

The unfinished global revolution: intellectuals and the new politics of international relations

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Abstract. More than a decade after the revolutions of 1989, we can see these as a high point of a new, worldwide and increasingly global wave of democratic revolution and counter-revolution. Violent struggles between the political forces unleashed have produced genocidal wars and stimulated global state formation. These developments present concerned citizens and students of international relations and politics with new challenges. This article criticizes two trends in the responses of political intellectuals in the West: the ‘new anarchism’ of some critical thinkers in the academic discipline of international relations, and ‘yesterday’s radicalism’ which has led some left-wing critics to revive the defence of sovereignty for repressive and genocidal non-Western states. The lecture concludes by outlining an alternative ‘new politics’ of international relations.

Ten years ago, on 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall was breached.¹ It is conventional to say that it ‘fell’, although we know that it was pushed.² A mass movement of the citizens of Leipzig and other cities had spread to Berlin. Thousands who had taken refuge in Budapest were granted permission by the governments of Hungary and East Germany to travel to the West, thus making nonsense of the Wall. These two kinds of popular movement forced the regime to open the symbolic as well as the physical door to the West.³

The revolutions of 1989, in Czechoslovakia and Romania as well as Germany, have been widely understood as marking the end of the Soviet system and of the Cold War order, and the beginning of a transition in east-central Europe. My contention is that they were more than this. They were the high-point of a *worldwide* revolutionary wave of democracy that gathered pace in the late 1980s and has continued to impact on world politics throughout the last decade. The fate of this revolution is now in the balance. Where it is going, and what we can do about it, are the themes of this article.

This wave is not at all confined to Europe. By 1989 it was already evident in the

¹ Based on an inaugural professorial lecture delivered at the University of Sussex on 9 November 1999. I wish to thank Justin Rosenberg and this journal’s reviewers for their helpful comments.

² Ken Booth, *Statecraft and Security: the Cold War and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 353.

³ As it happens, on 9 November 1989 I was checking the proofs of a chapter on the writings of E.P. Thompson, the historian and peace campaigner (who sadly has since died). I took the opportunity to comment, in an after-note, on the vindication of his vision which the overthrow of the Wall represented (‘From Total War to Democratic Peace: Exterminism and Historical Pacifism’, in Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland (eds.), *E. P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), p. 250. For E.P. Thompson’s own comment, see ‘Ends and Histories’ in Mary Kaldor (ed.) *Europe from Below* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 7–26. We do not have to substitute a ‘peace movements’ explanation of the end of the Cold War for more conventional accounts, to acknowledge the significant roles which the peace and democratic movements played.

demands for democratic change in Latin America, where they were beginning to topple that continent's military regimes. These demands had already impelled General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte to seek electoral legitimation for his illegal regime, thus setting (against his intentions) Chile on the path to democracy and Pinochet himself on the road to judicial process. The revolutionary wave was already evident, too, in the movement that overthrew the corrupt regime of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. Above all, it had been demonstrated earlier that year, in the May-June events in Beijing—quite as important as the events of the same months in Paris twenty-one years earlier. This heroic movement set the world's largest country on the road to democratic freedoms, which the regime of Jiang Zemin continues to block.

China reminds us that revolutionary movements bring forward their opposites. Some older waves of counter-revolution, represented by Pinochet and East Germany's Erich Honecker, were coming to an end, but the resilience of others was demonstrated in Tiananmen Square. And resistance did not only occur in China. In Romania, protestors were shot by the troops of Nicolae Ceausescu, before the revolution claimed his and his wife's lives. And little noticed, a new Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic, tore up the autonomy of the Yugoslav province of Kosovo—a usurpation of legitimate institutions quite as drastic as Pinochet's and with probably greater historic consequences.

Looking at the events of 1989 from the vantage of 1999, it is arguable that they led to more durable changes outside the former Soviet bloc than inside. In central Europe, it is true, countries like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic saw largely (although by no means wholly) positive transformations. In the former Soviet Union, the results were obviously worse. Mikhail Gorbachev failed to secure democratic legitimation for his reforms, and the democratic movements of 1989 were stronger in peripheral republics, like the Baltics, than in Russia itself. Democrats were strong enough to defeat the manifest counter-revolutionary attempt to overthrow Gorbachev in 1991, but this was a pyrrhic victory. Power passed to autocratic new leaders like Boris Yeltsin who broke up the Soviet Union, creating often-corrupt new fiefdoms. The depths of the new regime we see in the way that Yeltsin's successor, Vladimir Putin, has used war to consolidate his power.

If the revolutionary wave is largely stalled in much of the former Communist world, it has gathered pace elsewhere. In South Africa in 1989, Nelson Mandela was still waiting to be freed. The subsequent transition, although far from trouble-free, has been a remarkable achievement. In Latin America, a continent in which military dictatorship was endemic is now largely free from it. In Chile—helped (let us note) rather than hindered by the international action against Pinochet—there are the beginnings of justice for the victims of the repression of the 1970s and 1980s. Most remarkable of all has been the gathering transformation in Asia. Although the Chinese regime hangs on—as do the brutal Burmese generals—the torch lit in the Philippines has been passed to mass democratic movements, often led by students, from South Korea to Indonesia.⁴

⁴ Bruce Cumings has argued that the Korean reckoning of 1995 'ultimately went beyond anything in the global transition from authoritarianism that the world has witnessed in the last decade' and that 'the contribution of protest to Korean democracy cannot be overstated': 'Warfare, Security and Democracy in East Asia', in Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey (eds.), *Democracy, Liberalism and War: Rethinking the Democratic Peace Debate* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner, 2000.) This was written before the Indonesian movement really developed.

The echoes of democratic revolution can be found even in the more stable, formally democratic, Western countries. The drastic upheaval of the old party system in Italy is one manifestation; the removal of Thatcher, the Irish peace process and the triumph of the centre-left across Western Europe are others. In the West, democratic movements often take more subtle forms, from the diversion of parliamentary fora at European and regional levels, on the one hand, to social movements for the democratization of everyday life, on the other. The depth of the latter trend should not be underestimated: recall the ignominious failure of Margaret Thatcher's campaign to restore 'Victorian values', in contrast to her success in promoting the deregulation of markets.

I have referred to these varied, tumultuous events as a single new wave of revolution—and counter-revolution. What kind of revolutions are these, and how do we understand their significance? I want to deal with each of these questions in turn. There have been two previous waves of revolution in the twentieth century. In the first quarter of the century, peaking at the end of the First World War, there were *proletarian* revolutions, with powerful repercussions among the peasantry, mainly in Europe. These revolutions were mostly crushed, but in Russia they succeeded in creating the Soviet republic, soon subordinated from within by Stalinist tyranny. In the second and third quarters, peaking at the end of the Second World War, there were *militarized* revolutions with substantial peasant support, which led to the creation of a larger number of communist states worldwide, notably in China.

Today's movements are a new stage of the third wave, of *democratic* revolutions, which can be traced back at least to the earlier East German uprising, in 1953. In the second half of the century, this wave challenged the anti-Communist dictatorships of southern Europe and the Third World—dictatorships supported by the Cold War West—as well as the bureaucratic Communist states left by the earlier two waves.⁵ The first high point of this wave was the international movement of 1968, which challenged authoritarianism and arbitrary power in all three segments of the Cold War world. Students remain a key social group in all of these movements, as they were when my own generation occupied the colleges at the time of the Vietnam War.

