of Kathmandu.) He has repeatedly said that he is not like his brother – that he is not content to be a symbolic and fully constitutional monarch, that he cannot be inactive when he sees his people suffering. When he sacked Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba for "incompetence" on October 4th 2002, and prorogued Parliament, he claimed that it was not a coup, and that he was acting in accordance with Constitutional provision 127 that allows the King to "remove difficulties". Initially many were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, since it was undoubtedly true that Deuba – having dissolved Parliament and called elections – was not capable of actually holding them. But everything that Gyanendra has done since, including appointing two Prime Ministers from the pre-democratic and discredited Panchayat days, and not appointing a Prime Minister at all for three weeks in May 2004 (during which time India was able to hold an entire general election and transfer power to a new government), has led people to conclude that "Birendra was his grandfather's grandson, but Gyanendra is his father's son" (i.e., Birendra believed in democracy like his grandfather, King Tribhuvan, whereas Gyanendra is set on destroying it like his father, King Mahendra). The coup of February 1st 2005, when Gyanendra sacked Prime Minister Deuba for the second time – this time putting him under house arrest, along with all other leading politicians, while the telephones and internet were cut off for a week – had long been expected, though it still came as a surprise when it happened.

Support, or rather non-criticism, of the King's step has come from China, Pakistan, Russia, and Cuba. The USA and the UK have backed India's strong stance on the coup, condemning it, urging the King to join with the parties in order to form a united front against the Maoists, and suspending military aid. Pakistan, in order to queer India's pitch, has offered military aid, should the King need it. It is doubtful that the King will risk angering India, with which Nepal shares a long and open border, by accepting the offer. The wide and deep criticism of the King's coup has taken the palace aback. That the King's advisors are stuck in a timewarp is all too obvious as they attempt to repeat King Mahendra's overthrowal of parliamentary democracy in a wholly different world and an utterly changed Nepali context, summoning out of retirement octogenarian politicians most Nepalis thought were already dead. The only concession to the present era has been the King's repeated insistence, wholly at odds with all his actions, that he is acting in defence of multiparty democracy.

Hardline Maoists – those who wish to fight to the death – must be laughing all the way to their jungle hideouts. For what King Gyanendra has done, by forcing parliamentary politicians into outright opposition to the throne, is to create the very situation of feudal autocracy the Maoists have claimed existed all along. Thanks to Gyanendra, the Maoists' demands for a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution appear rational and sensible. He has driven the parliamentary parties to come out openly and directly for a new constitution and even for a republic. In the hands of a serious political strategist, the present moment would represent a historic opportunity. Evidence is beginning to emerge of serious splits within the Maoist movement, with many desperate for a truce and a way to achieve a 'soft landing'.

Such statesmanship does not appear very likely, however. Large parts of the army are diverted into harrassing human rights defenders, censoring newspapers, and supervising phone services (or the lack of them). Meanwhile, the situation in the Nepalese countryside degenerates still further. Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have warned of a human rights catastrophe. It is true that the King's step was initially popular among many ordinary people in the cities, fed up as they were with daily violent demonstrations by the parties, and sickened by the corruption of the politicians when they were in power. If the King had had some secret plan – peace with the Maoists, a rapid military victory – up his sleeve, they would have been willing to forgive him. But it has gradually become obvious that there is no strategic vision, no magic solution – just a grab for power and the need to shift the blame for the army's failure to deal with the Maoist insurgency onto political parties and civil society activists.

Unless the King and the Nepalese army see sense, unless they realise that killing democracy in order to save it will only drive people either to the Maoists or into exile, the situation in the Nepalese countryside will get even worse. Recent events in Kapilvastu in the Tarai (the southern strip of plains bordering India) may be a harbinger of things to come. The army appears to have encouraged mobs to go on killing sprees against 'Maoists'; tragically and ironically some of those killed or who had their houses burned down were refugees from the Maoist-controlled areas of Rukum and Rolpa. There is just a slim hope that the massive international pressure may force the King to change his mind and his mindset – though he has never shown signs in the past of admitting that he was wrong. And there are two big problems with India, Nepal's giant neighbour, forcing a policy of democratisation: first, it is quite happy to do business with authoritarian regimes in other neighbouring countries (Bhutan, China, Pakistan), so its motives in insisting on democracy in Nepal appear to be less than pure; second, the fundamental theme of Nepali patriotism has always been anti-Indianism and opposing what India wants.

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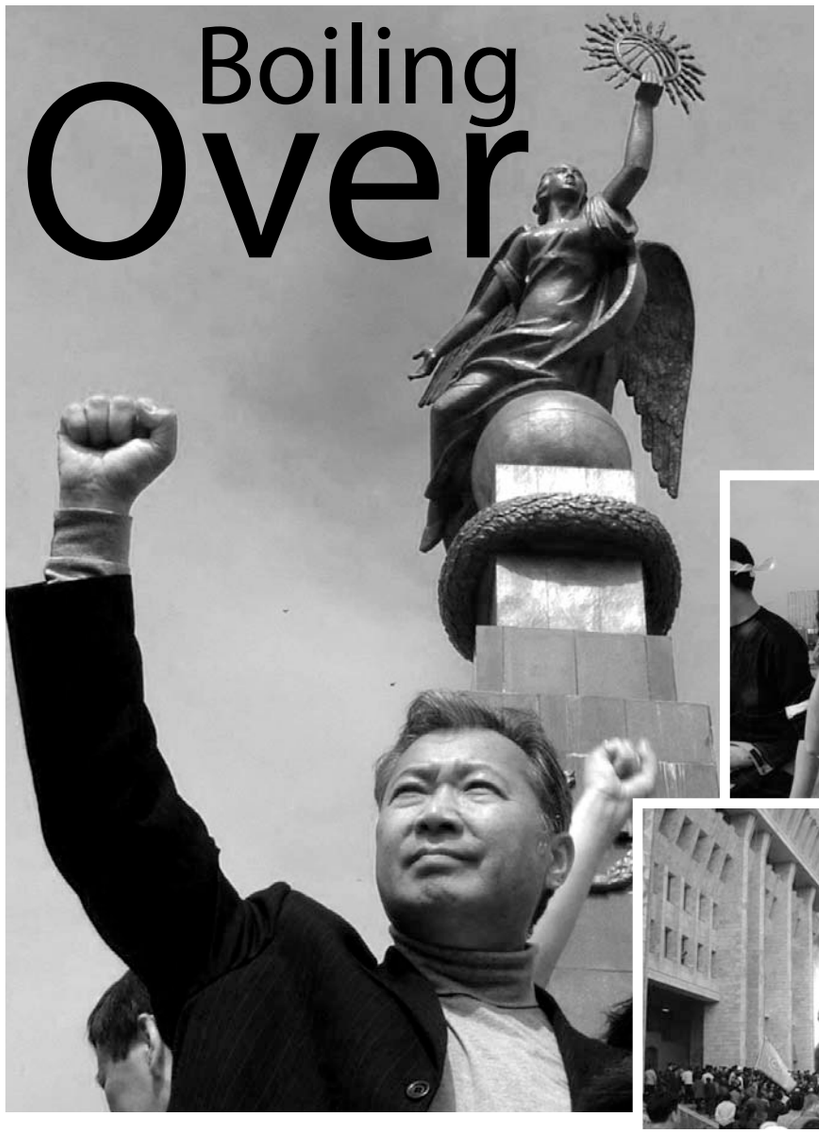
Boiling Over



Kyrgyzstan's 'Tulip Revolution' differed significantly from its Orange and Velvet counterparts, writes STEFAN KIRMSE

SIXTY YEAR-OLD Nurbek runs a guesthouse in the centre of Bishkek, the capital of the Kyrgyz Republic. For several months I have been a frequent visitor, calling in whenever I pass through the city.

"Do you think that the Ukrainian revolution is likely to repeat itself in Kyrgyzstan?" I asked him one evening back in December. Being an outspoken critic of President Akaev, he seemed eager to answer the question. The problem is, he pointed out, that many people actually support the President. Surely the district of Kemin, the President's homeland, is behind him. Talas province as well – that is where his wife is from. "And Mairam Akaeva is really the one who is running the country", he added. "No, we really have to rely on the South."

He went on to explain that the southerners had not forgotten about Aksy. In March 2002, several demonstrators in this small southern town were shot by the police. Prime Minister Bakiev resigned, yet the President, who had really been the target of the demonstrators, managed to survive the ensuing political turmoil.

If there is massive fraud during the next election, Nurbek continued, who knows how the South will react? Now they have seen that protest is not in vain. The Ukrainian example has shown it. Four months later, Nurbek's words seem almost prophetic.

In late February, parliamentary elections took place in Kyrgyzstan – a Central Asian republic that used to be part of the Soviet Union. While they compared favourably with elections in other former Soviet states, they fell short of international standards. Some promising opposition candidates were barred from running on dubious technical grounds, and others got themselves elected through vote-buying or intimidation.

The former head of Osh State University, for example, ensured his election by forcing students and staff to cast their votes for him. According to Farhad, a student of foreign languages, two days before the elections all teachers told the students to bring their passports the next day. Failing to do so would lead to expulsion. The teachers then collected all the documents, announcing that the students would get them back at the polling station. Here, it was impossible to fold the bulletins properly and people could see who someone had voted for through the glass of the ballot boxes. "They had not even opened the box when they announced who had won the constituency", Farhad explained.

As a result of the voting, the opposition was reduced to a handful of deputies in the Jogorku Kenesh, the Kyrgyz parliament. In many parts of the country, supporters of opposition candidates took to the streets to express their discontent. In the southern cities of Jalalabad and Osh, peaceful demonstrations turned into violent clashes between protesters and police. The crowds seized administrative buildings, tearing down pictures of the president and taking out their anger on local officials. The police and the military were not only largely outnumbered by the demonstrators but also badly equipped and unsure about how to proceed.

On March 21st, I was woken in my room in Osh by repeated cheers from a large crowd in the street. While the protesters had marched past my house in an orderly manner the week before, they now set their eyes on the institutions representing central power – particularly the law-enforcing bodies. The public prosecutor's office was ransacked that morning, as well as the police and security service headquarters – both about 300 metres from my house.

For most of the day, there was an eerie silence in the air as nearly all shops and cafes had been closed. Yet the silence was deceptive. Anarchy had replaced law and order, if only for a short while. The police and the military were no longer in control of the situation, as they had either thrown away their uniforms for fear of being attacked or taken sides with the opposition. Groups of stick-waving young Kyrgyz now seemed to have taken over the reins. Cars without number-plates chased around town at high speed, flashing their headlights.

It was not a day to be spent outside, and some of those who still made their way into the city paid dearly for it. Aziz, an Uzbek friend of mine, told me of nasty scenes near the bazaar where groups of people randomly stopped cars and dragged the owners out before driving off themselves. I made the mistake of trying to get food at a small market nearby, yet it soon became clear that

[Photography Elnura Osmonalieva]

criminals had decided to exploit this period of lawlessness. Prior to being beaten up and robbed that evening, I had been jostled about by people trying to steal my wallet several times. This was no longer the city I knew.

While the atmosphere of tension prevailed for days, the battleground moved elsewhere. As anti-Akaev strongholds, Jalalabad and Osh had quickly been taken by the protesters, who now tried to restore order as best they could. Within days, local authorities in what remained of southern Kyrgyzstan were brought under the opposition's sphere of influence. In most cases, law-enforcement bodies did not put up any resistance. Equipped with no more than two bullets per person, even special forces – brought in to defend the governor of Batken, the last provincial capital in the South – put down their shields and weapons as the crowds moved towards the local administration.

It was now the President's turn to respond but he had few allies willing to fight for him. By March 24th, busloads of young Kyrgyz from the South had arrived in Bishkek, staging a demonstration on the capital's central square and joining forces with local opposition groups. There were only a few hundred southerners, yet they were surrounded by thousands of locals curious to see what was going on. "Of course, few people here were in favour of Akaev", Nurbek explained to me a few days ago, "but city people would not have taken the initiative. We just stood there and watched."

The ensuing clashes between the police and the core of the demonstrators ended with the storming of the government building. Southern-style street law imposed itself on the capital – politicians and policemen became targets for those seeking to vent their anger. Due to the existence of large shopping malls – many of which were owned by Akaev's family – looting became much more rampant than it had been in Jalalabad or Osh. Yet it was the locals rather than the southerners who were responsible for most of the pillaging.

Having no resources at his disposal to counter the opposition's seizure of power, President Akaev fled the country. Former Prime Minister Bakiev – a southerner from the province of Jalalabad – became the country's interim leader. While critics still point to his involvement in the Aksy incident, Bakiev has earned respect as an opposition figure.

The overthrow of Akaev's regime was initiated and implemented predominantly by people from the south of Kyrgyzstan. To understand this, one has to take into account how divided the country is.

Northerners often speak Russian among themselves. Many have adopted European culture, know very little about Islam or the traditional ways of the Kyrgyz. In the western and southern provinces, on the contrary, Kyrgyz language and culture are respected to a much greater extent. The Ferghana Valley, in which both Jalalabad and Osh are located, is also a stronghold of Islamic values. The importance of these cultural concerns was highlighted by the fact that the leaders of the southern uprising usually answered in Kyrgyz when interviewed on local TV by Russian-speaking journalists.

Maksat and Mirlan, two young Kyrgyz from Osh, explained to me back in November that Kyrgyzstan was a bit like Korea: the southerners hate the northerners and vice-versa. "Kyrgyzstan: our common home" – Mirlan recited Akaev's famous motto, and they both burst out laughing. It has always remained an artificial motto – a laudable yet unsuccessful attempt to create a common identity.

Ethnic discontent played only a minor role in the recent events. Uzbeks, accounting for large parts of the population in many southern areas, merely stood out for their small numbers during the demonstrations. The majority of the protesters were young Kyrgyz men from mountain areas – parts of the country in which young people neither see a future for themselves nor the helping hand of the state. Few townspeople took part in the revolutionary action.

