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Waging peace

IT is an illuminating observation. According to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Third World War, already in motion, is a war waged by peace-loving peoples against perceptions of evil.

The engine that keeps this war in motion is the refusal to compromise - a senseless obstinacy that arises from both the warring sides' conviction of their respective righteousness. But no one will win this war. The only way out, said Dr Mahathir, is a compromise and a win-win situation is possible but only if the root causes of terrorism are identified and resolved.

Security in the post 9/11 world should be built on the power of diplomacy, transparent global governance and policies that reverse the world's inequities and provide human dignity for all. But the prevailing mindset is one that builds security on global military dominance, indefinite reliance on nuclear weapons and the threat to start pre-emptive wars. This Rumsfeld doctrine of "find and destroy the enemy before they strike" is a dysfunctional strategy for, as Dr Mahathir said, the target is wrong.

The impending war against Iraq would go down in history as the first war fought in the name of nuclear disarmament but, ironically, pursued by a country with more than 10,000 nuclear weapons against one with no demonstrated nuclear weapons. Nor is the world blind to the fact that while America wants to bomb Iraq - as re-asserted by Secretary of State Colin Powell yesterday - it turns a blind eye to Israel's arsenal of 200 nuclear weapons and chooses the diplomacy route on North Korea. The contrast between the "let's-talk-like-gentlemen" in North Korea and Machiavellian power moves in Iraq reveals the bankruptcy of America's war-is-our-only-option notion. It will only invite retaliation from the have-nots of the world.

A new mindset, as urged by Dr Mahathir, is urgently needed. Joblessness, poverty, homelessness, poor education and discrimination should be seen as weapons of mass destruction that must be eliminated. Peace is the precondition of human existence. In the 21st century there must be dignity for all, or there will be security for none.

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