Towards the global-democratic revolution

It is time to rescue the worldwide democratic revolution from the 'enormous condescension' (to use Thompson's phrase from another context⁶) from which it suffers in the elite literature of both the liberal centre and the left—who should know better. According to liberals like Francis Fukuyama, the remarkable transformation—through which a majority of all people now live in states with some sort of political democracy—represents the inexorable triumph of Western and indeed

⁵ In a more fundamental historical sense, of course, the contemporary wave of democratic revolution is a continuation of the democratic revolution of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Ultimately, neither the proletarian nor the militarized form of the 'socialist' revolution succeeded in surpassing the scope of the democratic revolution in which socialism originated. With their failures, we have been returned to historic democratic tasks.

⁶ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1968), p. 3.

American values.⁷ In this process of ‘democratization’, the lives sacrificed by citizens of ‘democratizing’ countries, to overthrow regimes that were often supported until recently by American money and arms, apparently count for little.

The left-wing version of this condescension is just as pernicious. According to this, democratic upheavals don’t count as revolutions, because they lead to the very political system advocated by the West, they don’t replace capitalism by socialism (if anything, the reverse), and they don’t put a revolutionary party into power. To cap it all, the United States often has the gall to support democratic movements against the very authoritarian regimes it previously supported, and worse still to support movements against surviving Communist and post-Communist ruling parties. All of this makes today’s democratic movements rather suspect to some people on the left, and certainly discounts them as a central agency of historical change.

Thus for Eric Hobsbawm, ‘the world at the end of the Short Twentieth Century is in a state of social breakdown rather than revolutionary crisis ...’⁸ For Fred Halliday, the revolutions of 1989 (and, for that matter, 1956 and 1968) don’t really count. There is a ‘permanence of unrest’, but the agenda of change which the classic revolutions inaugurated may now be achieved through reform.⁹ Perry Anderson is realistic enough to recognize that democratic movements offer an alternative perspective on the last decade to that of neo-liberal hegemony: ‘In a longer perspective, a more sanguine reading of the time can be made. This, after all, has also been a period in which the Suharto dictatorship has been overthrown in Indonesia, clerical tyranny weakened in Iran, a venal oligarchy ousted in South Africa, assorted generals and their civilian relays brought low in Korea, liberation finally won in East Timor.’¹⁰ But having found the new wave of revolution, Anderson discards it: ‘The spread of democracy as a substitute for socialism, as hope or claim, is mocked by the hollowing of democracy in its capitalist homelands, not to speak of its post-communist adjuncts.’¹¹ Certainly, there are elements of hollowing and manipulation, but there are also many of renewal and contestation, in the West as well as the non-West. And the democratic revolution, although it offers no glamorous seizure of power or expropriation of capital, may be all the better for its more modest modes of advance. It has not led to totalitarianism and mass death, as did the discredited waves of both proletarian revolution and guerrilla warfare. One would think that the enormity of Communism’s record, from Stalin to Mao and Pol Pot, might have held Anderson back from his quick dismissal of democratic transformation.

For these prominent analysts, schooled in earlier Marxist traditions, this is not therefore a change in the character of revolution, but a transformation of revolution into something else. However, there are four reasons for insisting on the revolutionary character of contemporary democratic movements. First, they involve challenges to national structures of authoritarian state power quite as fundamental

⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992).

⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), p. 459, quoted with approval by Robert Cox, ‘Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium: Prospects for an Alternative World Order’, *Review of International Studies*, 25:1, p. 3.

⁹ Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 334–5. It would be a caricature to claim that his study is based in any simple way on the assumptions elaborated in the penultimate paragraph. But his failure to deal seriously with the democratic revolutions of our times seems to owe something to each of them.

¹⁰ Perry Anderson, ‘Renewals’, *New Left Review* II:1, 2000, p. 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

as those made by classic revolutions. Second, they are rooted in widespread popular agency and deep-rooted aspirations, in a similar way to previous historic upheavals. Third, they are connected to fundamental changes not only in national structures but also in international relations, and in the ways these two are connected. And last but not least, the changes that they produce show every sign of durable impact on the forms and character of power. Certainly, these are not fundamental socioeconomic revolutions, but they represent historic political transformations.

Thus democratic transformation is not only revolutionary, but played a crucial part in breaking down the Cold War system of rival state-blocs.¹² Moreover, the character of the revolutionary wave has been transformed by the new international conditions in which it now operates. This movement always showed the potential to spill over into each and every state, invoking universal principles. However, before 1989 its actions were framed within the Cold War division of the world. There was no way in which democratic movements within the Soviet bloc could receive large-scale, practical assistance from the West, or in which the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights could be implemented in the Third World client states of either bloc. Today this is beginning to change: democratic movements are not only worldwide in scope and international in their repercussions, but also *global* in consciousness.

Since 'worldwide', 'international' and 'global' are often held to mean the same thing, let me propose ways of distinguishing them. Worldwide relations connect people around the world: they cross boundaries but do not necessarily negate them.¹³ International relations are between national units of state and society. Global relations, in contrast, are based on the consciousness of living in a common social sphere. Their first form is the understanding that we share a common natural environment. The second is that we live in a highly interconnected world.¹⁴ The third is that we share basic common values. Much argument fails to move beyond the first and especially the second of these meanings. However only with the recognition of all three elements has globality arrived at its fullest meaning, of human commonality.¹⁵

The roots of globality lie, therefore, in increasingly common world experiences. Globality is not, as commonly suggested, about how we all consume the same dross of worldwide commerce, Cokes and Big Macs. It is fundamentally about how experiences like world wars, the Holocaust and the threat of nuclear annihilation have made us aware of the common fragility of human existence. It is about how standards of democratic accountability and human rights are coming to be seen not as exclusive preserves of rich Westerners, but entitlements of all. Out of these

¹² The Cold War system itself represented a substantial evolution from the inter-imperial state system of the earlier stages of modernity, under the impact of world war and the revolutionary wave of 1944–45. I deal with these issues in *Theory of the Global State: Globality as Unfinished Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), ch. 3.

¹³ Worldwide relations are thus an extensive form of what are sometimes called transnational relations.

¹⁴ This is of course the most common definition, as in Anthony Giddens' assertion that 'globalization can ... be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.' *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), p. 64.

¹⁵ A fuller discussion of these distinctions will be found in chapter 1 of *The Global State*. For an earlier, although in some ways quite different, discussion of globality see Martin Albrow, *The Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996).

concerns has come a more concrete reinforcement of the universalistic tendency of modern thought, hitherto fundamentally compromised by the national rivalries of racially based Western empires. The growing sense of common values has informed global consciousness and institutions ever since the last major turning point in 1945, but it has been deformed up till now by the rivalries of Cold War *blocs*. It took the overthrow of the Cold War order, therefore, to turn this consciousness from an abstract into a more practical form.