The main grievance among southerners is not economic hardship but the feeling of being abandoned. Under Akaev, by and large the country was run by people from the north. Moreover, the capital thrived with money being pumped into infrastructure and business projects while resources rarely found their way down into the Ferghana Valley. This development was facilitated by the importance of clans in Kyrgyz society – help is readily extended to one's relatives and protégées; whoever is outside these networks has little to expect.

The police and military were no longer in control of the situation

Revolutionary action cannot be properly explained by focusing on grievances alone. It is equally important to see the successful mobilisation of resources on the part of the opposition. The demonstrators were neither disorganised nor unfunded. Food, drink and shelter were provided for thousands of villagers, many of whom stayed in the southern cities for weeks. Uniform dress, banners and flags – as well as transport costs – had to be covered. There was much speculation among the people of Osh about how much the mountain lads had been paid to take part in the demonstrations.

While opposition activists lacked in a common leadership, they still managed to focus on the lowest common denominator: getting rid of Akaev. There may not have been a united national front but opposition leaders successfully mobilised their respective followers. Here, they differed greatly from the 'powers that be'. In many parts of central and northern Kyrgyzstan, people did not actively endorse the overthrowal of the President and preferred stability to chaos. However, whereas the opposition's followers were ready to defend their interests by force, the supporters of stability had no intention of doing so.

The aforementioned issues and resources did not just come into being in February 2005. So why did people suddenly decide that enough was enough?

Most importantly, the recent elections were an indication that Akaev's possible retirement in October 2005 would not entail any major redistribution of power. The President had repeatedly promised not to seek an extension of his presidency beyond the current term of office. However, the results of the parliamentary vote demonstrated that the ruling family was not prepared to let the opposition become a serious challenge. There was no need for the anti-Akaev forces to wait until October. The cards had already been laid on the table.

After the revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine one finds it hard not to think of the events in Kyrgyzstan as an effort to end dictatorship and steer a pro-Western and more democratic course. Yet there are a few things that distort this picture, and give reason to worry.

The Kyrgyz revolution was hardly a national outcry for democracy. This may have been the sincere objective of some of its leaders, yet it was not what the majority of their foot soldiers were after. The pace was set by those previously excluded from power and prosperity.

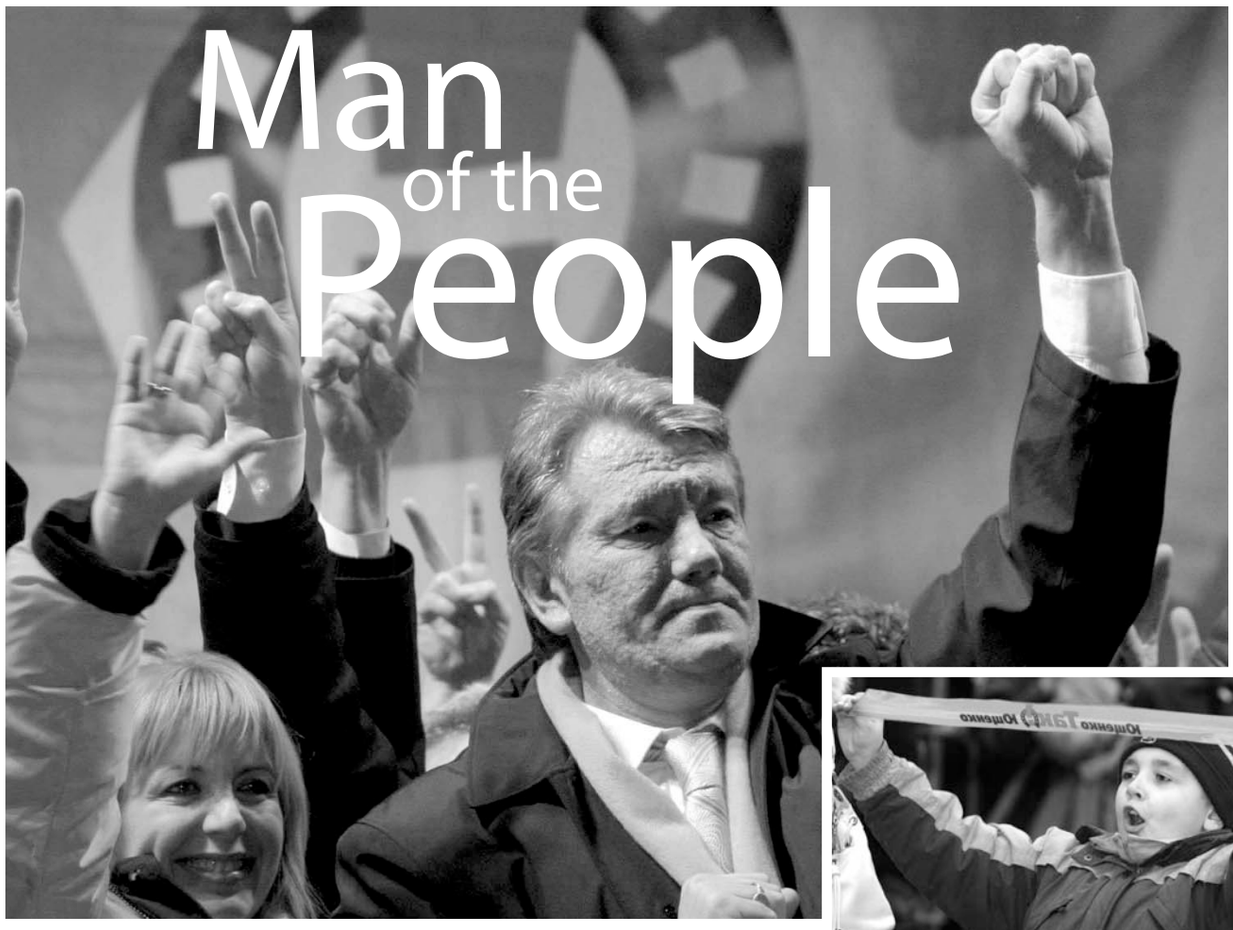
This does not bode well for the future of the Kyrgyz Republic. A result was achieved through confrontation, not negotiation – something problematic in several respects. First, it means political exclusion continues. Last week a young woman from Bishkek was already complaining to me that all key positions have been filled with southerners.

Second, the events have set a dangerous precedent. Now that people have realised political conflicts can be decided on the street, it is likely that those who feel excluded will adopt the approach again. Presidential elections have been announced for June 26th. Who knows what will happen when some of the groups do not get their way?

The fragmentation of the opposition exacerbates this further. Now that Akaev is gone, fissures will emerge. Only one of the leaders can take power, and it will require very skilful manoeuvring on the part of Bakiev to ensure everyone gets a share of the spoils. It is too early to tell if Kyrgyzstan has moved towards genuine democracy. So far, it is merely embracing uncertainty.

Stefan Kirmse is a PhD student at SOAS, London, studying post-Soviet society in southern Kyrgyzstan. He has been based in the city of Osh since August 2004. All names have been changed to protect anonymity

Man of the People



KATE WAGNER laments attempts to read too much into Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution'

"'People power' is the political fairy tale of our times. … The people in post-Soviet states are like the chorus in a Mussorgsky opera: power is brokered behind the scenes, the people are there just to cheer on cue or to boo the villain like in a pantomime."
Mark Almond, *Oxford Forum*, Spring 2005

OFTEN, WHEN SUCH a great deal has changed, it is the little things that jump out at us. Finally, after 13 months out of the country – and the better part of a popular revolution, I was returning to Ukraine as an election observer for the repeat second-round presidential election. While the other 99 observers on my flight buckled up and swapped mini-CVs and tales of the first two rounds ("it was so cold in Lugansk – I brought two pairs of long underwear this time!"), I mulled over the departures monitor at Gatwick, which listed 'Kyiv' instead of 'Kiev.' That, I thought, was real change.

Despite pouring over the Russian, Ukrainian and Western medias' various interpretations of the first two rounds of elections and the 'Orange Revolution', I did not know what awaited me. What would this revolution really look like? Would it just be a few bundled students camping on Khreshatyk, or something running deeper? Was 'people power' merely a political fairy tale for the idealistic? As someone who had seen great changes in the country between 2001 and 2003, I was cautiously optimistic.

I was in Ukraine for the 2002 Rada (parliamentary) elections, in a small but economically important factory and port city just north of Odesa. With the exception of a whirlwind visit by Viktor Yushchenko to the only Ukrainian-language school in town, a few precariously-hung campaign banners and an intimidating city council contest, the election passed with considerable silence. I never saw more than a dozen people attend a stump speech in the square. Most locals to whom I spoke did not vote, did not believe that their vote would count and did not trust politicians to look after their interests. As usual, the OSCE condemned the election as fraudulent, but there was little protest. What had happened in the two intervening years to cause such a drastically different response both nationally and internationally? Was it merely a reaction to the Georgian 'Rose Revolution', or orchestrated by the ever-meddling US? Or was there something to this notion of 'people power'?

I am not going to compare Ukraine in 2004 with Georgia in 2003. The two are radically different in history, process and outcome. Although the Rose Revolution was symbolically important, and did provide a concrete example – whether fairytale or reality – that post-Soviet people can make a difference, the factors that facilitated the Orange Revolution were primarily home-grown. And the crowd was one of those factors. Whilst the people may not have held the power directly, they did monitor and influence those who did – the President, the Rada and the Supreme Court – to follow the letter of the law. And, unlike in Georgia in 2000 or in Kyrgyzstan today, it was the law that dictated the change of power. In many ways, the Orange Revolution turned the Mussorgsky opera on its head: the politicians began to operate on stage, taking their cues from the boos and cheers of the 'Maidan Million' and vice versa. The change from popular indifference to political dialogue and from a passive to participatory political culture in Ukraine could be the most lasting – and important – result of the revolution.

It is difficult to write history as it unfolds. It is incredibly difficult, therefore, accurately to pinpoint the origins of the Orange Revolution or to weigh their relative influence. Ukraine in 2002 and Ukraine in 2004 were vastly different places. The unique confluence of popular dissatisfaction with corrupt and selfish politicians, a changed international context, Russia's interference, mistakes by the government, the appeal of

Yushchenko and the role of the courts all prevented the 2004 presidential election from remaining just another fraudulent post-Soviet blip on the international radar.

In a speech to the Woodrow Wilson Center in January, US Ambassador to Ukraine (1993–1998), William Green Miller, stated that "there had been a fundamental irreversible transformation in attitude on the part of Ukrainian voters" since the 2002 election. After the election, President Leonid Kuchma and his cronies managed to keep control over the Rada, but the fact that more than two thirds of the electorate voted against Kuchma's party undermined his authoritative power. During the subsequent two years of wrangling between opposition and government parliamentary factions, opposition forces coordinated and lobbied together. In the summer of 2003, while Kuchma attempted to push through a constitutional amendment allowing for the election of the president by the Rada, those opposition forces – led by Yushchenko and his current acting prime minister (and avid Orange Revolutionary) Yulia Timoshenko – set up tents on Khreshatyk, not for the first nor the last time. The support of fellow opposition figures such as Timoshenko and the well-respected Socialist Party of Ukraine leader Oleksandr Moroz was crucial in organising and leading a united opposition through the protests, as well as through the Rada debates and court cases that were the less-glamorous, but more instrumental, side to the Orange Revolution. Non-opposition was also influential. Rada Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn did not stop debate on election fraud and annulment; Kuchma did not prevent protestors from amassing in Kyiv, and popular Kyiv mayor Oleksandr Omelchenko provided sanitary and health services for Tent City while remaining politically neutral.

The Supreme and Constitutional courts provided an important mediating force in the Orange Revolution. Unlike in some post-Soviet states, the Ukrainian court system has recently asserted its independence from the government, proving itself to the public to be a fair and impartial judge. One example of this perceived objectivity was the much-publicised 2003 decision that allowed Omelchenko to keep office despite Kuchma's attempts to remove him on the basis of an obscure law forcing public servants to retire at the age of 65. Ironically, Omelchenko and Kuchma share the same birthday: August 9, 1938. A current senior US diplomat in Kyiv believes this case heavily influenced Omelchenko's enabling of Tent City.

Both Yushchenko and Yanukovych saw the courts as the first and last avenue to plead their cases, with Yanukovych conceding defeat after using every possible appeal in January. Domestic observers from both camps had hovered around polling stations and territorial election commissions with well-thumbed copies of the constitution and voting regulations, chronicling every break from procedure in order to bolster their respective cases.

From the 2002 campaign to his presidential one, Yushchenko arose as the leader of the opposition movement, gaining near constant – if rarely positive – media coverage. Finally, there was a face to the opposition. In fact, the same photograph of Yushchenko hugging a small child was used in both the 2002 and 2004 campaign posters. The ravages of dioxin poisoning only gave greater emphasis to the fresh change that Yushchenko represented.

While Yushchenko's camp made crucial campaign blunders in 2002, Viktor Yanukovych's camp made even more grievous mistakes in 2004. Indeed, perhaps the first error of the campaign was in deciding to choose Yanukovych at all. Corruption has been a known and begrudgingly-accepted part of Ukrainian politics since long before 2002, but the advocacy of Yanukovych – seen by many as uncultured and with a checkered past – may have pushed the envelope too far. His industrial magnate friends, government backers and Russian money rubbed the last veneer of legitimacy off of the 2004 election campaign. While Yushchenko presented at least the appearance of change, Kuchma's chosen successor represented its prevention. Throughout the campaign, and particularly after the inception of the Tent City, Yanukovych's demeanor was less open, more defensive and at times vicious – as any reading of the presidential debates (the only two in Ukrainian history) reveals. The brazen nature of the election violations in the second round in November – such as the busing of repeat absentee voters to the West from the East – also insulted the process beyond popular acceptance.

President Bush received much criticism at home for not supporting a revolution some abroad credit him for manufacturing

Russia's interference was also a large deterrent to Ukrainian voters. Although many Ukrainians, especially in the East and South, do prefer close relations with Russia, they do not necessarily desire a puppet government. President Vladimir Putin's open campaigning for Yanukovych, the constant presence of Russian PR and campaign specialists and the $300m donated directly to Yanukovych's coffers backfired. Following the public backlash to Putin's premature congratulatory call to Yanukovych after the November election, Yanukovych actually retreated from his image as Putin's ally – albeit too late.

