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Cultivating world peace

MUTUALLY-assured destruction, known by its acronym MAD, used to be the insane doctrine of competing superpowers in the nuclear age. But it isn't over yet. For too many countries, the threat of inflicting extinction on their enemies, if not the human race, remains the deterrent of choice. Given this scary scenario, the only sensible thing to do is to work for peace. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad spoke for millions of peace-loving people when he called on the world, especially the powerful nations, to nurture a culture of peace and abandon war as an instrument of national policy.

As long as strong nations can bully, dominate and exploit the weak, the world will never be peaceful. The weak will feel insecure and oppressed and will try to acquire whatever means they can to fight back. The powerful countries, fearful of the weaker nations' vengeance, will arm themselves with even more firepower. This is a vicious cycle of violence and war which feeds on mutual fear and distrust. The only way to break the cycle is to start from square one by advocating peace, especially in the nations that have convinced themselves of the contradiction that peace can only be won by a readiness for war. People must be taught from a young age to abhor violence, uphold tolerance and respect the rights of others.

Sadly, whatever progress has been made towards world peace is being undermined by the unilateralist tendencies of the United States and its allies. Despite its shortcomings, the United Nations is the only truly international force for law and order. There can be no lasting peace if weaker nations do not feel safe from aggression and if their sovereign rights are subject to the will of the mighty. The UN's role will be seriously weakened if the stronger nations abjure it. The powerful few must listen to the democratic voice of the majority and work through the UN if there is to be progress in the negotiated resolution of conflicts. By confining the conduct of international relations to the premise that might is right, unilateralism poses a grave danger to world peace.