It is in this sense that the democratic revolution is now becoming global. Where people seek democratic change, they appeal in an increasingly concrete way to common standards and institutions. Many (if not all) who fight for accountability and freedoms at a national level now locate these ends within a global context: universal values and world political and legal institutions. Globality does not make the national or international redundant: indeed the nation, and its place in international order, remains one of the universals to which marginalized groups appeal. However our understandings of the nation and international relations are beginning to be transformed by seeing them in a global context. International links and ‘cosmopolitan nations’¹⁶ can then be seen as building blocks of globality.

Some reject the idea of common global values because their expressions are mostly Western in origin. However, all world religions contain recognitions of human commonality. The attempt to assert that there is a ‘clash of civilizations’¹⁷, stronger than those things pulling us together, is not supported by worldwide evidence. Go to Teheran, first centre of the Islamic revolution: our counterparts in universities there are trying to connect to global, even Western, politics and culture. Go to Beijing, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur or Rangoon, and see whether students and academics will give up ideals of democracy and human rights for the ‘Asian values’ proclaimed by their rulers. Of course, people interpret common values in the contexts of nationality and religion, and they often have justified suspicions of Western leaders and world institutions. But none of this negates the strong drive towards commonality, which means that we can talk of the wave of *global-democratic revolution*.

These points are not merely of abstract importance. They have a life-or-death meaning for many people in non-Western regions. If you are Timorese and have endured a quarter of a century of oppression, your national aspirations and global values are not divisible. The people who will tell you about national *as opposed to* Western values are those who will burn down your village, kill members of your family, and disregard your vote. The same is true, of course, for the Kosovo Albanians or the Iraqi Kurds. For the most oppressed peoples, like the student campaigners in the capital cities, the democratic revolution is framed within a global commonality of values.¹⁸

¹⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), pp. 130–2: this term makes partial sense, at least, of trends in places as far apart as South Africa and Britain, although both trend and concept are far from uncontested.

¹⁷ This increasingly notorious term is, of course, from Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

¹⁸ Of course, many leaders of secessionist movements are opportunist in their espousal of democracy; left to their own devices they often introduce new forms of national and other oppression.

Genocidal war and global state-building

How this global-democratic revolution relates to relations between states is also important, in theory and practice. Traditionally, revolution has been understood as a question of political sociology, relations between states as the subject of international relations. Of course people have recognized how the two affect each other: revolutions have always had repercussions for relations between states, and international relations, especially wars, are part of the conditions for revolution.¹⁹

Today, because of structural changes that are partly products of the new democratic movements, the basic compartmentalization underlying these analyses no longer works in the old way. Global-democratic revolution is not just about the form of government within states, but about the shape of world order. Wars, traditionally thought about as being mainly between centres of state power, are now mostly between states and peoples. And yet they are not simply 'civil wars', in the old sense of conflicts within a single state. What Mary Kaldor has called 'new wars' are about the shape of civil society as well as the state.²⁰ They mobilize cross-border alliances of ethnic nationalists, on the one hand, and of civic nationalists with global humanitarians, on the other.

In reality, most wars going on at the turn of the early twenty-first century (and some are not so new) are wars of the anti-democratic, anti-globalist counter-revolution. War is the tool of authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes, in quasi-imperial states like Serbia and Iraq, Indonesia, Turkey and Sudan, and indeed, Russia and China, threatened by democratic movements—and particular by secessionist demands from oppressed minorities which inevitably accompany democratization.²¹ I contend that in the hands of this kind of state machine, war is almost invariably genocidal to some degree. But many question whether atrocities such as those of the Serbian regime in Kosovo amount to 'genocide'.

Clearly our understanding of genocide needs to be deepened.²² The international convention refers to the deliberate destruction of a national, racial, ethnic or religious group 'in whole or in part'.²³ There are two obvious problems in taking this international legal definition as the basis for a full understanding. The first is that it accords a special ontological status to particular kinds of group, so that their destruction is seen as particularly heinous, while that of other kinds of group is not. In any case, episodes of mass slaughter are rarely confined to particular groups of any kind. Genocidal regimes almost invariably target a variety of groups more or

¹⁹ See the classic modern study of these issues, in the context of the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions: Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); also Halliday, *Revolution*.

²⁰ Mary Kaldor, *Old and New Wars: Organized Warfare in the Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999).

²¹ Clearly authoritarian, quasi-imperial states come in many shapes and sizes, and I do not intend to suggest a simple equivalence between the states listed here. There are (highly variable) reform processes, as well as repression, in some of these states. Nevertheless there are important commonalities in their responses to democratic movements and, especially, movements of national minorities. These lead to a growing contrast between major non-Western centres of state power and the democratized West, where secessionist movements are increasingly managed within processes of internationalization. I develop this contrast below, and more fully in ch. 7 of *The Global State*.

²² The following discussion is based on preliminary work for a forthcoming book on war and genocide: see, for example, 'On slaughter', <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/hafa3/slaughter.htm>.

²³ For the full definition see Roy Guttman and David Rieff (eds.), *Crimes of War* (New York: Norton, 1999), p. 142.

less simultaneously (in the case of the Nazis these included communists, the mentally handicapped, Poles and other Slavs, and Roma, as well as Jews). They link social targets to the soldiers and civilians of state enemies whom they kill in more conventional war. They kill people because of their gender (for example, men as potential combatants, women because of the significance of sexual humiliation), age (for example, the young because they are productive, the old because they are 'useless') and social status (for example, the educated and officials as potential leaders, peasants as supporters of resistance). The execution (literally) of centrally defined policies depends, additionally, on the instant decisions of killers 'on the ground'. There is a 'fog' of genocide as much as of war. In short, from the point of view of many victims (a not unimportant consideration for social theory), genocidal killing is deeply arbitrary and indiscriminate. It follows that we should be careful not to give legal or sociological standing to the pseudo-rationalities of murderous practice.

There is another kind of problem, signified by the argument, fudged in the legal definition, over the extent of destruction that qualifies as 'genocide'. Here the Holocaust model has widely lodged a maximalist concept of clinical extermination as a standard that, almost by definition, no other case can meet. This makes it easy for all kinds of people to deny as 'genocide' cases that they find politically inconvenient. However it is clear that episodes of mass killing are always deeply embedded in the social and political relations of which they are outcomes. It makes little sense to separate large-scale killing in any absolute sense from the escalations of social enmity, political exclusion, violence and smaller-scale killing which usually precede it. In this sense we have to recognize organized slaughter as a set of processes that includes more limited killing episodes (sometimes called genocidal massacres), mass expulsions, rape, and terror of many kinds. The overall meaning of this is the attempt to assert the absolute power of the *génocidaires* over that of the target social groups. This is war, not so much with other means as with other enemies: a section or sections of civilian society. Usually it takes place in the context of more recognizable war between political centres.

These problems could lead us to question the very category of genocide. If, however, we attempt to give it a rational meaning, this must include both the *intention* of destroying, through processes that involve organized mass killing, the social power of some kind of human group, together with *results* that include relatively indiscriminate terror and mass slaughter. To say, then, that new wars are genocidal is not to equate them in any simple way with the Holocaust. However, what the Nazis did when they defined international Jewry and other groups as *enemies* alongside more conventional state enemies²⁴ has become the normal model in new wars, even though the ideology, scale, means and extents of killing all differ from the major precedent.