Russia's direct negative impact on the election certainly trumped any influence that the West supposedly imposed. At a recent speech at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, US Foreign Service Institute Ukraine specialist Dr William Gleeson outlined the Bush administration's failure in US-Ukraine policy both before and during the Orange Revolution – voicing opinions shared by current US Ambassador to Ukraine, John Herbst. Instead of following the State Department's strategy of promoting fair elections, during 2004 the myriad high-profile US visitors spent more time lauding Kuchma's deployment of troops to Iraq than warning against fraud. Gleeson argues that US foreign policy toward Ukraine in 2004 was merely an arm of its Iraq policy – a weakness that Kuchma hoped to take advantage of, and that the Ukrainian public grew to resent. The US message was muddled, and its funding negligible with respect to spending on 'democracy promotion' in the Middle East – or with respect to Russia's outlay. President George W. Bush received much criticism at home for not supporting a revolution some abroad credit him for manufacturing.

These are but a few of the many factors that interwove in 2004 to create the Orange Revolution. I could also mention the importance of the recent EU enlargement, which allowed Ukrainians to compare personally the EU with Ukraine and with Russia. While many large businesses still look toward Russia, small- and medium-sized businesses look increasingly westward. It is far too soon to judge how important each of these factors was in brining about change. But it is clear that change occurred – more than just signs at the airport and tents in the square. As the Russian politician Grigory Yavlinsky said this winter, "I'll give you a tent and you put it on Red Square and see how many people go live there – even if you make sandwiches." Two of my colleagues in Ukraine who did not vote in the 2002 election – and did not know what the European Union was in 2002 – were polling station commission members in 2004. That might not be overwhelming power, but it is 'people power'. There is a long and extremely difficult road to hoe in Ukraine, and as the feeble promises President Bush made to President Yushchenko on April 4 illustrate, future success, like the Orange Revolution, will be a mostly home-grown affair. As usual, I'm cautiously optimistic.

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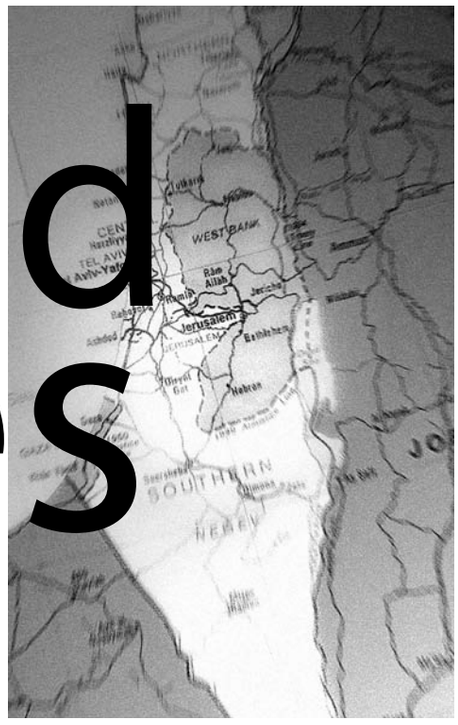
Mind Games



CHARLES BRENDON is taken for a ride by BICOM – Britain's foremost pro-Israeli lobby group

TO THE CASUAL observer, there is something unnervingly shady about BICOM. With the type of soulless name bestowed upon fictitious, demonic biotechnology conglomerates and a stated aim of "over time [bringing] about a significant shift in opinion in favourof Israel" in Britain, images of anonymous, scheming ideologues pulling Machiavellian strings seem to leap from its every glossy 'briefing paper'. Founded in 2001, the organisation possesses every asset required of a US-style political lobby group – from a slick website to heaps of cash.

To the undoubted delight of conspiracy theorists everywhere, there is more: not only does BICOM engage in domestic lobbying against purported "media and political hostility" towards Israel, it has – since 2001 – been flying small parties of British student journalists to the world's most divisive region to "see for themselves" what all the fuss is about. Thus, the reasoning evidently goes, the foreign correspondents of 2015 will demonstrate a little more "balance" in their Middle Eastern coverage.

Accepting an invitation to embark upon one such trip was a decision made only after lengthy deliberation. Most of us are (knowingly or otherwise) subject to near-daily efforts to mould our understanding of the world – be it via election propaganda, prevailing economic dogma or partisan news editing. Yet willingly to expose oneself to what looked like five days of unidirectional, deliberate manipulation threw up both moral and intellectual dilemmas: would I emerge a brainwashed, committed Zionist? What kind of obligations would accepting so generous a 'freebie' generate? Would my actions forever be noted – my career purposefully obstructed – were I to stand firm as a principled 'lefty'?

Yet BICOM is in a strong position. It is rare for a student to be offered an all-expenses-paid trip to the local curry house, let alone to the region most central to current geopolitics. Throw in breakfast with Her Majesty's man in Tel Aviv, dinner with prominent British foreign correspondents in Jerusalem and a meeting with Israel's deputy defence minister (BICOM certainly doesn't suffer from its lack of official ties to the Israeli government) and the phrase "once in a lifetime" begins to jar with instinctive reticence. Indeed, one wonders if the thousand of pounds spent transporting, feeding and "educating" us are unavoidable given BICOM's aims – after all, how many UK students would be willing to attend a domestic-based Zionist seminar on Israel's future?

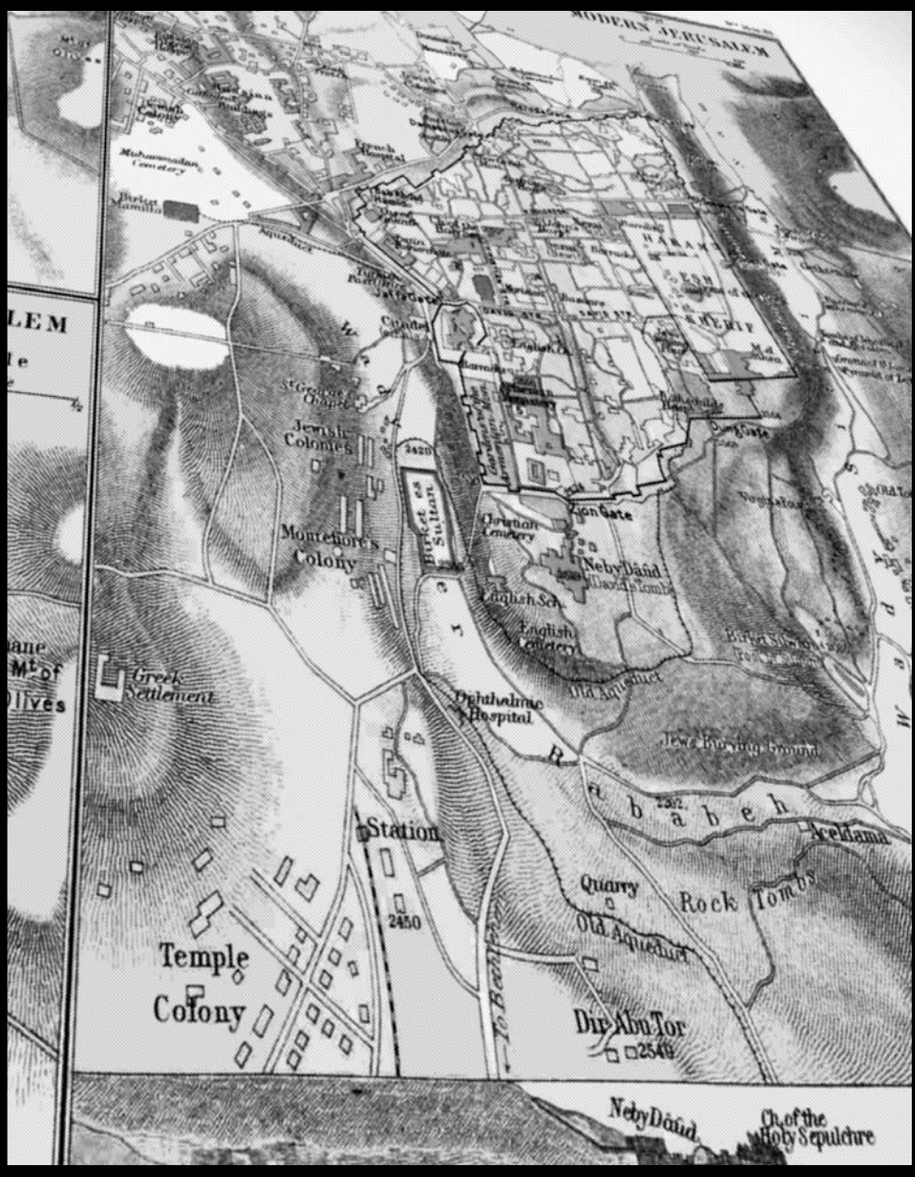
Nonetheless, assembling at Heathrow was an uneasy experience. The atmosphere was akin to that of a Louis Theroux documentary – the four students present were all aware that BICOM's representative (a sharp yet worldly London postgraduate named Erica) wanted primarily to change our minds, so treated her with a tentative mixture of suspicion and curiosity. It was here that the mode of interaction to govern proceedings began to be established: friendly conversation on menial topics, peppered with more loaded political exchanges – a model upheld staunchly by the trip's endearingly bellicose Israeli co-ordinator, Dr Jonathan Spyer (who was to meet us on arrival in Tel Aviv). We landed in Israel at 5am on a grey Sunday morning. The "programme" was to start at nine. None of us had succeeded in getting much sleep.

It is always tempting to see ulterior motives behind every act of the agenda-ridden (when wiley French statesman Charles Talleyrand died in 1838, Prince Metternich is said to have remarked: "I wonder what he meant by that"). Perhaps the timetable BICOM prepared for our trip accommodated its busy speakers simply in accordance with their own scheduling preferences. Yet it was notable that our first visit was to Herzliya's Inter-Disciplinary Centre (IDC) – Israel's only private university, established ten years ago to counter an alleged left-wing bias amongst the country's other higher education institutes. There – on the site of an old army barracks – students are given the privilege of an educational environment where party political debate is banned and lectures on negotiation skills are given by esteemed former army generals. There, we were presented with an academic introduction to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. So far, so predictable.

That the week's schedule presented us with a "balanced" picture of the situation was unquestionable – so Jonathan assured us, ad nauseam. In fairness to him and to BICOM, this was certainly true in a narrow sense: from an affable if wholly irrational extremist settler to a Labour party politician partly responsible for the Geneva peace accords, few sectors of Israeli society were permitted to pass us by. Yet using the IDC as a springboard for the rest of the trip seemed geared at pre-empting this deluge of opinions: there, academics taught us the "official line" – how Yasser Arafat had launched the Second Intifada unprovoked, how Israel had never in its history embarked upon a war of aggression, how suicide bombers are a product entirely of the Palestinian education system. It was the implied rational benchmark, against which we were intended to gauge the validity of all future viewpoints. It was for the most part devoid of subtlety.

Over the next few days we were duly "shown" Israel. Here was an ordinary, western country trying to mind its ordinary, western business in the face of the

[Illustrations Matt Hasteley]



despotic Arab world that would have it driven into the sea. The security barrier was admired, both physically and statistically (as deputy defence minister Zeev Boim explained, the lack of recent bombings vindicated Ariel Sharon's decision to put "hard life" before "no life" – a pity about the former, mind); the state of the economy's hi tech sector was lauded; the Israeli army's concern for Palestinian life noted. From all informed parties, both within and without the Israeli government, the failings of our arrogant, liberal British media were spelled out to us.

Special vitriol was reserved for the BBC. Danny Seaman – fiery director of the government press office (and a man who works to the accompaniment of Fox News) – spat at us of the "institutionalised anti-Semitism amongst the British elite", resulting in the likes of Barbara Pleat using the Corporation as a platform for describing her tears at Arafat's funeral. Indeed, the Pleat example seemed to pervade all discussion of the beeb – testament either to the impact a single online report can have upon an entire nation, or a general paucity of empirical support for the frequent allegations of partiality. The Guardian, inevitably, was an object of similar hostility (Suzanne Goldenberg was, according to Seaman, "a liar"), whilst mere mention of the words 'Robert Fisk' to Jonathan was sufficient to initiate a half-hour debate.

And it was this barely-concealed anger, more than anything, that caused it to click. Far from a sinister, manipulative instrument of raw Israeli self-interest, BICOM's programme was exhibiting little beyond simplistic nationalist frustration – it was a by-product of Israel's overwhelmingly defensive national mindset, whose accompanying self-righteous indignation prompts the view that "if only the world could see things from our perspective, they'd understand why we act as we do". Thus there was no need for a Palestinian independence campaigner to add to the "objective" tapestry weaved under Jonathan's scrutiny – such a piece would be irrelevant to the exhibition around which we were earnestly being escorted. The trip was not so much about brainwashing as trying to appeal to common values.

It didn't work, of course. For all the insistences we heard that any western country would act identically when faced with a similar terror threat, or that unilateral action was the only way to proceed in the absence of a viable Palestinian partner, no speaker was ever going to convince British students to assume Israeli national priorities. So, for instance, it was perfectly possible to understand why the Israeli army believes it must perform incursions into the West Bank, but not to support such actions; it was perfectly possible to see that the infamous security barrier does prevent suicide bombings, without considering this the sole relevant criterion in assessing its worth. BICOM's fundamental weakness lies in failing to realise that an irreconcilable difference does exist between British and Israeli values: the passionate sense of nationalism so central to the latter is almost entirely absent within our singularly self-depreciating realm – certainly in academic circles. Thus, ironically, the central thrust of its campaign is doomed to founder upon the very emotion that inspired it.

There are doubtless those in Britain that look at Israel's continued defiance of international law, look at the blind eye turned towards it by the United States and look at the power of the Israeli lobby in Washington (AIPAC – the largest pro-Israel pressure group in the US – has an annual budget of $33.4m with which to influence congressional affairs), and duly fear the day such weighty interest groups begin to exercise their influence on these shores. Yet if BICOM's attempts at winning round a handful of student journalists revealed anything, it was that the lobby's intellectual grounding is far less secure than it itself believes. For fear of disappointing the conspiracy theorists, it was more fuming than shady.

