

LIVING with the WORLD

*Let idealism inspire; let realism rule
(It is time to argue with myself)*



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[AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING AS A GLOBAL WATCHDOG](#)

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and handmaidens for costly crusades.**

IS THIS ANOTHER NAZI KIND OF THING?

It is time to face an "unpleasant truth."

I have spent a decade developing this [website](#) exploring the history of American journalism as a global human rights "watchdog."

I am a firm believer in this kind of journalism.

Yet the human rights emphasis, as perpetuated by international organizations, media outlets, the American government, and a host of human rights lobbying groups can be a dangerous and misleading way to view the world.

It can be the stuff of arrogance and propaganda, of intolerance toward other cultures -- and even a force leading toward war.

The American tendency to view the foreign affairs in terms of human rights is for journalism a fundamental [Achilles Heel](#). It distorts our perception of the world and makes us vulnerable to be manipulated into [choirboys](#) and [handmaidens](#) for costly crusades.

Human Rights causes are frequently ways to impose one's values as superior -- or as propaganda coverlet for the interests of individuals, groups, and nations pushing their own agendas.

For countries like the United States human rights abuses can be an excuse to go to war, excellent propaganda for rallying popular support.

Human rights reporting has sometimes [helped lead to war](#).

For individuals a focus on human rights issue is often a moralistic outlook justifying arrogance. It is frequently a substitute for understanding other cultures, other ways of doing things. At best it can be a call for constructive action. At worst a self congratulatory form of [hubris](#).

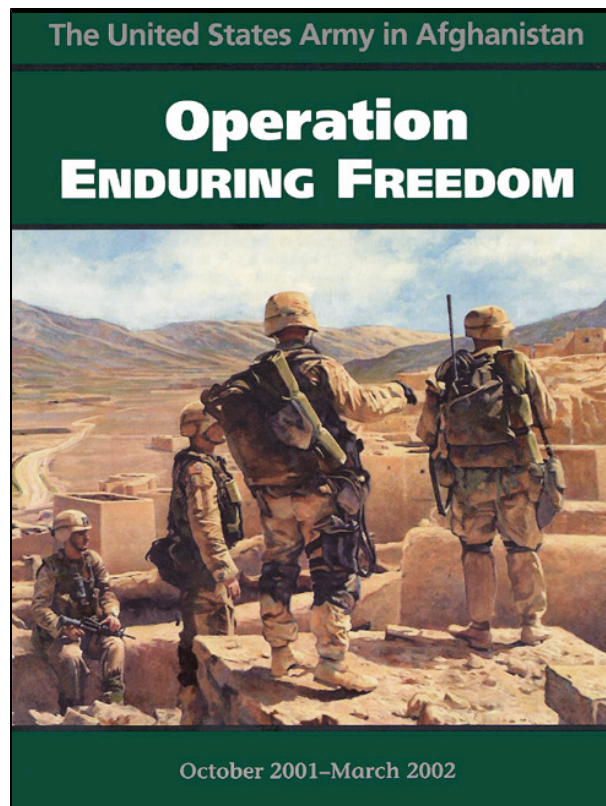
Journalists need to recognize this -- lest they be sucked in as propaganda agents for governments and pressure groups.

This is not to say journalists should be anti-war.

This is not to say that massacres should be unreported. But it is to urge a sense of perspective, care about climbing on moralistic bandwagons, caution about responding with outrage to everything which is different from that with which we are accustomed.

It is quite understandable to report, indeed emphasize, the goal of preventing Al-Qaeda and the Taliban from using Afghanistan from becoming a staging grounds for terror attacks on the American homeland.

It is another thing to portray the American military effort there as an effort to export democracy or protect Afghan women.