Thus the wars of Saddam Hussein have targeted Kurds, Shia and Marsh Arabs as much as Iran, Kuwait and the West. The wars of Slobodan Milosevic have been fought against Croat, Bosnian Muslim and Albanian civilians—and plural communities like Sarajevo—as much as the Croatian and Bosnian states, the Kosovo Liberation Army and NATO. The *interahamwe* and their political masters declared

²⁴ Lucy Davidowicz, *The War against the Jews* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

war on the Tutsi people as well as the Rwandan Patriotic Front. The means of war have included burning, robbery, torture, incarceration in camps and rape as well as execution and massacre. War has become increasingly genocidal in the sense I have defined. This is true although some of these states have not intended complete extermination of their enemy populations, and even those that have intended something approximating to this have not achieved it—any more, of course, than the Nazis themselves achieved the complete destruction of the Jews in the Holocaust.

It is true that even the Nazis did not invent these tactics. The point is not that today's (or even yesterday's) wars are crueller than those of earlier periods, but that the deliberate destruction of civilian populations has become more than a means of prosecuting interstate war, as it was in the case of Allied strategic bombing in the Second World War.²⁵ Expulsion and mass killing of civilians is often the main point of war for today's authoritarian states, as it was for the Nazis, and indeed for some colonizing wars against indigenous peoples.²⁶ Moreover, since the Holocaust we have a global standard by which to judge these policies. Genocide may have existed before it was named; the naming (however much it raises as well as solves difficult questions of understanding) means that we can now begin to recognize and deal with the challenge to our humanity that slaughter presents.

The fact that genocide is defined by an international convention emphasizes that globality is about common values, not merely in an abstract sense, but in the practical sense of norms, laws and institutions. Looked at sociologically, the international regulation and punishment of war and genocide amount to an instance in the processes of state formation on a global scale. One of Marx's most interesting ideas was that all previous revolutions had always 'perfected this [state] machine instead of smashing it.'²⁷ He thought that the proletarian revolution would be the exception, but historical experience has hardly been kind to this idea. It seems that the tendency of revolutions to encourage the growth of the state may be a general law. I want to examine its significance for the global-democratic revolution.

Several new state forms have resulted from recent struggles between democratic movements and genocidal repression. One is the expansion of international law and legal institutions, especially the tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and the proposed new International Criminal Court. A second is 'humanitarian intervention', which covers a broad range of military and other action by coalitions of states and international organizations, invoking United Nations authority. Its ends range from the provision of humanitarian supplies to threatened communities to the imposition of political settlements in zones of conflict. A third is the idea of the 'international community' of states, an ideological representation in which states are seen as combining for common world interests and in defence of common principles.

²⁵ This form of war could also be said to be genocidal in the sense that the destruction of civilian populations was intended, as a means if not an end in itself, and it resulted in indiscriminate mass killing. The separation of genocide from such 'strategic' slaughter was another problematic element in the 1948 genocide convention, but one which I cannot explore further here.

²⁶ See Michael Mann, 'Authoritarian and Liberal Militarism: A Contribution from Historical Sociology' in Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁷ Karl Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, quoted by Ralph Miliband, 'Marx and the State', in Miliband and John Saville (eds.), *The Socialist Register 1965* (London: Merlin, 1965), p. 290.

These are all developments of a *global layer of state power*.²⁸ Like the rest of this layer, they are constituted internationally, that is, through relations between national state-entities. Global law and legal institutions take the form of international law; global intervention of international intervention; global community of international community. It is apparent, moreover (from the pre-eminent role of Western states) that all three depend on processes of state development in the West itself. Indeed, while the extension of the global layer is supported by many smaller non-Western states, major centres like Russia, China and India are at best reluctant partners. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, there is however no serious counter-weight to the West, and most developments of global institutions depend on Western resources and political will.

The West—in the political sense which includes Japan as well as north America, western Europe and Australasia²⁹—comprises of course a small and declining proportion of the world's population. But its economies account for most wealth and its states for most worldwide state expenditure, military and civilian. Its internationalized structures, from NATO and other military alliances to the IMF, OECD, WTO and Group of Seven, and its regional organization, especially the European Union, give it a worldwide structure of power, to which other state centres can only give grudging assent. Its political model, parliamentary democracy, has finally become convincingly institutionalized across almost all member-states of Western institutions, and the West now promotes rather than opposes its adoption elsewhere.

The worldwide democratic revolution has arrived, however, uninvited by Western statesmen and often a cause of some embarrassment to them. The first post-Cold War generation, George Bush, John Major and François Mitterand, wielded the rhetoric of the 'New World Order' but had few real plans for global reform. When they identified Iraq's seizure of Kuwait as a military challenge, it was largely for old-fashioned strategic reasons. Their aims were international, to restore Kuwait's sovereignty, not global, to institute democracy or protect human rights. 'I don't recall asking the Kurds to mount this particular insurrection' proclaimed Major petulantly as the trails of refugees poured across the mountainsides, demanding protection and spoiling the victory celebrations.³⁰ But before long, these same leaders were eating their words and forging the intervention in Kurdistan—the chief precedent for today's global power-projection.³¹ Major proclaimed 'safe havens' as his very own contribution.³²

²⁸ I prefer this term to looser concepts like 'international organization' and 'global governance' because there is a definite development of state-level international institutions and governance, which is closely linked to the general internationalization of national state institutions centred on the West. If it is true that non-state institutions also play parts in global governance, it is not true that these constitute 'governance without government', as the collection edited by James N. Rosenau and Otto Cziempel, *Governance without Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) suggests.

²⁹ In this sense the contemporary political West only partially coincides with the historic territories of Western civilization, and we should avoid collapsing these two concepts into each other.

³⁰ John Major on ITN, 4 April 1991, quoted in Martin Shaw, *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises: Representing Distant Violence* (London: Pinter, 1996), p. 89.

³¹ Piers Robinson criticizes my *Civil Society and Media* for 'a failure to analyse the policy process itself'. As a result, he argues, I tend 'to privilege the role of the media while ignoring other possible motivations for intervention.' 'The CNN Effect: Can the News Media Drive Foreign Policy?', *Review of International Studies*, 25:2 (1999), p. 306. Since I did not claim to analyse the policy process, I cannot disagree that other factors may have been involved in this. However Robinson himself fails to take the opportunity to demonstrate that 'other possible motivations' were more important in Kurdistan than the media-driven politics of the refugee crisis, which I documented. Thus his criticism remains abstract and the force of my analysis is not seriously dented.

³² Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 212.

The second generation of Western leaders is not much better. In opposition, Bill Clinton took a strong stand against 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia; but he too saw domestic prosperity as the key to success—'It's the economy, stupid', as one of his advisers famously opined. Handed the poisoned chalice of Somalia, the new administration drew negative conclusions from the humiliation of American soldiers there. Many wrote off international intervention worldwide at that point. They were wrong. Before long, similar exposures of Western weakness in Bosnia worked the opposite way, pulling the US towards Dayton and a permanent NATO role in the Balkans. As we all know, 1999 saw dramatic further examples of a united West prepared to use military power, both to protect threatened civilian populations *and* to create new political realities, in Kosovo and Timor—although in both cases only after terrible suffering was inflicted.