Balancing the Cost

Pulitizer prize-winning author JARED DIAMOND considers the new pressures for corporate responsiblity.

IT IS OFTEN taken as given in business circles that the needs of the environment and of the economy must be 'balanced' with one another. The intuition is simple: environmental regulation (preventing, say, metal extraction firms from releasing cyanide into local ecosystems), or measures promoting sustainable activities in industries dependent upon renewable natural resources (such as logging and fishing) all impose higher day-to-day running costs upon businesses – costs that must be 'weighed up' against any wider social benefits. Thus policy debates tend to focus upon whether or not it will be worth governments' while imposing environmental initiatives on firms, or whether the resulting impact on profits and jobs will be too great. Crucially, the entire process is almost always pitched as a tug of war between the public need – in the form of regulation – and the needs of industry.

As somebody who has straddled this supposed divide for many years now (for instance, in simultaneous roles as a director of World Wildlife Fund and consultant to numerous major international oil companies), the conceptualisation seems to me at once simplistic and fatalistic – simplistic for failing to acknowledge the many voluntary moves towards more environmentally-friendly business practices have taken place over the past decade or so; fatalistic for assuming that CEOs will always consider their interests as separate from those of the environment.

It is certainly true that we are a long way from seeing perfect confluence between the actions of businesses and the needs of the public. In the United States, for example, the voters of Montana have become so disillusioned and disgusted with the actions of gold mining firms that gold miners are now effectively banned from that state – in accordance with popular ballots in both 1998 and November last year. After many years in which the 'prosperity' associated with gold extraction came at the price of polluted water supplies and refusals on behalf of the miners to cover clean-up costs (often by declaring bankruptcy), voters have been forced to take the last resort left open to them.

Yet contrast this with the actions of the US's platinum and palladium mines: at one notable site, so keen are the owners to keep the local populace appeased that the environmental organisation 'Trout Unlimited' has been hired (much to its astonishment) and asked to monitor the mine's impact upon local trout streams. Similarly, the borax mine operated in California by Rio Tinto is the cleanest in the entire United States, and titanium mines likewise tend to be environmentally sound.

So what is it that's making some producers adopt such apparently altruistic approaches to production – both in the extraction industry and elsewhere in the global economy? The answer is best found by continuing the comparison between cleaner forms of extraction and gold mining.

Culture is inevitably a factor – both corporate and social attitudes towards particular practices. In this particular case, the role of gold mines in encouraging westward migration in 19th-century America has bred a genuine sense of entitlement on behalf of the miners: a view that 'We are the

[Illustration Thomas Rayner]

people that made the West and saved the West – God put these metals there to be mined'. Indeed, the directors of one of the leading mining companies in the US all belong to a small church that believes the world is going to come to an end and that God will return to Earth within ten years – so why worry if a little arsenic gets dumped into the environment in the mean-time?

Moreover, the American government has subsidised the gold mining industry phenomenally since 1872 – but it wasn't until around 1981 that the government even began to require mining companies to clean up after themselves. Until then, such responsibility was virtually unheard of, and could even have prompted legal action against publicly-traded firms, obliged to deliver maximum yields for investors. Taking good care of the environment was neither necessary nor expected.

Today, though, much has changed. High profile environmental catastrophes – incidents like the 1988 Piper Alpha oil platform fire (which killed 167 people) and the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill – have contributed to wider social awareness of environmental issues, including of a concern regarding corporate pollution by miners. This has guaranteed a culture whereby the general public is much more prepared to recognise and to use the tools at its disposal for influencing corporate practice. In particular, both the 'stick' of consumer pressure and the 'carrot' of consumer preference are being waved with greater vigour than ever before. As the voters of Montana showed, in the most extreme cases this can result in companies being unable to ply their trades at all – the likes of Rio Tinto must behave responsibly, or face the bitter consequences.

It is precisely because this carrot/stick approach can be applied less effectively to the gold mining sector that environmentally reckless practices prevail there. The reasons for this are numerous, but by no means too specific for broader relevance. Firstly, the costs of disposing of waste materials cleanly are far higher for gold extraction than, say, coal mining – whereas in the latter case the ratio of waste material to product is roughly one-to-one, in the former it is closer to five million-to-one. The higher quantity of waste resulting ensures it is far less imprudent for gold miners to risk the wrath of environmentally-savvy consumers – high 'cleanliness' costs can still prevent responsible business practice.

Secondly, there exist huge differences between the lengths of time over which businesses are looking to exploit profitable opportunities. Gold mines generally get exhausted within a decade, but the US's two platinum and palladium mines have enough resources to continue for another century. If you've got a short-term perspective – if you're going to be out of your mine within ten years – that encourages what miners call a 'rape and run' attitude: keeping local pressure groups onside is sacrificed in favour of a 'get the stuff out of the ground and to hell with the mess' approach. Clearly the public has little chance of using a 'stick' approach to influence firms with such short-term perspectives.

Finally, there is a considerable problem in the use of the 'carrot' approach (exercising consumer preference in favour of environmentally responsible businesses) when individual purchasers are so far detached from polluting firms as in the gold mining case. There, gold goes through a chain of eight steps: it goes from the mine to the smelter, to the refiner, to a warehouser, to a manufacturer, to a wholesaler, to a retailer – and finally to a consumer. The result is that the consumer can't have the faintest idea where his or her gold came from – the gold in my wedding ring, for instance, may have been mined just 24 years ago (when I got married), or have come from a stockpile dating back some 20 years beforehand. There's just no way for me to tell. If the public is to render it in firms' economic best interests to pursue environmentally-friendly practices, it has to have some way of knowing when such practices are being followed. If it cannot, the option of polluting will remain a tempting one – it'll remain beyond consumer control.

Both the 'stick' of consumer pressure and the 'carrot' of consumer preference are being waved with greater vigour than ever before

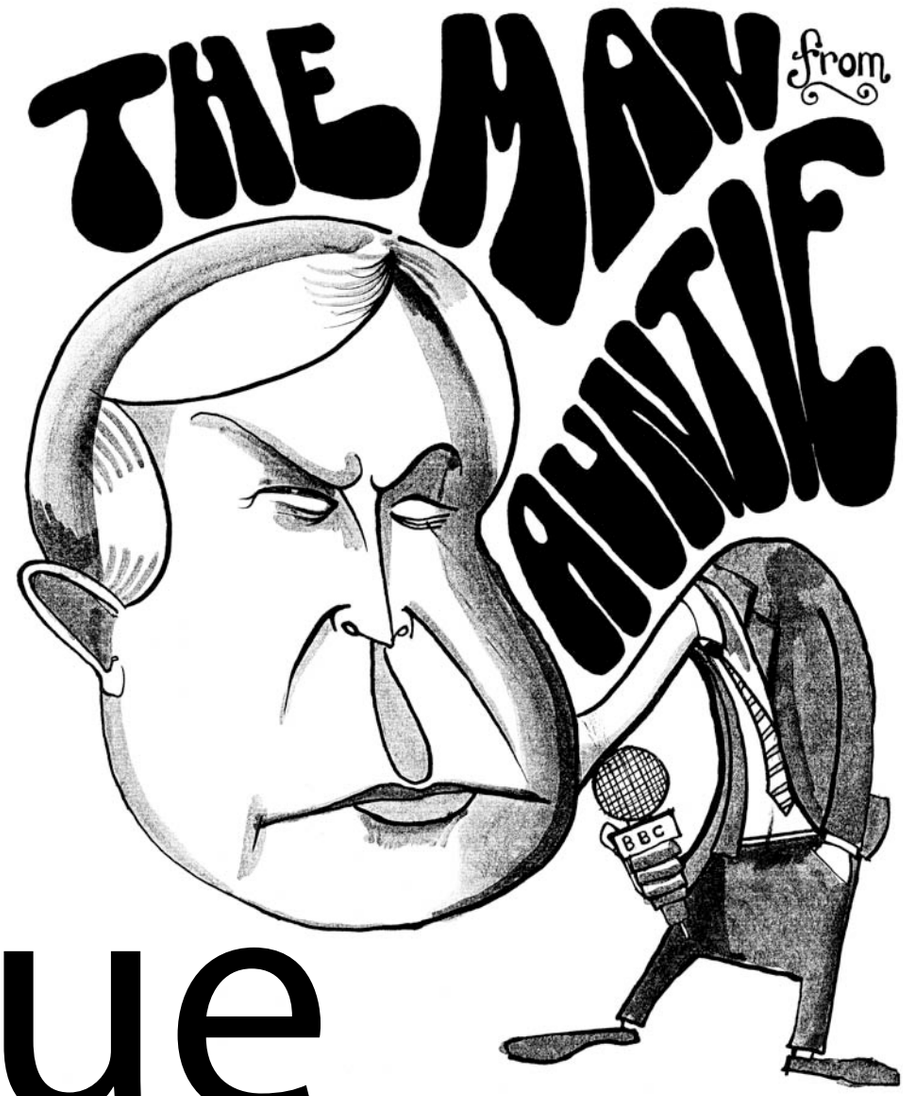
All of which should go some way to demonstrate why economy and environment need not pull us in opposite directions: if the public wants cleaner practices, these can be 'purchased' as part of final manufactured goods, through both pressure and preference. Yet it should also highlight why even supposedly 'sovereign' consumers cannot always have their way. Certain industries (gold was used above, but copper extraction and even, in some respects, fishing and forestry are applicable) do not naturally allow individual purchasers to exercise environmentally-founded discretion when buying goods, whilst at the same time – for whatever reasons – being less prone to popular pressure. How, in these situations, are the interests of business and those of the environment to be aligned?

One solution that has made much headway in recent years is the use of consumer organisations. On the surface, somebody looking to buy, say, a chair made of wood taken only from sustainably-managed forests ought to be faced with the same general problem as an environmentally-minded gold purchaser: there is no clear physical difference between 'sound' and 'unsound' products, so how to exercise preference? The answer has been provided in the form of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which hires auditing companies to check the practices of logging firms across the globe, and permits only those conforming to strict sustainability criteria to carry the FSC logo of approval. In other words, the FSC does the work consumers are unable to do – it lends transparency to what would otherwise be a largely opaque production process, and in so doing ensures it is in logging firms' economic best interests to avoid the type of environmental wastage consumers resent (in one experiment, 37 per cent of US consumers were prepared to pay more for FSC-certified timber than non-certified – yet in fact no significant extra costs are incurred by producing in accordance with FSC standards).

It is an approach that is coming to be used even in the gold industry (though to a lesser degree): top jeweller Tiffany's – fearful of the consequences should the public begin to target it in any protest against mining practices – based its decision to deal exclusively with Rio Tinto on the fact that it is by far the cleanest of the big international mining companies, able to 'turn the screw' on its client miners. So the point of public pressure is Tiffany's; Tiffany's deals with Rio Tinto; and Rio Tinto can then put pressure on the gold miners.

Ultimately, though, there will always be some sectors of the economy beyond the public's grasp – sectors in which even a desire on behalf of consumers for cleaner practices could not alone yield results. Yet perhaps we need not be so pessimistic. There are, for sure, about a dozen key environmental 'time bombs' – ranging from climate change to water shortages – that all need to be addressed within the next 30 to 40 years to avoid a catastrophe. But it's worth remembering that most CEOs have either children or grandchildren under the age of 30, and are prepared almost without exception to do whatever's necessary to ensure a good life for them – sending them to the right school, college, university etc. Is it really that unrealistic to think that this narrow altruism might manifest itself in a desire better to protect the environment, to the benefit of all? If it's in our interests to do it, it's in our economic interests too.

***Jared Diamond is Professor of Geography at the University of California, Los Angeles and the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of the widely acclaimed* Guns, Germs, and Steel: the Fates of Human Societies**



True to his every word

THE OXFORD FORUM talks to JOHN SIMPSON, and finds the BBC correspondent pessimistic about the state of British journalism

JOHN SIMPSON IS not a man accustomed to ranting, but tonight he seems reluctant to reign himself in. "Let me tell you something," he gestures. "It's one of the bees buzzing in my bonnet right now: I just think that real, good journalism is under attack at the moment."

Coming from the BBC's best-respected foreign correspondent – a man himself once accused by a British Prime Minister of "outrageous" journalistic practice (moments after Harold Wilson had landed a firm punch to the young reporter's stomach) – it is a startlingly frank accusation. Yet Simpson clearly isn't afraid of appearing the outspoken media conservative. He ploughs on: "There are two ways this is happening. One is through the deliberate desire to slant things, to 'editorialise' – the 'Fox News' approach, and the approach of quite a lot of newspapers. The other, in my opinion, is the degree of political involvement we're seeing currently, and the way in which governments – particularly British and American governments – now regard it as completely acceptable to try to manipulate journalism in ways that I think no decent government would have in the past. And it worries me; I don't like it; it disturbs me."

It is no coincidence that the issue of journalistic objectivity should be what ires Simpson so. As a man whose career has been spent studiously adhering to the BBC's principle of political neutrality, it is difficult to envisage him taking issue with anything other than the parameters of debate in Britain – never the actual, partisan arguments within. It is clear, though, from his adamant tone that he believes these parameters are presently being warped like never before. Elaborating on his criticism of Fox News, Simpson explains why he views Rupert Murdoch's creation with such unease.

"A lot of people out there think it's genuine and honest – I mean, it says it's unbiased and truthful. And the more you tell people things, often, I'm afraid, the more they believe it. People said about *The Sun* newspaper: 'oh,

[Illustration Nick Hayes]

well everybody knows it's tosh' – well, a lot of people do know it's tosh, but at the same time it does colour their views, and I think we've got a problem on our hands – we've got a fight on our hands."

