

CHICAGO SPEECH: SOME SUGGESTIONS

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We now have a decade of experience since the end of the cold war. It has certainly been a less easy time than many people hoped in the natural euphoria that followed the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Our armed forces have been busier than ever – delivering humanitarian aid, deterring attacks on defenceless people, backing up UN resolutions, and occasionally engaging in major wars, as we did in the Gulf in 1991 and are currently doing in the Balkans. In the search for a peace dividend the armed forces of the west were cut back, but they can be cut no further and we are starting to worry about overstretch.

Have the difficulties of the past decade been simply the aftershocks of the end of the cold war, and things will soon settle down, or does it represent a pattern that will extend well into the future?

Many of our problems have been caused by two dangerous and ruthless men – Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosovic. Both have been prepared to wage vicious campaigns against sections of their own community and Saddam even occupied a neighbouring country. As a result of these destructive policies both have brought calamity to their own people. Instead of enjoying its oil wealth Iraq has been reduced to poverty, with political life stultified through fear. Milosovic took over a substantial, ethnically diverse state, well placed to take advantage of new economic opportunities. His drive for ethnic concentration has left him with something much smaller, a ruined economy and soon a ruined military machine.

They have both also made the common mistake of dictators in underestimating the resolve of democracies when aroused and their determination to see things through. Despite all the talk of the softness of western public opinion, over the past few weeks there has been plenty of evidence that ordinary people well understand the importance of

the conflict in which we are now engaged, and the dangers which our fighting men and women must face.

One of the reasons why it is now so important to win this war is to ensure that others do not make the same mistake in the future. That in itself will be one step to ensuring that the next decade will not be as difficult as the past decade.

However another reason why international politics can be so perplexing is that we are having to work out new rules for coping with a very different world. For most of this century we have had to worry about powerful states posing a direct threat to our way of life. Now our concern is with the human problems caused by numerous weak states, created by the dissolution of the old European empires, who often lack the political institutions to cope with the enormous political and economic problems they face.

At the end of this turbulent century the United States has emerged as by far the strongest state, but has no dreams of world conquest and is not seeking colonies. If anything many Americans see no need at all to get involved in the affairs of the rest of the world. America's allies are always both relieved and gratified by its continuing readiness to shoulder the burdens and responsibilities that come with its sole superpower status. We understand that this is something that we have no right to take for granted, and must match with our own efforts. This is the basis for the recent initiative I took with President Chirac of France to look for ways to improve Europe's own defence capability.

As we address world problems, at the NATO summit and G8 meetings, we might be tempted to think back to the clarity and simplicity of the cold war. There were arguments about the right strategy to adopt to contain the Soviet threat but the threat itself was well understood. Now we have the luxury but also the dilemma of choice. Our most vital interests demand very little of us these days. They are not at risk. Yet we can see values that we cherish being violated daily and images of humanitarian distress that touch our hearts and our consciences. We know that these are often symptoms of political upheavals that could have knock on effects that will eventually be felt at home.

The most pressing foreign policy problem of the 1990s has been to identify the circumstances in which we should get actively involved in other peoples' conflicts.

Non-interference in the affairs of other countries has long been considered a basic principle of international order. It is not one that we would want to jettison too readily. One state should not feel that it has the right to change the political system of another, or foment subversion or seize pieces of territory to which it feels that should have some claim. Yet this principle of non-interference must be qualified in important respects.

- Acts of genocide can never be a purely internal matter:
- when oppression produces massive flows of refugees which unsettle neighbouring countries then they can properly be described as 'threats to international peace and security';
- when regimes are based on minority rule they lose legitimacy. This was the foundation for the successful campaign against apartheid in South Africa.

Looking around the world there are many regimes that are undemocratic and engage in barbarous acts. If we wanted to right every wrong that we see in the modern world then we would be doing little else but intervening constantly in the affairs of other countries. We soon would not be able to cope.

So how do we decide whether to intervene? Let me suggest five tests:

1. Are we sure of our case? Many conflicts are confused in their origins. We must not rush in on the basis of media reports of terrible events that lack any context. We must acknowledge that war, as we have seen, is an imperfect instrument for easing humanitarian distress. In the process of doing good innocents can easily get hurt. But war is sometimes the only means of dealing with the political forces ready to inflict such distress, and to ensure that they enjoy no lasting gain.
2. Have we exhausted all diplomatic options? At times we must negotiate with evil-doers and negotiate seriously. This requires enormous clarity about our concerns and

objectives. Of course a desperate desire for compromise can be exploited – but so can a refusal to compromise.

3. On the basis of a practical assessment of the situation, are there military operations that we can sensibly and prudently undertake? At the moment the might of NATO is taking on a relatively small country in the middle of Europe and it has not been easy. We would give false hope if we pretended to be able to deal with every outrage.
4. Are we prepared for then long-term? We have perhaps in the past talked too much of the need for 'exit strategies' for the good reason that we do not want our forces to be tied up indefinitely. But it is a matter of fact that once we have made a commitment to these unfortunate societies we can not simply walk away once the fighting is over. There will always be a job of political and economic reconstruction. Better to stay with moderate numbers of troops than to return for repeat performances with large numbers.
5. Do we have national interests involved? The case for action will always be stronger when national interests are at stake. The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was a blatant aggression that had to be reversed: there is nothing to be ashamed of in pointing out that this took place in a strategically important oil-producing part of the world. The mass expulsion of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo demanded the notice of the rest of the world: it does make a difference that this is taking place in such a combustible part of Europe.

Governments will address these tests in their own way. We do rely on international institutions to help us reach agreement on our views and organise common action. The events of the past month have demonstrated that this is less difficult for generally like-minded governments than is often supposed. There were many gloomy warnings at the start of Allied Force that the alliance could simply not bear the strain of even a short campaign over Kosovo. Milosovic may well have been relying on it. Yet the alliance has held together remarkably well, despite all the disappointments and setbacks, simply because they have a shared conviction that certain forms of barbarity must not be allowed to succeed in modern Europe.

The international institutions – and I am here talking mainly of the UN - that are intended to bring all governments together have had a less happy time. It is important to be clear that at issue here is not the principle of Yugoslav sovereignty. The Security Council determined last year that events in Kosovo constitute a threat to international peace and security. There are differences among the permanent members on the use of force.

These differences, however, have also been evident on Iraq and so go beyond this particular conflict to a worrying breakdown of trust on a number of questions. There is a risk if this goes on of a return to the same sort of deadlock that undermined the effectiveness of the Security Council during the cold war, when the risk of automatic vetoes meant that certain issues were never brought forward for its consideration. I propose that the members of the P5 should meet urgently to consider a new modus vivendi so that confidence in the institution can be restored.

Second, we need to do much more to integrate all the bodies who have to deal with complex emergencies such as Kosovo, which involve both humanitarian assistance and military operations at the same time. I realise that it is important for the aid agencies and concerned NGOs to maintain their independence. On the other hand they often depend on military support to get their job done speedily and efficiently. We need better procedures to manage this relationship and we hope to organise a conference in London later this year to address the lessons learned from the Kosovo experience ...

The western alliance is now at one of the most critical moments in its history. We can not at this point afford debates about abstract points of doctrine. The fighting and the atrocities which prompted it have brought a harsh sense of reality to our discussions. It is the least that we can do over this coming weekend to demonstrate to our people and the people of the Balkans that we are united in our determination to bring this war to a close, and that we are thinking hard about its implications for all our security.