However, the ambivalence over the general scope and means of Western policy remains, and can be regarded as, structural. On the one hand, the West's *de facto* world dominance and unrivalled physical and authoritative resources mean that the forces of global-democratic change inevitably seek its support and protection. The weaker the local democratic movement, the more it must depend on worldwide support. Western civil-society organizations may be more reliable allies, but they too depend on the frameworks and finance offered by state institutions, national and international.³³

On the other hand, the West's commitments to global-democratic change are uncertain. In the United States, especially, there is deep-seated opposition to the extension of global institutions, manifested in the scandalous failure to meet its UN dues and the alliance with China to limit the powers of the International Criminal Court. In Europe, while support for international bodies is stronger, there is an inward-looking focus on developing the Union itself. Everywhere, support for global political change is mediated by national electoral politics, which can always work both ways.³⁴

Two other structural problems, partly inherited from the Cold War, reinforce the ambivalent character of Western power in world politics. First, although dominant, the West has serious difficulties in projecting even non-military power directly into the territories of the principal non-Western states. Containing smaller powers like Iraq, Serbia and North Korea, and even managing situations like Somalia and Sierra Leone, have created enormous costs and intractable problems. There is no real question of the West's trying to police Russia or China in the same way. Whatever happens in Kosovo or Timor, there will be little 'humanitarian intervention' in Chechnya or Tibet. This should not prevent the West from using its political and economic levers in these situations. But the West has no alternative but partial coexistence with the main authoritarian states.

This inevitably seems to encourage compromises with arbitrary and corrupt rule. Western leaders slip all too easily into complicity with even the worst local regimes, as Dayton showed. Patterns of collaboration are often inherited from Cold War alliances or compounded by commercial interests. Hence the British state supports

³³ See my discussion in *Civil Society and Media*, pp. 30–70 and 175–8.

³⁴ For example, television coverage can both spur intervention, by highlighting atrocities, and constrain it, by threatening to show the 'body bags' of Western soldiers. See my discussion in *Civil Society and Media*, especially pp. 178–81.

Timorese independence *and* licences arms sales to Indonesia, supports democratic change in China *and* cosies up to Jiang Zemin—all at the same time. The ‘ethical dimension’ to foreign policy is just that—one dimension alongside others, which include the strategic, the commercial, and so on. Michael Mann has explained this theoretically as the ‘polymorphous crystallization’ of state power: different crystallizations dominate different state institutions, so that often ‘the left hand has not known what the right hand is doing’.³⁵

Second, the West’s institutions, forces and *modus operandi* are still largely inherited from the Cold War. When the West finally abandoned its search for compromise with Milosevic, it fell back on a strategy of aerial bombardment inherited from the Second World War *via* Vietnam and Iraq. The so-called ‘revolution in military affairs’ has certainly made bombing less indiscriminate than it was, but even NATO admitted this was a blunt instrument that killed some innocents even as it saved others. Above all, of course, it saved Western soldiers’ lives while risking Serb and Albanian civilians. Here Cold War capability coincided with the electoral imperative to keep body bags off our screens.

If we look at these contradictions in historical perspective, we are in the midst of a great world transformation. State power is not being undermined in any simple general sense, as those who are over-impressed with the advances of world markets and information technology suggest. State power is transforming—becoming globalized rather than weakened.³⁶ A post-imperial, democratic, internationalized Western state can largely mobilize the growing global layer of state. The axis between these two forms the core of a global structure of state power.³⁷

This global-Western state confronts secondary powers with quasi-imperial, semi-authoritarian structures. While powerful in historical terms, the main non-Western states lag greatly behind the West in resources and authority. These states face a democratic momentum sufficiently strong for all but the most repressive regimes to trim. China’s rulers claimed on their fiftieth anniversary that they represent ‘democracy’, and Pakistan’s military regime makes the same boast. More significantly, Boris Yeltsin’s near-monarchical rule could not buck elections; even Milosevic had to master the art of electoral manipulation, and in the end it was his undoing.

Democracy has even been incorporated into the grammar of genocide: homogenous electorates are a prime aim of ‘ethnic cleansing’.³⁸ This is the backhanded compliment that the ugliest form of political practice pays to an ideal that is sweeping much before it. I suspect that in a few decades’ time we will look back on

³⁵ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 80.

³⁶ For a definition of the transformationist view of globalization, see David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathon Perraton, *Global Transformations* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), pp. 7–10.

³⁷ See my ‘The State of Globalization’, *Review of International Political Economy*, 4 (1998), pp. 497–512.

³⁸ Michael Mann, ‘The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing’, *New Left Review*, 232 (1999), and ‘The Polymorphous State and Ethnic Cleansing’ in Stephen Hobden and John Hobson (eds.), *Bringing Historical Sociologies into International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, forthcoming). It is important to recall that democratic elections were held in the republics of Federal Yugoslavia in 1990, after the collapse of Communist dictatorship elsewhere in east-central Europe. These elections played a critical role in the process of break-up, since now each republican elite had a national constituency to play to. The principle of electoral legitimacy was established and ethnic-nationalist parties knew that they had to maintain electoral majorities in their new statelets. This principle continued to prevail in the Dayton division of Bosnia.

today's world and find today's remaining authoritarianisms as anachronistic as we already find the totalitarianisms of Hitler, Stalin and Mao. Not only could democratic institutions become general; the infrastructure of a global state, resulting from today's layer of global institutions and the Western state, may be greatly enhanced.³⁹

The big question is whether we can get from here to there without many more of the wars which have multiplied in recent years—indeed without wars between big nuclear centres of state power. So far the trends towards global order, while striking, have definite limits. The demands of world commerce and communication, as well as democratic movements, partly push in this direction,⁴⁰ but there are powerful opposing interests. We may face decades of conflict between society and states, and if we are even more unfortunate, between state centres too. Contrary to the simpler versions of democratic peace theory,⁴¹ the spread of democracy within national borders does not automatically bring peace. Democratizing processes can actually be very dangerous to those involved—as we have seen in Timor and elsewhere. Only stable national democratic entities within a consolidated global framework are likely to secure a peaceful world.

Limits of the new anarchism⁴² in international relations

I turn now to the responsibilities of scholars and students of international relations and politics towards these issues. We cannot be outside the political field of global-democratic transformation. Indeed across the world, many of our colleagues are in the forefront of movements for change, while all too often, people like us are prime targets of authoritarian power and even genocide. I want therefore to look at the relevance of two kinds of intellectual response to current change. First I discuss some recent theoretical ideas in international relations; second, I consider trends in the wider intellectual and political debate.

It is unfortunate that the gap between the two areas of thought is wide. Despite new Labour's intellectual gurus, in Britain academia and public debate remain mostly worlds apart.⁴³ William Wallace has written recently of his frustration with this situation; I sympathize with his case for political relevance, but I cannot agree with his diagnosis or solutions for the discipline.⁴⁴ For even if, as Michael Nicholson

³⁹ These trends are clearly not inevitable in a simple sense. Theoretically we can envisage other outcomes, including the break-up of the Western state. However there are strong trends towards consolidation, and earlier prophecies of disintegration from both Marxists and realists have so far proved invalid.