Nor is this bellicose criticism reserved exclusively for the right-wing media. True to the 'balance' he is advocating, the BBC World Affairs Editor professes similar distaste for the recent turn taken by *The Independent* towards a 'liberal' brand of sensationalism. "I'm not enthusiastic about it, I'm really not," he sighs. "I really don't think you need to grab people by the lapels and shout your opinions in their face. I think that a quieter, a more reasoned approach that doesn't block out one whole side of an argument and only give you the other side is much better. And the old *Independent*, as it was, would have done that."

It would be difficult for any person whose career demands complete immersion in current affairs to remain free from staunchly opinionated views, particularly given the contentious nature of world politics today. John Simpson doesn't pretend to be a pure distiller of fact, untainted by any form of 'belief'. Yet he is adamant that this need not impact upon his professional life.

"I suppose the older I get, the more I think that it's important to take a stand on matters of principle," he confesses. "But I would only do that in private. I do think that in my job you really do have to try to be as objective as it's possible to be, because otherwise, what's the point? I mean, we've got *The Sun*, we've got Fox News – we've got *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, for that matter. Everybody's shouting their opinions. I think it's quite valuable to have somebody – or an organisation – that tries, strives, to be balanced."

The organisation to which he is referring is of course the BBC – the uniquely British institution that has employed Simpson ever since he accepted a job as 'junior trainee sub-editor in the newsroom', aged 22. For all its troubles with the government in recent years, the Corporation remains widely trusted to present the news in an 'unbiased' fashion – indeed, throughout the Hutton debacle it was only ever Tony Blair's credibility that seemed to suffer in the polls, 'Auntie' always remaining in high public regard. When Simpson outlines his scepticism for the more campaigning, politicised approach to his trade, it becomes clear the extent to which he has found his natural home.

"I rather suspect people who feel that journalism is a great way of righting wrongs," he explains. "Righting wrongs is a definite part of journalism – it's an important part of it – but, to go into it with that sort of motivation … I think the purer is just simply to find out what's happening."

It is a viewpoint that would seem to put Simpson at odds with those that perceive a wider purpose for the reporter in a democracy: the likes of John Pilger, or *The Independent's* Robert Fisk, who subscribe to Edmund Burke's model of a 'Fourth Estate' (the media serving to keep otherwise unaccountable power in check). Yet the BBC correspondent is prepared to be conciliatory: "Oh, but journalism is like literature – there's such a range that you can find yourself a niche in just about any of it.

"John Pilger is a friend of mine, and I really admire the fact that we have noisy, outspoken, difficult people. That doesn't mean to say I agree with everything he says – in fact, often I don't seem to agree with anything he says very much. But I love the fact that there is somebody like John Pilger saying it in a passionate way."

John Simpson's approach, though, is one driven entirely by curiosity. As he encapsulates it, "there are some people who just have to know what's around the next corner". Perhaps surprisingly, this outlook has led him to welcome the additional degree of scrutiny to which British reporting in general, and particularly that of the BBC, has been subject since the heated days of the Iraq debate.

"I suppose it probably is unprecedented," he muses. "But if so, I think that's a very good thing. I can't see that there's anything wrong with having to watch very carefully what you say. What is wrong is to be timid about it, and to prefer not to say anything serious rather than to set yourself up in the firing line. But to be honest, I don't see any greater signs of that now – certainly in the BBC, I think the same people are doing the same sorts of things."

Moreover, he denies that 'asymmetric' scrutiny is a problem – that the powerful alone are in a position to ensure legally watertight coverage of their affairs. "I honestly don't think that is happening," he asserts, with indignation. "I wouldn't want to be part of an outfit which was so terrified it dared not squeak, I really wouldn't. … We just need to make sure we're doing the right thing – that we're not acting out of fear, or indeed of hubris."

Yet hubris is a quality certainly not found wanting in international political debate at present. Having witnessed the Iraq war first-hand – and had its horrors painfully brought home when a US bomber mistakenly killed the Iraqi translator stood by his side – Simpson confesses to feeling somewhat angry when the 'chattering classes' insist upon debating the conflict with poorly-founded rhetoric.

"I get quite frustrated by ignorance dressed up as semi-informed opinion. I do think that is quite irritating," he confides. "I don't mind – hell, it's so difficult to go to Iraq and make your own mind up – but I do think journalists who can go, and perhaps ought to go, shouldn't necessarily just stay at home and preach about it."

This said, Simpson admits it can sometimes be difficult to make his own mind up about a situation – even when merely seeking to report the facts. Taking China as an example, he duly outlines the difficulties: "I love China: I love going to China, I love reporting on it – but it is hard, because I don't speak Chinese at all, and to understand the precise details of a society which is so different … I think that is quite difficult.

"I was at Tiananmen Square, and I felt that was very true then: we were inclined just to assume that the students there wanted the kind of democracy that we have, but in fact they'd been so restrained in their education that they didn't even know what it was that constituted democracy. It's very hard to get into the minds of people whose background is so different."

He laments the all-too-regular tendency for foreign correspondents to simplify – picking 'good guys' and 'bad guys' in any given conflict, for easier audience digestion.

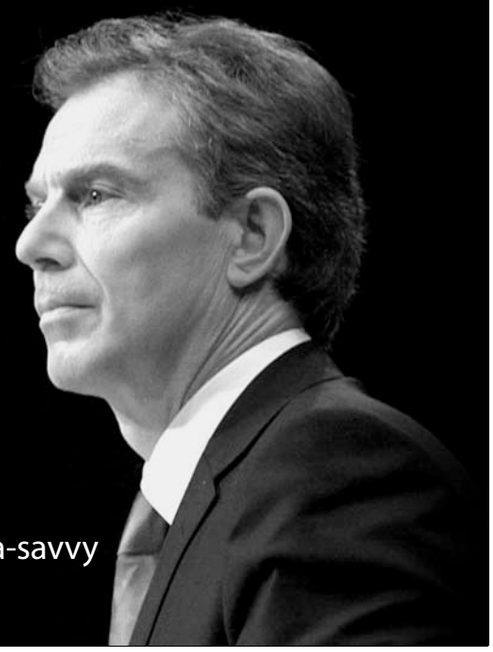
"That's grotesque, that is. The most obvious example of that was in Bosnia in the nineties, when it was a three-way civil war: most journalists – or a lot of journalists, particularly for television – had a real problem trying to explain that one. I used to be one of the people who most thought it was the function of a journalist to make things simple to people – to say: 'This is how things are, and it's not as difficult as you think'. But I realised over the years that I don't think that is the function at all – I think the function is to say: 'Listen, you think there are simple answers to complicated questions. Actually, I'm telling you things are a damned sight more difficult and complicated than that.' And I think that's a much more valuable approach."

It's an illuminating comment. Simpson has spent much of our conversation attacking moves to more partisan news coverage, but perhaps there's more to this stance than a mere desire to respect the democratic consensus behind an 'impartial' media – perhaps it's founded on a belief that the world is just too complex to be encapsulated in a neat, thousand-word opinion piece. Nonetheless, he refuses to be defeatist.

"I'm uncomfortable about a lot of the ways journalism is going – we've got to rally round it and we've got to defend it. People have got to be aware that it's under threat. … In many ways the world is too complicated for journalists, but that doesn't mean you can't have a bash at it. I think it just demands a bit more understanding, a bit more experience – a bit harder work, to be honest."

British and American governments now regard it as acceptable to try to manipulate journalism

hidden Agenda



Tony Blair's is just the latest in a long line of media-savvy administrations, as STEWART PURVIS explains

IN 1938 THE BBC held a post-mortem into how the Corporation's news department had covered the Munich crisis, when the British Government of Neville Chamberlain postponed war via a deal with Adolf Hitler.

The post-mortem concluded that "there was no censorship by the Government of the BBC news bulletins or broadcast material, though the Corporation naturally kept in close touch with the appropriate departments and the bulletins fell into line with Government policy".

It is a classic example of self-censorship. Why would a Government need to impose censorship when the nation's only broadcaster says it will "fall into line" with official policy? The line between censorship and self-censorship had become academic.

When I began researching the events of 1938, I was curious rather than suspicious. I wanted to discover how the events of that year were covered by the electronic media of the day – namely BBC radio and the cinema newsreels. (Television news didn't start until in Britain until the 1950s.) What I discovered was disturbing.

The memories of the First World War two decades earlier were understandably very fresh in British minds in 1938. The Government and mainstream public opinion were very keen to avoid another war. So when the Prime Minister decided to compromise with Hitler in his very first territorial expansion outside Germany it seemed to some to be a price worth paying 'for peace'. The government of Czechoslovakia was persuaded to give up some territory to Hitler. To others this kind of peace was an illusion: the German chancellor would be back for more.

But in pursuit of the official line newsreel films were ordered back from the cinemas by the producers because the Government didn't like some of the content and opponents of Chamberlain's deal were kept out of the newsreels and off the BBC. One commentator of the time, Harold Nicholson – whose diaries are in the library of Balliol College – recorded how he was told that he couldn't talk on the radio about the Nazi threat. The message to the BBC from the Foreign Office was that "it would prefer that no talk at all was broadcast on the subject" that night. When the BBC asked if this was an instruction, the Foreign Office replied that it could not instruct the BBC on a matter like this, "but that the recommendation was very strong".

Spin existed long before we called it spin, and probably before the public knew that it was going on

The self-censorship practised by the BBC and the newsreels was partly a misguided form of patriotism and partly the result of a very sophisticated campaign by Chamberlain: the Prime Minister and his advisers lobbied media owners and editors with an energy and enthusiasm that would put Tony Blair and Alastair Campbell to shame. It was an example of what's known in America as 'big tent politics' – gathering under a single political roof a range of different interest groups. The other intention, of course, is to try to marginalise those outside the tent. So the 'big tent' helps create a subtle form of self-censorship on editors.

When I moved on from researching Munich to learning more about the coverage of the Suez crisis of 1956 I discovered other 'big tents' being erected at times of crisis. By then there were two television news services – BBC and ITN – as well as radio and newsreel. The Government of Anthony Eden questioned the right of those who opposed its invasion of Egypt to get access to these airwaves. The BBC and ITN resisted but the newsreels ignored the lessons of 1938 and again avoided interviewing those who spoke out against the official policy.

What 1938 and 1956 demonstrate is that spin existed long before we called it spin, and probably before the public knew that it was going on. Politicians and journalists have always been at it and always will be. Spinning, taking spin, reading spin, playing a straight bat against spin – indeed, every cricketing metaphor you can think of – they all pre-date any date you choose to select for the birth of the 'modern media'.

It always has been and always will be natural for humans to want other humans to think well of them and to try to put their best case and best face forward. The bigger sin in my mind is the self-censorship that allows spin to work and to prevent legitimate voices being heard at times of conflict.

Being in a 'big tent' alongside 'all right-minded people' can be a seductive place for media owners, executives and editors. But the late Hugo Young, the doyen of political columnists for many years, often warned of the dangers. He said journalists could discover as insiders but should write as outsiders. And my trip around the 1938 and 1956 archives confirms that there are some very real examples from history that today's practising and aspirant journalists would do well to remember.

Stewart Purvis is this year's News International Visiting Professor of Broadcast Media at Oxford University, and is also Professor of Television Journalism at City University. He worked at ITN for 31 years and was Chief Executive from 1995 to 2003

[Photography Leon Neal]

OXFORDFORUM

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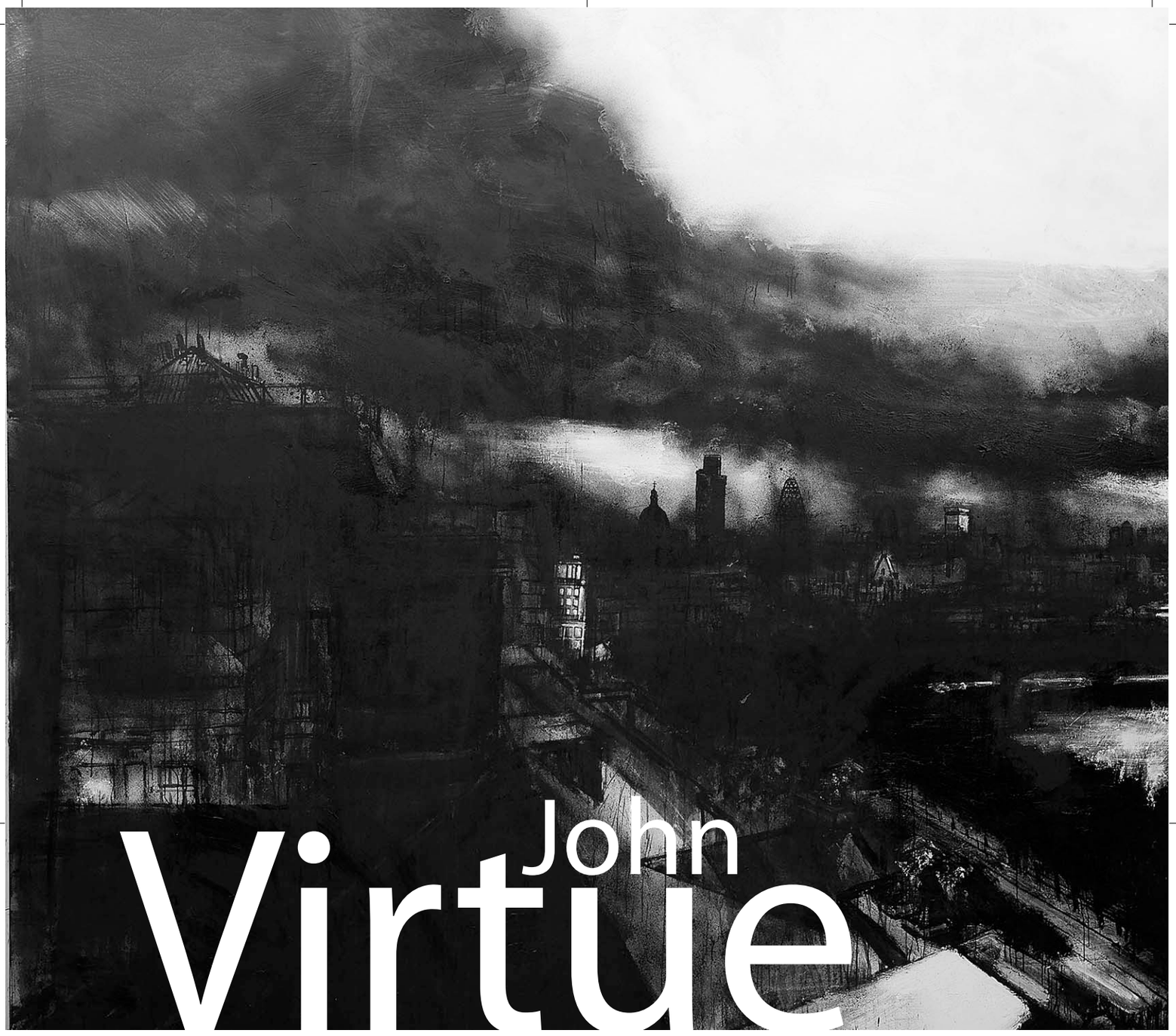


John Virtue

COLIN WIGGINS looks at the influences behind the new work of painter John Virtue

WHEN PAINTER JOHN Virtue abandoned the countryside of South Devon which had previously been his home and subject to tackle the sprawling cityscape of London, no one had ever imagined that he would undertake such a radical break from his past. Moving from the Exe Estuary to the River Thames, Virtue's physical paintings took on a scale never before attempted by any other visual artist as he considered in the historic skyline a subject he had not previously focused on.