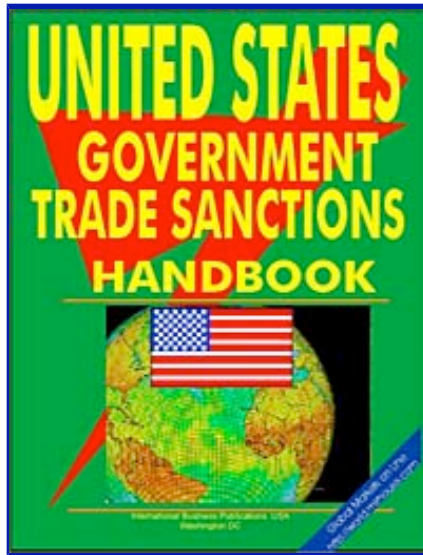
Media coverage of human rights issues indirectly burdens the US economy by supporting lobbying for sanctions by government officials and human rights groups.

Hundreds of US sanctions have been imposed since 1950. Some argue these have opened the door for prosperity for America's commercial competitors while reducing prospects for profitable American trade. This may have been acceptable when the United States was the dominant world economic power. But is it acceptable today as competitors pull ahead and American jobs decline?

Researcher Bryan Early wrote in the March 25, 2009 issue of *The Christian Science Monitor*:

"US allies have tended to trade far more with the states it has sanctioned than other countries. Part of this is because the US has lots of commercially competitive allies. It is also because these states use their alliances with the US as political cover to shield their companies from American retaliation. In effect, this means that the US subsidizes the economies of its allies to the detriment of its own businesses."

Click this [summary](#) of the case against human rights and other sanctions by the Libertarian Cato Institute.



[US Trade Sanction Summary](#)

It is important that we do not let ourselves be brainwashed by journalism into a feeling we are above history, that we are uniquely moral, that our will should be accepted by the rest of the world. Often we may need to settle, without disillusionment, for more limited results.

It can be a responsibility of journalism to strengthen a realistic awareness of the outside world.

Not to reinforce the prejudices, self righteousness of those who would mount unrealistic overseas crusades harmful to America's safety and economic interests -- and dangerous for the rest of the world.

It is in the nature of American journalism, as an expression of nationalism, that it will become an instrument of interests and agendas masquerading under the slogan of democracy and human rights. Awareness of this can limit the damage.



From William McKinley to Woodrow Wilson to George Bush, Christian civilization, human rights, and or promotion of democracy were fig leaves for [going to war](#).

We can see how Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson manipulated journalists in support for defending democracy in South Vietnam.

We can see how President George W. Bush manipulated journalists in the early days of the Iraq war to support the American invasion partly to bring democracy (human rights) to the Middle East.

During the Mexican War [American journalists](#) promoted the heroic military campaigns of American soldiers as a righteous campaign against medieval Catholic military dictatorship led by General Santa Anna.



GENERAL SANTA ANNA
[SANTA ANNA SEA CHANTEY](#)
[SEA CHANTEY MODERN ANIME VERSION](#)

During the [Spanish American War](#) "on team" American journalists sometimes picked up rifles and charged against Spanish soldiers to help banish Spanish Catholic medieval tyranny from the hemisphere.

American newspapers climbed aboard Woodrow Wilson's World War I campaign against anti-democratic European monarchies in hopes "to make the world safe for democracy."

By the time of the Cold War the anti-communist crusade of American foreign policy merged with a human rights call for freedom in Soviet occupied countries. American media adopted the framework lock stock and barrel.

The natural nationalistic tendency of media to rally public support for American wars got a massive boost from the World War II crusade against Nazi genocide.



DACHAU EXTERMINATION CAMP OVEN

The killing of millions of Jews became an "archetypical" symbol of the need for media to detect, publicize and "watchdog" any similar abuses happening anyplace in the world. After all governments and media had a woeful record between the world wars in detecting, publicizing and combating atrocities by both Communist and Nazi totalitarians.

Indeed the burden of reporting human rights "violations" seemed to grow with the establishment after World War II of United Nations human rights agencies and human rights lobbies such as Human Rights Watch.

The problem with all this is that a moralistic human rights framework encourage by media encourages a parochial American outlook which is vulnerable to manipulation by cynical politicians and moralistic zealots.

It is time to step back a bit -- and to learn to live with the world as it is -- rather than as we wish it to be.



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