⁴⁰ Thus the internationalized global state is developing not only at the levels of military and economic institutions, but also through the harmonization of (especially commercial) law: see Jarrod Wiener, *Globalization and the Harmonization of Law* (London: Pinter, 1999).

⁴¹ For a useful summary and critique see John MacMillan, 'Democracies Don't Fight: A Case of the Wrong Research Agenda', *Review of International Studies*, 22 (1996), pp. 275–99.

⁴² I have refrained prefixing 'anarchism' with the ugly 'neo-' by which new variants of old positions are routinely labelled in International Relations (compare neo-realism, neo-Gramscianism, and so on).

⁴³ The totemic attention given to one or two thinkers, like Anthony Giddens, has hardly reversed the deep-rooted divorce of politics from academia that has developed over decades.

⁴⁴ William Wallace, 'Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 22 (1996), pp. 301–21, and criticism by Ken Booth, 'Discussion: A Reply to Wallace', *Review of International Studies*, 23 (1997), pp. 371–7.

has argued, some of the claims of so-called ‘post-positivism’⁴⁵ in international relations are ‘myths’⁴⁶, the critical theoreticization of international relations was a necessary development. Without it, is difficult to see how the field would have escaped from the constraints of the taken-for-granted ‘realism’ which privileged the ‘national interest’ centred on the truly mythical ‘unitary’ nation-state—or its dogmatic restatement as structural realism.⁴⁷

However the chief use of new political theory in international relations has been to challenge old ideas—like the distinction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the state⁴⁸—rather than to provide substantial new analyses. To my mind historical sociologists like Mann have given us far more usable frameworks for analysing states within power networks which cross the ‘domestic-foreign frontier’⁴⁹—but they too have sometimes been slow to recognize the transformation of world politics.⁵⁰ ‘Philosophical’ critiques will remain salutary so long as we fail to confront the revolutionary transformations of our times.

The full critique that we need is suggested by Marx’s most famous aphorism.⁵¹ To paraphrase: the international relationists have only discussed how to explain and understand the world—the point is to change it.⁵² New realities call not only for new understanding, but also for new political responses, framed historically as well as philosophically. In this sense, ‘post-Westphalian’ political philosophy, premised on the earlier historical reality of a ‘Westphalian’ state, remains a problematic starting-point, sharing too many of the founding assumptions of the dominant traditions.

International relationists have been, for the most part, international anarchists. They have mostly believed not only that the world is, but also that it must necessarily remain divided between sovereign political communities. Whatever their other differences, they have tended to agree that world order can only be constructed on this basis.⁵³ Traditionally, so-called realists saw order as a result of the balance of power in the international system, often centred on the hegemony of a single power such as the United States after 1945. The so-called English School, on the other hand—including my Sussex predecessor, Martin Wight—argued that there must be some sort of shared civilizational understanding (or ‘international society’).⁵⁴

⁴⁵ Steve Smith, ‘Positivism and Beyond’ in Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 11–46.

⁴⁶ Michael Nicholson, ‘The Uses of International Relations’, plenary lecture, British International Studies Association Annual Conference, Sussex, 1998.

⁴⁷ Kenneth Waltz, *The Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979).

⁴⁸ See R.B.J. Walker, *Inside-Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁴⁹ Mann, *The Sources*; the ‘frontier’ idea is from James N. Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ See my polemic, ‘The Historical Sociology of the Future’, against John Hobson’s article ‘The Historical Sociology of the State and the State of Historical Sociology in International Relations’, *Review of International Political Economy*, 5:2, pp. 321–6 and 284–320 respectively.

⁵¹ ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it’, Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, XI, in Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1965), p. 653.

⁵² See Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

⁵³ I have always found puzzling this tendency towards ‘anarchophilia’ (the term is from Barry Buzan and Richard Little, ‘International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations’ in Hobden and Hobson, *Bringing Historical Sociologies into International Relations*).

⁵⁴ Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977); see also Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (London: Macmillan, 1977). Wight’s historically rich writing on state systems

The most fundamental problem with both claims is this. The idea that we have an international system characterized by order jars badly with our understanding of modern history. The extreme violence routinely inflicted by states—through their international relations—on society worldwide is sufficient to bring this notion into question. It is more plausible to see international anarchy as problem than as solution. Recently, international scholarship has increasingly prioritized individual human rights against the claims of states, and has argued for cosmopolitan frameworks for political community.⁵⁵ In these contexts, as Ken Booth has argued, states should be seen more as the source of ‘human wrongs’ than of order.⁵⁶

However the answers to this problem are often sought in bypassing the state, in a position which echoes classical anarchism rather than its international realist mutation. For Booth, for example, in his own inaugural lecture (at Aberystwyth in 1991), ‘No central government deserves much trust. ... Even decent governments are not necessarily mindful of the interests and diversity of all their citizens’. World government is dismissed as an almost totalitarian nightmare: ‘The idea of centralising all power on a world scale is a fearful prospect, and not likely to work’. Security will be created, he proposes, through ‘an anarchical, global “community of communities”’, but the mechanisms for this remain obscure.⁵⁷

Hence anarchism proves to be even more deep-rooted in international relations than first appears. Indeed a similar trend is evident in the Gramscian literature on social movements and civil society. Thus Robert Cox argues for a ‘two track’ strategy:

First, continued participation in electoral politics and industrial action as a means of defensive resistance against the further onslaught of globalization; and secondly, but ultimately more importantly, pursuit of the primary goal of resurrecting a spirit of association in civil society together with a continuing effort by organic intellectuals of social forces to think through and act towards an alternative social order at local, regional and global levels.⁵⁸

The mistakes in this passage are also twofold. First, the myth of globalization as threat or onslaught—which can only be resisted—is combined with the myth of the weakening of the state.⁵⁹ Second, hopes for ‘an alternative social order’ are vested in the ‘resurrection’ of civil society, but Cox himself identifies a fundamental difficulty with this scenario, ‘the still small development of civil society’.⁶⁰ The expansion of civil society is indeed crucial to the long-term consolidation of a worldwide demo-

has set one parameter of the Sussex tradition of international relations. Another is the interest in political economy and civil society, for which see, for example, the essays by current and recent colleagues in my edited book, *Politics and Globalisation: Knowledge, Ethics and Agency* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁵⁵ Notably, Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).

⁵⁶ Ken Booth, ‘Human Wrongs and International Relations’, *International Affairs*, 71, 1995, pp. 103–26. For a further exploration of these issues inspired by critical reflection on Booth’s ideas, see the essays in Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler (eds.), *Human Rights in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁵⁷ Ken Booth, ‘Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice’, *International Affairs*, 67:3 (1991), p. 540.

⁵⁸ Cox, ‘Civil Society’, p. 28.

⁵⁹ For critiques, see Paul Q. Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996) and Held et al., *Global Transformations*.