In December 2002, Virtue became the sixth National Gallery Associate Artist. His relationship with the Gallery goes back a long way. He vividly recalls his first visit as a schoolboy in 1964, when encounters with, amongst others, Gainsborough, Turner, Constable and Rubens, left an enduring legacy. In addition to his fascination with European landscape, Virtue draws inspiration from other traditions, including the Japanese art of Zen calligraphy: "The Oriental tradition is to do with movement, and the Western tradition is to do with stasis, so it's as if you could capture with line and speed something so autonomic as breathing and walking and somehow freeze it in the way the Western tradition thinks." This frozen energy permeates Virtue's work throughout.

His pictures are executed in a modernist painterly language inherited from Abstract Expressionism. He is fond of quoting from E.H.Gombrich's *Art and Illusion*, where Gombrich discusses a line drawing that can be read as either a rabbit with its long ears, or a duck with an opened bill. Gombrich points out that we can perceive it as either the rabbit or the duck, never the two at the same time. Yet Virtue argues that you should be able to see them both together: "The actuality comes from trying to lock into the two; one's to do with movement, of being, existing, of living, the other is to make a contemplative object that has an aesthetic quality, an aesthetic value." Taking his cue from this, Virtue insists his paintings are made as reference-free abstract marks, but allows they can become the topographical features to which they relate.

During his time in Devon, his work focused on the Exe Estuary and Virtue would undertake a weekly 16-mile walk, right around the estuary, filling sketchbooks with rapid drawings. Whatever the weather, he would complete the 16 miles, often with his sketchbooks and himself saturated with

[Virtue, John W008. Landscape No. 710, 2003-4. Oil, acrylic, black ink and shellac on canvas. 305 x 610 cm. Courtesy of the artist. © John Virtue. Photo The National Gallery, London]

rainwater. This walk and its resultant images would act as source material for the next few days' painting. In London, Virtue constructed a new routine. He would start weekdays by drawing outside, from two specific locations: the roof of Somerset House – overlooking the North Bank of the Thames, facing eastwards towards the City – and on the South Bank at ground level, also facing east. He later added a new location: the roof of the National Gallery, overlooking Trafalgar Square.

When making his London drawings, as with the walks around the Exe estuary, bad weather was not a deterrent. New drawings of the same views were made on every working day, with the same buildings being drawn – often in fairly meticulous topographical detail – literally hundreds of times. This almost obsessive routine seems to show the need to draw for Virtue is not solely about gaining information, but is also to do with the desire to enact some kind of ritualistic procedure that bonds him to his subject.

The broad sweep across the London skyline gives an epic, visionary quality

The contrast between the artist's previous rural surroundings and central London could not have been greater. However, Virtue says that all this is incidental to his method of working: "Obviously, you'd be a fool to say that you'd not be influenced and changed, you may well be castrated by this situation, it could strangle you – I mean, your studio is in Trafalgar Square, not some back-street of Exeter or the middle of Dartmoor. That could be quite a frightening thing, but my career has been one of movement, not one of stasis. It's not been about settling and having a cosy background; it's had a lot of violent changes … I will be very much affected but the actual discipline and the way I work will not be affected. And it doesn't matter whether

there are 20 million people around you, or a few sheep and cows."

Virtue claims he is trying to make abstractions that derive from a visual reality. He is not consciously dealing with the history of a place and its peoples. Yet London is emphatically not a neutral subject. By choosing to paint the view towards the City, following the flow of the Thames rather than looking back upstream towards Westminster, he is representing one of the most potent symbols of London and its history: the instantly recognisable dome of St Paul's.

Virtue works solely in black and white, but cites practical rather than theoretical reasons for this. Yet despite the artist's conscious intentions, black and white can never completely shake off their psychological and symbolic resonance and inescapably have other implications. White is hope, life, light. Black is despair, death, darkness.

Virtue is uneasy about such interpretations. However, on the regular open days that he held as part of his time as Associate Artist, he encountered many students and members of the public who identified this element in his work, and admits that "usually what people say about your work is not what you wish to communicate". A common response was to find the pictures menacing or foreboding – apocalyptic even. Virtue's reply was always the same: to state that he is simply making abstractions from the visual data he has recorded and he is certainly not attempting to invest the paintings with any emotive content. He conceeds, though, that "I don't put atmosphere into my pictures but people seem to say it's there."

People do not feature in Virtue's paintings. This is especially noticeable in *Landscape 709*: an enormous canvas measuring twelve feet square. Virtue made the drawings for this painting whilst standing on the muddy foreshore of the river at low tide. The viewpoint is thus set dramatically low. The picture is divided horizontally by the wide span of Blackfriars Bridge, which separates the viewer from the buildings on the other side of the river. Despite their distance, the dramatic perspective makes them dwarf the spectator. On the near side, a black scaffolding of lines represents a construction of wooden piles used for mooring. Virtue has rigorously observed this construction and placed each element with painstaking accuracy. It provides an area of abstract stability, whilst hinting subtly at the lives of those anonymous men who put them there.

The paintings made from drawings executed from the roof of Somerset House are almost bird's-eye views. We look down upon the great curving arc of the river and can follow its progress as it sweeps towards the distance. The broad sweep across the London skyline gives these pictures an epic, visionary quality although they never lose touch with visual reality.

Like St Paul's, the Thames has a powerful symbolism. Rivers have an unavoidable and almost clichéd connotations of the journey through life and of our common mortality. Although Virtue is reluctant to have his own paintings discussed in a similar metaphorical way, the black sheets of paint with which he shrouds the city's buildings powerfully elicit a sense of the inevitable. The great metropolis is literally and metaphorically overshadowed by the irresistible dark forces that loom above it, and is split in two by the band of white energy that flows through it.

[Virtue, John W004. Landscape No. 706, 2003-4. Oil, acrylic, black ink and shellac on canvas. 244 x 244 cm. Hiscox plc, London. © John Virtue. Photo The National Gallery, London]

Whilst working towards his National Gallery exhibition, Virtue read Peter Ackroyd's acclaimed *London:The Biography*. Ackroyd, like Charles Dickens before him, understands the city as a huge living, breathing and evolving organism. Virtue found Ackroyd's book utterly compelling and admits that it affected the way he viewed the city that had now become his subject.

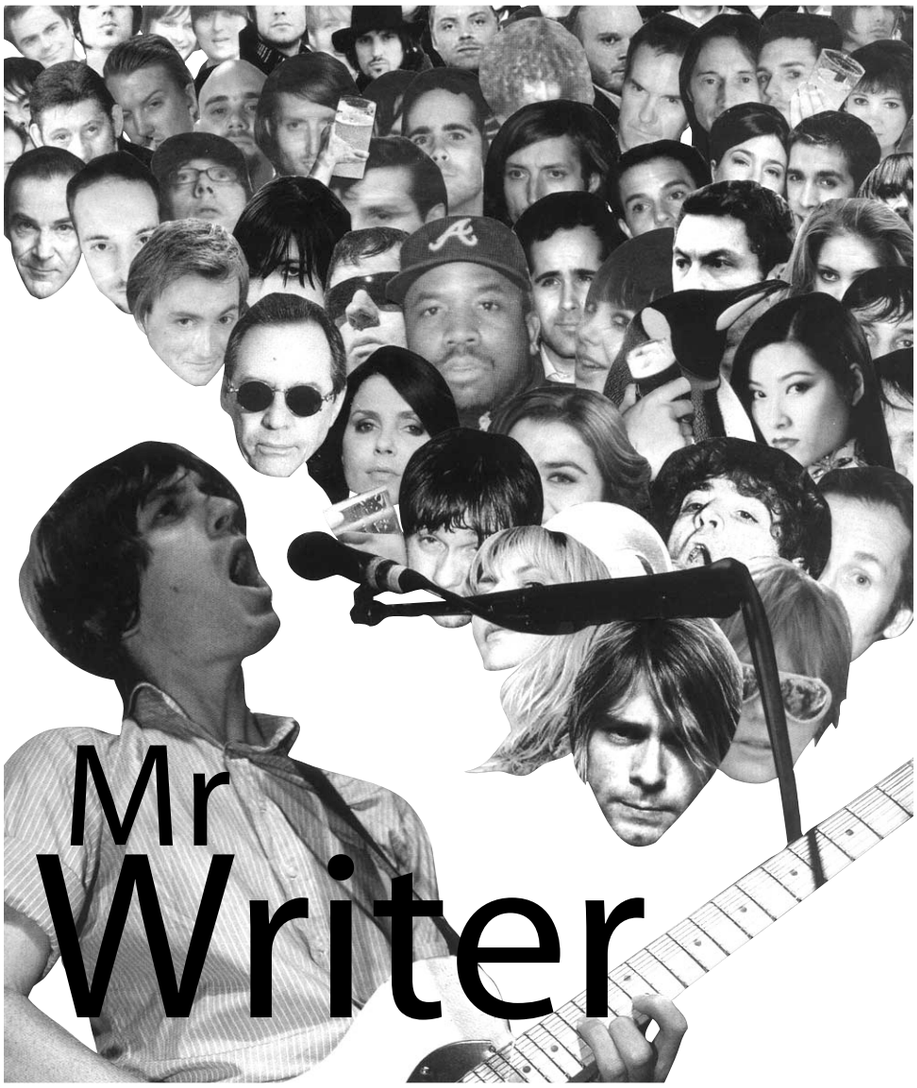
Dickens himself, when writing of London in *Our Mutual Friend*, also uses a visionary language that seems apt to Virtue's paintings: "It was a foggy day in London and the fog was heavy and dark. Animate London, with smarting eyes and irritated lungs, was blinking, wheezing, choking; inanimate London was a sooty spectre, divided in purpose between being visible and invisible, and so being wholly neither."

Dickens is referring to the industrial coal-produced pollution that choked 19th-century London. When making his drawings, Virtue was often struck by the beauty of the sunlight as it struggled to penetrate the pollution of 21st-century London, and this has inevitably found its way into his paintings. Looking at the surface of this new work, the Dickens reference seems especially pertinent. Much of the architecture is indeed "between being visible and invisible". Virtue's method is carefully to delineate all of the buildings, window by window, chimney by chimney. All of this detail might then be completely or partially obscured by veils of black. The process is cyclical: these black layers in turn might then be covered with dense white acrylic, enabling the artist carefully to redraw the architecture, which will once again be buried. He employs a wide variety of mark-making methods. Using the point of a small brush, the fine architectural details that have been noted in the drawings are transcribed with care. On the opposite extreme, a whole bucket of black ink might then be emptied over the picture from a distance of several feet, at times with the painting on the floor.

Virtue's new paintings, like London itself, are built layer upon layer, with previous images buried but still occasionally revealing themselves through the translucency of subsequent layers. A symbolic connection with the history of the city is unavoidable. Each generation of London's inhabitants leaves a mark on its appearance, which either survives for posterity or becomes buried beneath the additions of later generations.

The city has been burnt and rebuilt, blitzed and rebuilt, with the only constant feature being the River Thames. During his time at the National Gallery, the Thames became Virtue's leitmotif. The fluctuating weather and the changing London skyline, marked during this two-year period by the completion of Swiss Re 'Gherkin' Tower, provide a contrast with the constantly-flowing river, which is the one note of permanence. It was of course alongside that river that the first human inhabitants of what was to become London chose to make their settlements, thereby beginning the countless generations who have contributed to its development and evolution. Virtue's paintings record that evolution and at the same time, become part of it.

***Colin Wiggins is the curator of the exhibition* John Virtue: London Paintings, *running at the National Gallery until June 5th. He is also co-author of* John Virtue: London Paintings**



Mr Writer

MARCUS LEROUX finds it difficult to tell it like it really is

'WRITING ABOUT MUSIC," Elvis Costello famously said, "is like dancing about architecture."

It's a stinging slight to those of us who have ever written – or, indeed, read – about music. It renders the whole exercise futile and fatuous. Our response to music is involuntary and occasionally akratic. Writing is an exercise of the intellect, and reading is an undoubtedly cerebral activity. The same can not be said of our response to music, unless we admit to thinking with parts of our body we shouldn't. In the face of the immediacy of our reaction to melody and rhythm, the written word is foreign and plastic.

Even those who set out merely to describe music (perhaps as Pevsner described buildings) will be defeated. Think of any piece of music. After being told even the most specific details – the time signature, key, the instruments used – will you ever be any closer to imagining what it sounds like?