⁶⁰ Cox, ‘Civil Society’, p. 13.

cratic order. But civil society is not only too weak to take the full weight of global transformation, it is also still too national in form.⁶¹ Moreover, it is theoretically and practically inconceivable that we can advance emancipation without simultaneously transforming state power.⁶²

While Booth explicitly rejects world government, Cox largely avoids the role of internationalized state organizations. He sees nation-states as playing ‘the role of agencies of the global economy’⁶³ and seems incapable either of understanding the global transformations of state power, or envisaging a constructive role for them. Critical international theorists have dug themselves into a hole over this issue. In committing themselves to ‘globalization from below’, as Richard Falk⁶⁴ calls it, they are simply missing political battles that matter in today’s world. Falk is certainly moving towards a new position when he writes:

An immediate goal of those disparate social forces that constitute globalization-from-below is to reinstrumentalize the state to the extent that it redefines its role as mediating between the logic of capital and the priorities of its peoples, including their short-term and longer-term goals.⁶⁵

But this tortuous language is hardly necessary. People’s movements have been on the streets throughout the last decade, trying to make both national and international state organizations responsive and accountable. The real question is: How could this question ever have been marginalized in any serious radical project?

It sometimes seems that critical international theorists have left the state aside.⁶⁶ Critics evacuate the harsher edges of world politics for the soft ‘non-realist’ territory of political economy, gender and civil society. No such refuge is possible, however. Economic and gender inequalities will not be solved so long as the repressive state is untamed. The new international relations will have to formulate its response to the continuing role of organized violence in the world order.

A loose ‘governance without government’⁶⁷ is too easily supported. While Booth is obviously right that all government is imperfect, the differences between ‘relatively decent’ and tyrannical government, both nationally and globally, are absolutely critical. Without addressing the nature of contemporary global state networks, and a serious discussion of the ways in which they can be developed into an adequate global authority framework sustained by and sustaining local democracies, we have hardly begun to fashion a new agenda.

⁶¹ Shaw, *Civil Society and Media*, pp. 30–70 and 175–8.

⁶² It is a theoretical curiosity that new ‘Gramscian’ thought should have been caught in the political economy/civil society trap. Gramsci’s own work was clearly all too aware of the state as the ultimately defining context of political change. For a parallel argument see Randall Germain and Michael Kenny, ‘The New Gramscians’, *Review of International Studies*, 24:1 (1998), pp. 3–28.

⁶³ Cox, ‘Civil Society’, p. 12.

⁶⁴ Richard Falk, *Predatory Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999).

⁶⁵ Falk, pp. 150–51.

⁶⁶ In effect, they have abandoned the state to realism—a serious mistake because realists have never had more than a superficial understanding of these problems. I have developed this argument more fully in ‘The State of International Relations’, in Sarah Owen-Vandersluit (ed.), *State and Identity Construction in International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 2000, forthcoming).

⁶⁷ James N. Rosenau and Otto Czempel (eds.), *Governance without Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

'Yesterday's visions' and the old radicalism

World events repeatedly thrust these issues into our faces, but in the wider public debate too, many—lacking an understanding of the new situation—fall back on old ways of thought. The idea of absolute state sovereignty is resurrected by many who should know better, to defend the autonomy of repressive, even genocidal states. Louise Arbour, retiring Chief Prosecutor of the International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, provided a terse comment on this move. 'Since the creation of this Tribunal, the Rwanda Tribunal, the Rome statute', she says, '... there is now a much more ambitious agenda: the one of peace with justice, where no one can hijack the concept of state sovereignty and use it to guarantee his own impunity. These are yesterday's visions of a peaceful world.'⁶⁸

That these are indeed 'yesterday's visions' is clear from the selective way in which they are used. It is a curious anti-imperialism that attacks the so-called 'imperialism of human rights'⁶⁹ but provides the defence of sovereignty to the imperialism of genocidal oppression.⁷⁰ Something is wrong with the radical tradition, when as distinguished a representative as Edward Said could write of the Kosovo war that what he found 'most distressing' was the 'destruction from the air' wrought by American power⁷¹—not the genocidal massacres by Serbian forces that prompted NATO's (admittedly problematic) response.

Said has reminded us recently of what Thompson called the 'Natopolitan' world, in which many intellectuals were indirectly on the payroll of the CIA.⁷² What he did not acknowledge was its Stalinist counterpart, in which intellectuals sold their souls to the KGB and the Stasi. And there was an anti-Cold War world, in which those who refused the choice of NATO and the Warsaw Pact elaborated their ideas. Although those of us in this intellectual third world turned down the lucre of the blocs, this did not guarantee lasting validity to our ideas.

In the new global era, many characteristic assumptions of the old anti-Cold War left appear increasingly as prejudices. A whole generation has not let go of a mindset, four elements of which are problematic in the new situation. Most fundamental is a residual Third Worldist ideology. According to this, Western, especially American, imperialism is the touchstone for all world politics. Said's anachronistic conclusion about Kosovo was to ask: 'When will the smaller, lesser, weaker peoples realize that this America is to be resisted at all costs, not pandered to or given in to naively?'⁷³ There are strong criticisms to be made of American and NATO policies in Kosovo. However a systematic blindness lies behind the continuing belief that

⁶⁸ *Tribunal Update*, 128 (London: Institute for War and Peace Reporting), 9 June 1999, www.iwpr.net.

⁶⁹ The title of the Special Issue, *New Left Review*, 234 (1999) on Kosovo.

⁷⁰ A prominent representative of this point of view is John Pilger. See, *inter alia*, 'Revealed: The Amazing NATO Plan, Tabled at Rambouillet, to Occupy Yugoslavia', *New Statesman*, 17 May 1999, p. 17.

⁷¹ Edward Said, 'Protecting the Kosovars?', *New Left Review*, 234 (1999), p. 75.

⁷² Edward Said, 'Hey, Mister, You Want Dirty Book?', *London Review of Books*, 21:19, 30 September 1999, p. 54, reviewing Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 1999).

⁷³ Edward Said, 'Protecting the Kosovars?', *New Left Review*, 234 (1999), p. 75.

America is the principal problem, coupled with the failure to recognize the need for international action against genocide.⁷⁴

From this viewpoint, non-Western states are potential sites of resistance, organizers of ‘underdeveloped political economies’⁷⁵ which can contest the dominant form. While sovereignty in general may be regarded as a political form of capitalist social relations⁷⁶, the sovereignty of non-Western states must be defended from Western power. Yet to support Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo, or Chinese over Tibet, gives sustenance to forms of colonial domination deeply mired in blood. Critics find themselves in an inversion of the double standard of which they accuse NATO: if it is right to support Timorese self-determination against Indonesian claims to sovereignty, how can the same right be denied to the Kosovans or Tibetans?⁷⁷

Second, there are echoes of the intellectual left’s ambiguous attitudes to Communism itself. A residual affinity for post-Communist states makes NATO’s attack on rump Yugoslavia particularly shocking.⁷⁸ Left-wing critics were especially offended by NATO’s sidelining of Russia, but ignored how the unstable and self-serving character of the Yeltsin government’s positions made it a unreliable partner.⁷⁹ Indeed Russia’s imperial role in the former Soviet area, reflected in a reluctance to support international justice, makes it a problematic player, however necessary is its participation in European and world security systems.

Third, there is a rather pious attitude to the United Nations, seen as requiring a consensus of the world’s major states to act as a legitimate world centre. Thus left-wing critics were often disingenuous in their criticisms of NATO’s failure to seek UN authorization—ignoring Russian and Chinese determination to veto any action against Yugoslavia, in the light of their own imperial repression in Chechnya, Tibet, and so on. They also ignored, of course, the anachronistic character of the Security Council veto itself.

Finally, there is the generalized pacifism of anti-Cold War politics. To my mind, this is the element of this position with by far the greatest continuing salience. The horror at aerial bombardment has deep roots in modern history—for many older

⁷⁴ There are of course imperial (and neo-colonial) echoes in the new globalism: but it is limiting to ascribe these to continuing American, rather than broader pan-Western, dominance, and even more to ignore the new, partial congruence between Western state interests and worldwide democratic movements.

⁷⁵ This term is used by John MacLean, ‘Towards a Political Economy of Agency in Contemporary International Relations’, in Martin Shaw (ed.), *Politics and Globalisation* (London: Routledge, 1999, forthcoming).

⁷⁶ Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1994).

⁷⁷ Even from a narrow juridical viewpoint it is questionable if the Kosovo case can be regarded as substantially different from that of East Timor. First, Kosovo’s incorporation in Serbia earlier this century had doubtful legitimacy. Second, international decisions to recognize constituent republics of the former Yugoslavia as legitimate bases for independent states, and to exclude Kosovo (an autonomous province with its own representative in the federal presidency) appear arbitrary. Third, the abuse of ‘sovereignty’ and constitutional order by the Serbian-Yugoslav state machine, in flagrant violation of international agreements and principles to which it had subscribed, can be held to invalidate its claims to authority.

⁷⁸ Yugoslavia held, of course, a special place in ‘third camp’ left-wing affections as a state between East and West which had long developed its own more market- and worker-control-oriented model of socialism.

⁷⁹ See for example, Tariq Ali, ‘Springtime for NATO’, *New Left Review*, 234, March-April 1999, pp. 62–72.

people based on childhood experience,⁸⁰ for others resonating from the nuclear threat. Objections to the use of airpower are compounded by complaints about 'the fastidiousness articulated about the loss of American lives', which Said was not alone in finding 'positively revolting'.⁸¹

Nevertheless, this concern too often remains at the level of abstract criticism, and fails to specify the kinds of alternative power-projection that might address the dire situations of people like the Kosovans or Timorese. Indeed critics of bombing also often reject not only other forms of military power, but international political and legal interventions, as mere Western power-projection.⁸² A simple pacifism was only partially viable during the Cold War (even then there were reasonable demands for 'alternative defence policies'). It does little to address the realities of global politics, in which a relatively modest use of military power may protect a threatened civilian population.

Underlying these specific positions, of course, is the continuing socialist critique of a capitalist world. Democratization is also often seen as a new form of Western or American power.⁸³ Ironically, this functionalist approach attributes too much power to the West, and too little to the movements that are forging global-democratic change. It is a very limited sort of socialist understanding that fails to grasp the potential of democracy to open up social reform. This socialism has not learnt the fundamental lesson of its twentieth-century failures: no genuine social change is possible without political democracy and individual freedom.

The new politics of international relations

The new politics of international relations require us, therefore, to go beyond the anti-imperialism of the intellectual left as well as of the semi-anarchist traditions of the academic discipline. We need to recognize three fundamental truths. First, in the twenty-first century people struggling for democratic liberties across the non-Western world are likely to make constant demands on our solidarity. Courageous academics, students and other intellectuals will be in the forefront of these movements. They deserve the unstinting support of intellectuals in the West. Second, the old international thinking in which democratic movements are seen as purely internal to states no longer carries conviction—despite the lingering nostalgia for it on both the American right and the anti-American left. The idea that global principles can and should be enforced worldwide is firmly established in the minds of hundreds of millions of people. This consciousness will become a powerful force in the coming decades. Third, global state-formation is a fact. International institutions are being extended, and (like it or not) they have a symbiotic relation with the major centre of state power, the increasingly internationalized Western conglomerate. The

⁸⁰ For an interesting reflection of this dimension, see the interview with Harold Pinter, *The Observer*, 5 September 1999.

⁸¹ Said, 'Protecting the Kosovors', p. 75.

⁸² For a representative collection, Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman (eds.), *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis* (London: Pluto, 2000), *passim*.

⁸³ See William Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

success of the global-democratic revolutionary wave depends first on how well it is consolidated in each national context—but second, on how thoroughly it is embedded in international networks of power, at the centre of which, inescapably, is the West.

From these political fundamentals, strategic propositions can be derived. First, democratic movements cannot regard non-governmental organizations and civil society as ends in themselves. They must aim to civilize local states, rendering them open, accountable and pluralistic, and curtail the arbitrary and violent exercise of power. Second, democratizing local states is not a separate task from integrating them into global and often Western-centred networks. Reproducing isolated local centres of power carries with it classic dangers of states as centres of war.⁸⁴ Embedding global norms and integrating new state centres with global institutional frameworks are essential to the control of violence. (To put this another way: the proliferation of purely national democracies is not a recipe for peace.)

Third, while the global revolution cannot do without the West and the UN, neither can it rely on them unconditionally. We need these power networks, but we need to tame them too, to make their messy bureaucracies enormously more accountable and sensitive to the needs of society worldwide. This will involve the kind of ‘cosmopolitan democracy’ argued for by David Held.⁸⁵ It will also require us to advance a global *social*-democratic agenda, to address the literally catastrophic scale of world social inequalities. This is not a separate problem: social and economic reform is an essential ingredient of alternatives to warlike and genocidal power; these feed off and reinforce corrupt and criminal political economies. Fourth, if we need the global-Western state, if we want to democratize it and make its institutions friendlier to global peace and justice, we cannot be indifferent to its strategic debates. It matters to develop international political interventions, legal institutions and robust peacekeeping as strategic alternatives to bombing our way through zones of crisis. It matters that international intervention supports pluralist structures, rather than ratifying Bosnia-style *apartheid*.⁸⁶

As political intellectuals in the West, we need to have our eyes on the ball at our feet, but we also need to raise them to the horizon. We need to grasp the historic drama that is transforming worldwide relationships between people and state, as well as between state and state. We need to think about how the turbulence of the global revolution can be consolidated in democratic, pluralist, international networks of both social relations and state authority. We cannot be simply optimistic about this prospect. Sadly, it will require repeated violent political crises to push Western and other governments towards the required restructuring of world institutions.⁸⁷ What I

⁸⁴ The Eritrea-Ethiopia war that began in 1998 is a seemingly textbook case of this problem.

⁸⁵ David Held, *Democracy and Global Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995).

⁸⁶ Likewise, the internal politics of Western elites matter. It makes a difference to halt the regression to isolationist nationalism in American politics. It matters that the European Union should develop into a democratic polity with a globally responsible direction. It matters that the British state, still a pivot of the Western system of power, stays in the hands of outward-looking new social democrats rather than inward-looking old conservatives.

⁸⁷ One of the most troubling aspects of the West’s handling of Kosovo during the 1990s was the failure to respond to peaceful movements for reform, and in contrast the success of the Kosovo Liberation Army in helping to provoke Western military and political intervention. This was a negative lesson for the new century, after the unprecedentedly peaceful revolutions of 1989.

have outlined is a huge challenge; but the alternative is to see the global revolution splutter into partial defeat, or degenerate into new genocidal wars—perhaps even nuclear conflicts. The practical challenge for all concerned citizens, and the theoretical and analytical challenges for students of international relations and politics, are intertwined.