It seems that whatever the spurious motivation of the author (the 'reviewer' or, for those with a loftier self-image, 'critic'), the result is invariably redundant. The same might be said of any attempt to explain, describe or evaluate a work of art. It brings to mind Wilde's aphorism: "There are two ways of disliking art. … One is to dislike it. The other is to like it rationally"

Yet, a difficulty unique to writing about music is that in writing about literature you can quote, in writing about architecture you can produce pictures. This distance between the subject and the writing occasionally causes a jarring effect when one finally hears a song. It dawns on you how ill-fitting, or, indeed, inane the original review was. This, however, is where new technology comes galloping to the rescue. On the internet words and music can happily cohabit. The purest example of this is the MP3 blog (my particular favourite is *www.3hive.com*), where one can, with the click of a mouse, listen to music being obsessed over. A neat comparison is found with podcasters – if podcasting is the new pirate radio, then MP3 blogging is the new rock journalism.

And how ironic it is, too. The scribes who were decrying the death of music at the onset of the digital age are unaware the very same technology has breathed life into their trade. At the onset of the digital age the death knell of the album was sounded. As we become increasingly used to single-song digital formats, and as music-listening becomes increasingly embedded in busy lifestyles, intelligent discussion of popular music seems ever more distant. It makes sense: our music-listening patterns come to be defined by our lifestyle, not vice-versa. A song is just a song. Something to make commuting or ironing or exercise more bearable; a method of alleviating life's humdrum monotony. This song's good for working to; this one for jogging to. It's the musical equivalent of buying a painting because it matches your sofa. If this is all that music amounts to, then we can only hope to enthuse about a song in the same manner as we would about wallpaper. Would anybody write about architecture – let alone dance about it – if they genuinely thought that a house was a machine for living in?

Yet the music press are slowly coming to grips with this by developing their web presence, offering free downloads, and generally being more aware of music in non-traditional formats. Tellingly, Danger Mouse's *Gray Album*, a bootleg which was, for legal reasons, only available to download, made numerous magazines' 'albums of 2004'. Similarly, Wilco, whose adventurous *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* was a trail blazing internet success when released online because Warner Bros thought it insufficiently radio-friendly for CD, proved that people are willing to have challenging music on their MP3 players and laptops. Yet new publications like Haymarket's *Rip and Burn* mark an abject failure to grasp the difficulties and opportunities raised by the 'download generation'. By offering a traditional magazine based on the new formats of music they offer you the worst of both worlds.

The way we listen to music will continue to change. And so too will the way we read about it. In the same way that dog-eared vinyl has now become the domain of retro enthusiasts and collectors, so to will dog-eared copies of the *NME*. In the meantime, out of the tension between the music itself and the hopelessness of writing about it, the best journalism about music will spring. This is physically manifested in an iconic piece of rock journalism by Lester Bangs, entitled "My night of ecstasy with the J. Geils Band", where he is challenged by the band to 'do his thing' on stage with them. Bangs, in a self-aware bout of egomania, takes them up on it. He gets on stage with them, and rhythmically hammers away on his amped-up typewriter, before smashing it to pieces as the set reaches its crescendo.

Perhaps Costello had Lester Bangs in mind. As Bangs himself put it: "For is not every rock writer a frustrated rock star, and didn't I deserve my fifteen minutes of instant celebrityhood?"

Marcus Leroux writes for **The Observer Music Monthly**

[Illustration Hannah Marks]

Cultural Deficit

TOM LITTLER bemoans the removal of Arts funding and asks what this means for widening access to culture in Britain

ONE OF THE most violent rows I have ever had with my close friends was on holiday in Brittany three years ago. Our drunken conversation somehow meandered round to the subject of arts funding. How disgusting it was, said my friend, that public money was given to the Royal Opera House, when the only people who went in the first place were "rich arty toffs" like me. Presumably, I snapped back, my friend wanted to keep the ROH for the rich arty toffs: without any public money only the wealthiest city bankers would be there. And so it went on along well-known, predictable lines. My friend accused me of being an elitist with my head in the clouds; I duly called him a Philistine with a chip on his shoulder.

The decision taken in December 2004 by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to freeze arts funding is not disastrous, but it

[Illustration Nick Hayes]

is deplorable. The arts industry in Britain is booming after several years of relative financial security. After the post-9/11 slump, the Americans and Japanese are now back in London and our theatres, concert halls, art galleries and opera houses are full again. Artists are able to stage more experimental work, and we are moving back to the cutting edge of the global culture scene, which is where we belong. The real-terms £30m cut won't kill the arts but it will have two effects. First it will remove that cutting edge, which exists on a financial tightrope and relies on subsidy. Second, ticket prices will rise again. The director of Arts Council England, which has just cancelled funding for 121 organisations, warned in March: "We cannot do this again".

Over and above these two practical concerns, the decision was symptomatic of an endemic attitude towards the arts. They don't matter; they are at best a harmless bunch of people in long coats and scarves and at their political worst a minor irritation, a fly to be swatted. In the run-up to the election I haven't yet heard a word about arts funding. It's not a popular topic – in fact it's a vote-loser, because it's shrouded in myth. First among these myths is that art is the preserve of the financial elite, Glyndebourne perhaps. But our national museums are now free; our national theatre runs a £10 season all summer; you can stand at the back of our principal opera house for a fiver. You have to be booking a pretty good seat at a pretty posh West End theatre before you encounter the same prices as Premiership football tickets, but does football provoke the same inverse snobbery? Of course not. Ironically enough, most of the shows which command high ticket prices are 'populist' in nature – Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals that pack houses night after night. Even on a student budget, most art in this country is affordable, and so-called 'high art' is even more so.

The idea, then, that the arts are necessarily the preserve of the moneyed middle classes is nonsense. But there is a grain of truth here: audiences are predominantly white, middle-aged, and middle-class. Richard Eyre's diaries from his days as director of the National Theatre reveal his constant worries about where to find 'the new audience', if indeed it exists. The problem is not one of financial reality but social perception. And of course it's naïve to expect a group of teenage kids from the East End to roll up at Covent Garden to pay for their standing places, but the government and media certainly don't help by labelling art elitist.

Very broadly speaking, the American arts are unsubsidised, and work on a long-established tradition of sponsorship, while the European arts are government-funded. That is why one can sit in the front row of the Austrian national theatre for a couple of euros, and hear the Vienna Philharmonic at the Musikverrein for only a little more. In Germany there is a major producing theatre in every town of any size. Classical music thrives in France. In Italy every church is always booked up with concerts and full of ad hoc art exhibitions; operas are staged in tiny villages in the summer. Britain, meanwhile, is stuck in a strange limbo between government subsidy and corporate investment. Business isn't quite prepared to throw its weight behind the arts – sport represents better advertising. The government can't see any advantage to being nice other than making sure it doesn't get slammed on TV by a famous actor.

Let's confront the underlying questions: why should the arts be subsidised? What practical good do they do? Well, a surprising amount. Not only are they a major employer, they also generate an enormous income through tourism and for related industries – cafes, restaurants, pubs, shops. Outside London, many rural communities survive on income from what we now call 'heritage', and venues like the theatre by the Lake in Cumbria have become tourist attractions in their own right. The arts do more in a hidden capacity – a thriving arts industry is indicative of a country on a roll. We only need to contemplate how much poorer a tourist destination London would be if we removed its theatres, galleries, and concert halls in order to realise that these places are far from being a drain on the state; they are in fact an investment – a loss-leader that ultimately enriches.

The real reason why the arts deserve subsidy is more amorphous and, well, arty. It is a reason that will make no sense to hard-headed taxmen, and still less to those people who think the arts are for rich snobs who should pay for their own entertainment. It is that the better our arts are, and the more of us enjoy them, the better our country is and the better we are as people. If we want to live in a cultural desert that is all very well, but it must be a conscious decision to live in that desert.

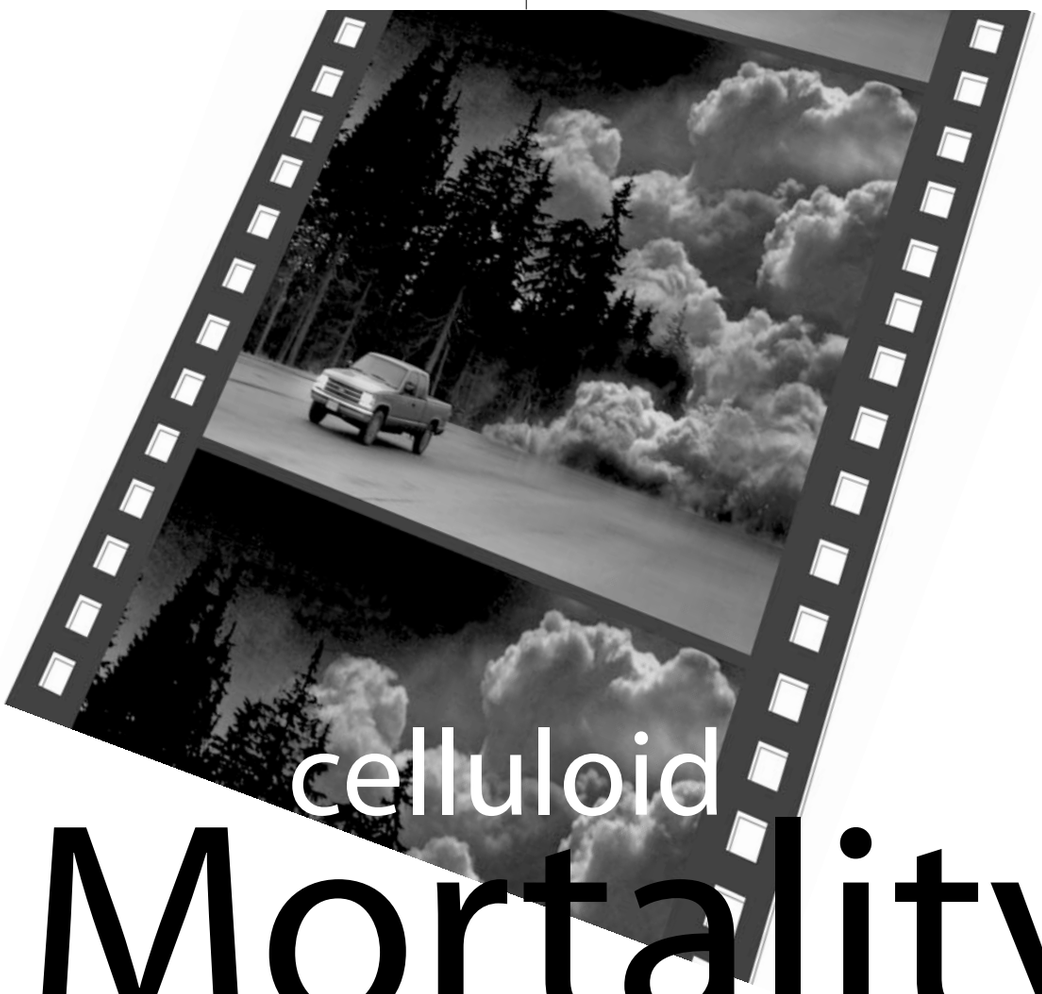
What does art give us? Whether it is a mirror held up to life, or a mode for entertainment, or a tool for attacking the state, art that is worth the name has one overriding function: to ask questions. Great art asks great questions; it makes us see the object as it really is. Without art we think in clichés because our knowledge is all received. We accept that A plus B equals C simply because that is the prevalent and unquestioned belief. Art may be deeply political or it may be entirely personal, but if it is good art it makes us think. No wonder governments don't like it.

David Hare's recent play *Stuff Happens* at the National Theatre was one of a number to interrogate what happened in the run-up to the Iraq war. The last decade has seen a burgeoning of political and so-called 'documentary' theatre – re-enactments, trials, plays based on real events and real characters. Most of it has been even-handed but critical of the status quo. It asks questions. All of that has, ironically, flourished partly because of increases in arts funding. And art still has incredible capacity to shock – witness the Sikh riots spawned by the Birmingham Rep's production of *Bezhti – Dishonour* last year, which showed sexual abuse taking place in a Sikh temple. Writers, composers and visual artists have always asked the toughest questions, and some of the world's greatest art has been born out of the most repressive regimes: Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony has an infamous climax which appears to be a celebration of Russian communism, but on closer inspection the supposed 'triumphal march' is written in a deeply ironical and critical vein.

Art may be deeply political or entirely personal, but if it is good art it makes us think. No wonder governments don't like it

But art does not need to be explicitly 'political' to ask questions. The most classically formed of ballets, the best made play, the most Raphaelite painting – though apparently conservative in form – can still probe the most obscure regions of human life. *Swan Lake*, with its good and bad heroines, asks us how we can tell the difference between good and evil. An apparently trivial Noel Coward play like *Private Lives* investigates what love means and whether we can live with those we love. Raphael's exquisite *Madonna and Child* paintings are not just about aesthetics but about the nature of maternity and the mortal's relationship with the divine.

If the measure of our success as a country is that we are, in Alan Milburn's phrase, going 'forwards not backwards', then what does it mean to go forwards? If it is to develop an increasingly smooth-running economic machine in which we are all slightly more wealthy and healthy, and enjoy slightly better bus services, that is all very well. But nobody will look back on the year 2005 and remember the buses. The arts should stand up for themselves and make the case that they are not a sideshow, but an end in their own right. If our arts are standing still, we are an undeveloped country: a slick machine producing nothing of worth. We are asking no questions and learning nothing; we are going backwards, not forwards. So if the government really does want to live up to its own slogan it can start by giving the arts subsidy back.



celluloid Mortality

WILL BROWN examines the film industry's egotistical portrayal of human life and death

WHAT A VAIN piece of work film is. The world might yet end with a bang rather than a whimper, but mankind will almost certainly expire with the latter.

The recent tsunami that took the lives of hundreds of thousands of humans in Asia was one of the most appalling natural disasters in recent memory. The following is not written in any way to belittle this cataclysm, but merely to reflect the vanity of man and his belief in his own greatness.

Apocalyptic films followed shortly after cinema's inception, for its first century was also the century of the Great War, the Holocaust, Dresden and Nagasaki. Film's infancy and young adulthood was accompanied by mass destruction; it seems natural that films should therefore depict mass destruction. I find it distressing that the moniker 'World War II' is a tacit admission that such events are normal and inevitable for humans, as if WWII were simply the next in a line of World Wars; I am also baffled that people do not openly find the Nagasaki bombing equally or more distressing than the Hiroshima bombing – as if it were too much effort to mention them both.

In addition to man's self-immolation, film has also often depicted man at the mercy of external phenomena: natural disasters, disease, asteroids and alien invaders – the latter being an imaginative result of understanding our own insignificance in an infinite universe; I wonder sometimes whether the universe is in fact much smaller than people imagine.

It stands to reason that some of these disasters would be magnificent. For example, an alien life form capable of reaching Earth would have to be technologically more advanced than us and therefore mightier than us – otherwise we would have reached them first. Similarly, planets are 'destroyed' – in the sense that they no longer exist as previously they had been every day (however long a day is in this poor planet's particular solar system). It could be even worse: we could end up in a gamma-ray burst, a documented cosmic explosion so violent that it emits the energy of 100 million billion Suns. It may be that the current Manhattan Project team is looking into harnessing such power, but one thing is certain: I'd like to see that on film.

But whilst these possibilities are at the very least conceivable, if not wholly feasible, man does love to exaggerate his own mortality. Unless, as I secretly believe, sci-fi films about alien invasions are made to condition us into accepting the forthcoming advance of the little green men, (we have not discovered any alien life forms as yet, except the ones we are holding prisoner in Nevada – their being captured proving that they are not that great).

Nor has an asteroid come along to destroy the Earth recently. One might contend that a meteorite impact caused the demise of the dinosaur and that it could equally cause mankind – or should it be mancruel? – to come to a sticky end. Yes, it is possible. But the last impact (assuming it happened) did not end the world; the world is still here and our existence is proof of the matter.

An interesting delusion: we humans love to believe that the end of us is the end of the world – that somehow we are the world, an equation that goes against our usual stance that we (humans) are in permanent conflict with the world (nature). The meteorite collision, should it ever happen (and I suppose inevitably it must occur if we have a long-sighted enough viewpoint), does not presuppose the end of mankind and certainly not the end of life or of the world. But whilst this vaguely depressing prospect is perhaps an inevitability, this is not my point.

[Illustration Gareth Lloyd]

My point is that whilst a meteorite could certainly in theory wipe us all out, the chances are that we will have already offed ourselves in a much more banal manner, the collective recipients of a species-wide 'Darwin Award'.

In a film like *Outbreak*, we see a terrible disease vaguely similar to Ebola wiping out most of a city. Similarly, *28 Days Later…* sees a load of tree-huggers cause many people's deaths by liberating 'Rage'-infected monkeys. In both films, the 'end of the world' is averted by quarantines. This is all well and good, but to defeat a mega-disease in a fiction film is a revelation of man's vanity when we cannot (or, to evoke the conspiracies again, will not) find a cure for the common cold and influenza, the latter of which possesses strains that are decimating human populations as you read.

Of course, in *The Day After Tomorrow* an enormous tsunami brings New York to its knees (and the rapid onset of a new ice age wipes out the rest of the Northern Hemisphere). This recalls the mega-tsunami at the end of *Deep Impact*, or indeed the one that aliens control at the end of the director's cut of *The Abyss*.

In our minds, it would take a wave the size of the Statue of Liberty (the symbolism is wonderfully ironic) to destroy man. In reality, it takes a tsunami that is significantly smaller to terminate hundreds of thousands of people.

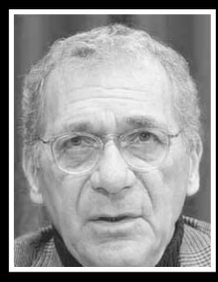
I have overheard people watching footage of the Asian tsunami express their disappointment at its size and implore the dying humans onscreen just to swim to safety. It is hard to get our heads around it, but quite simply it does not take much for us to die – as every person who falls from a ladder or drowns in a bath should, but somehow fails, to remind us.

In the case of December's tsunami, the number of the dead impresses us, not the manner of death itself. Perhaps we also over-hystericise the Holocaust in this sense: in the popular imagination, Pure Evil walked the paths of Auschwitz and Belsen. Pure Evil did walk there, but Pure Evil looks and talks like us and is quite a boring bloke to boot. Vainly we expect that only a diabolical monster, a mega-disaster or a super-disease will kill us; in reality it takes normal but misguided people, water and a cold. Our bodies are not as able as our minds think.

To cower for fear of dying at all moments is pointless: what kind of life would that be? To feel for the victims of and to seek not to repeat natural or human-induced disasters is, of course, right. But let us also remember that, real though the movies look, life is ultimately very different from film.

Will Brown is studying for a D.Phil in Cinemtography at Magdalen College, Oxford

Sydney Pollack in his own words



AS A DIRECTOR, producer and actor, Sydney Pollack's career has spanned over 50 years. His work includes films such as *Out of Africa* (1985,) for which he won an Oscar for directing, *The Quiet American* (1999) starring Michael Cane and most recently *The Interpreter*, released this April. Here Pollack talks about the process of movie making and the purpose of his work.

"THE FIRST THING you ask as a director is: what is this about? The answer to this can't be: the story of a film. The idea of what it's about for me is not something that has to be visible to an audience. But it serves as a superstructure like the studs and the steel girders in a building that are not visible when the building is finished, but which really hold it up. I'm doing a film now, a thriller [*The Interpreter*], so I can say to myself that this picture is about diplomacy versus violence; and that is a picture about one person that believes in the power of words and another person who's totally cynical and believes words are used to lie – like politicians and world leaders – and that action is the only thing that counts. That gives me some sort of structure around which to build a movie. It doesn't mean that I ever say those words, or that I ever let the audience know that's what it's about, but if you were to analyze it you'd know. It's giving me a path to go down.

"Each genre has certain demands, but that doesn't mean that the central concerns can't be similar. I am the same man when I direct whatever it is. I am trying to observe certain rules of the genre but I'm also trying to explore what interests me primarily: men and women and the central argument that separates them – the thing that keeps permanent committed relationships almost impossibly difficult. They happen, but they are always difficult. The greatest love stories have been about irreconcilable obstacles that can't be overcome. *Romeo and Juliet*, or *Tristan and Isolde*, or *Doctor Zhivago*: they do not resolve themselves where the lovers walk into the sunset. It doesn't matter whether I am making a thriller or a comedy, I'm always doing love-stories.

"In all candor, I'd say that I am not a director that enjoys directing. I find it full of too much anxiety to say it is enjoyable. I obviously enjoy having made a movie I enjoy when it's over with, I'm glad I did it, I'm happy that I did it. But the process itself seems extremely difficult to me and I go through hell every time I make a movie

"To be a good director you have to have patience; you have to be fluid inside your own personality in the sense that you have to be all of the characters. You can't take sides. You have to be the man and the woman and the crook and the bad guy and so on to make a really complex film that reflects life in some way. But you need to be able to have the kind of imagination that allows you to be somebody else, completely. And that's not always easy.

"You also have to have lots of stamina as a director. I have stamina because one life isn't really enough. Being one person isn't being enough, for me. I am just one person at a time, I have one age, one family, one marriage I have one relationship: I want more than that. Making films is two years out of my life and a way of living with a whole other group of people and becoming them in a way and that broadens my life enormously. It's a way of vicariously becoming all these other people and seeing the world through their eyes; and that's a very enriching experience.

"I think film directors of my generation are somewhat saddened by the industry's consolidation– there are a lot of movies that I have made that I wouldn't be able to make today. The fact that the studios are all owned by multinational corporations has created a sort of Blockbuster mentality where all the studio films are looking to be Blockbuster movies. Whereas the movies of the seventies – let's say that 20 year period from the middle sixties to the middle eighties – was as great a period America has ever had: some of the greatest movies were made because the variety was limitless. Studios were still individual small houses; movies did not have to make 100 million dollars prior to *Jaws*. A movie would cost two or three million dollars and if it earned back ten million dollars that was hugely profitable. Now everybody in the world has become movie conscious. Everybody knows about movies, everybody knows the grosses of movies, everybody knows the technicians in movies – it's a movie-literal world. I simply think that's kind of fun."

Sydney Pollack was interviewed by Stephan Littger, who is a student at Keble College Oxford. The full interview will be available in book form later this year in The Art of Becoming a Hollywood Director – conversations with 20 Hollywood directors

CROSSWORD

'It's all a question of numbers'

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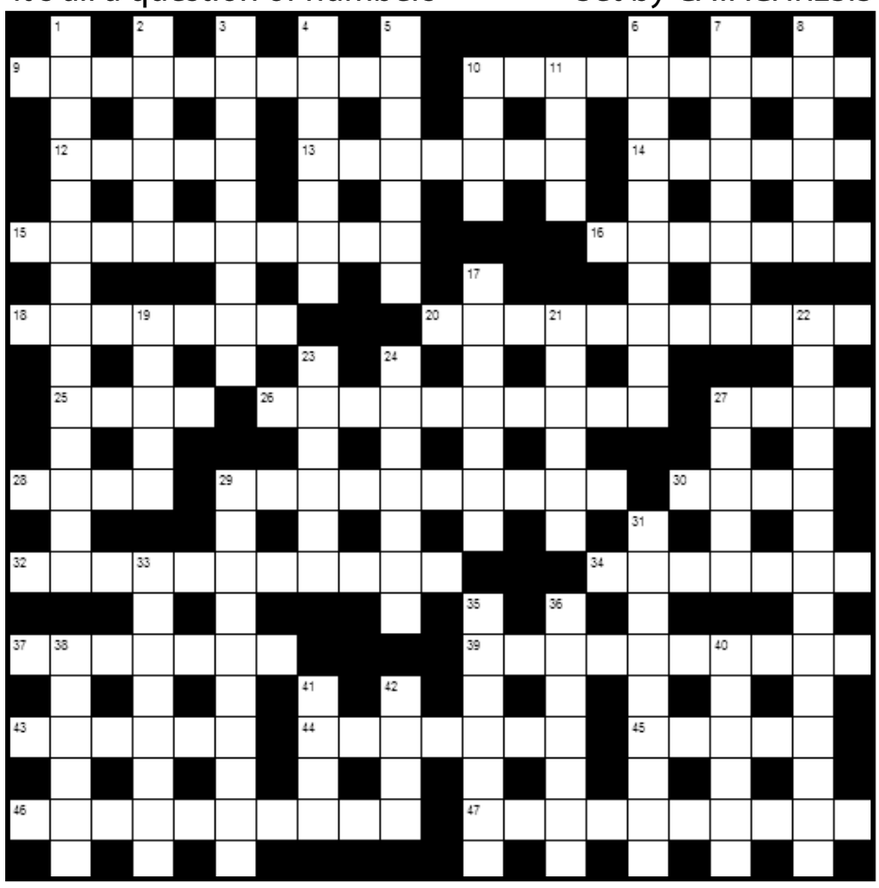

ACROSS

9 Make love to large number – interrupting chess, which is left unfinished – under these? (10)
10 Insubstantial white taken down by number of pawns (10)
12 BBC boss is cleaved by Chinese female – his number's up (5)
13 Log pony jumps has a number of sides (7)
14 US rock band 'Road' – first of numbers is 'Stay Behind' (6)
15 She does numbers – so no great worry (10)
16 Wanting to achieve, wanting end to this number of headaches? (7)
18 Threatened "Leave 'er alone" – 'e gets outnumbered, finally (7)
20 Number of inches of ground traded for money – one about turn by infantryman (4,7)
25 Increase in numbers when Georgia's at home (4)
26 A number's beginning in part of France, which is where it comes from (10)
27 See 42 Down
28 Fruitbat's disheartened by a number of US college boys (4)
29 A portion contains half of number - that's not normal (10)
30 Second of number, with Enlgish heart, is a fruit (4)
32 Study of varying mass numbers is nothing next to a branch of mathematics (11)
34 Retaliation brought about, for example, in an infinite number of years? (7)
37 Fights ending in the Emergency Room are fewer in number (7)
39 Damage of a cable cull can be worked out using numbers (10)
43 Unfashionable number of games of tennis beginning (6)
44 Wishes increasing 18 Across number? (7)
45 Part of a number Etables-sur-Mer's inhabitants might wear (5)
46 Plant grown in a number of counties – and various terraces in West Sussex (10)
47 Jitters permeate National Theatre – strict number of beats in each line! (10)

DOWN

1 Upwards of a thousand pounds mentioned after boss shows aptitude with numbers (4,3,7)
2 Leaders of a cast, twenty in number, gallantly putting on a show (6)
3 Pro took a number left behind (9)
4 Roman number, more fashionable and sprightly (7)
5 Impractical function, smaller in number (7)
6 Old number, following brief, condensed orchestration (5,5)
7 Four years old, May gets ill, having swallowed a number of round things (8)
8 Italian town, birthplace of a number of saints – Donkey being one (6)
10 Number on payslip stands for weight and age (4)
11 'Particles' is one section of Number Comprehension Skills Course (4)
17 Junior collects poems, numbered 1 through 154 by Will (7)
19 Alien captures a number, flying upwards – we don't know if he does this (5)
21 A number do nothing, initially – Achilles is one (6)
22 Formal dress: a number done up in gloves, etc. – hot, dishevelled (7,7)
23 Experience alternatively great number (6)
24 A very shortened number of years is usually the case (7)
27 Two short of standard number, but well on course? (5)
29 Quietly create Personal Identification Number, confusing novice (10)
31 Shaded regions round edge represented by a number (PS: difficult) (9)
33 Machine used for harvesting an endless number – female, right? (8)
35 Spy wraps up unfinished crime, watching the numbers carefully (7)
36 Unhealthy sort of number creates tangle – splendid! (7)
38 More than one in number, all upright in arrangement (6)
40 In accordance with thirst for greater numbers? (6)
41 Leaving number of seconds out of chart of figures? Can do (4)
42 & 27 Across Unusual number of dwarves, likely as not (4,4)

The first correct entry will win a meal for two with wine, courtesy of the Vaults Café: send answers to Charles Brendon at Exeter College, complete with full contact details. Good luck!

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