

**THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS
IN FOREIGN POLICY**

Also by Peter R. Baehr

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The Role of Human Rights in Foreign Policy

Peter R. Baehr

*Professor of Human Rights
Leiden University and Utrecht University
and Director of the Netherlands Institute
of Human Rights*

Foreword by Peter Kooijmans

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Foreword

Much has changed in the field of human rights and foreign policy during the last few years. The confrontation between East and West, of which the human rights issue was a preponderant part, has – at least for the time being – disappeared. As a consequence in this relationship, the human rights debate has lost its political overtones. That does not mean, however, that human rights have become less politicized. During the preparation of the World Conference on Human Rights, held in June 1993 in Vienna, the issue of universality or cultural relativism loomed large. And in spite of the fact that in the concluding document of the Conference this controversy apparently was solved by the adoption of a consensus text, the fact that there was no real meeting of minds is evidenced by the controversies about the establishment of the post of High Commissioner of Human Rights during the 1993 session of the UN General Assembly, although the World Conference had recommended this without open opposition.

Moreover, in a number of countries, violations of human rights are either openly perpetrated by the authorities or are wilfully condoned. An active policy – either bilaterally or multilaterally with regard to such violations – is as necessary as it used to be in the past. The establishment of monitoring mechanisms can play a useful role in this respect.

What has become more important than in the past is the promotion of human rights by rendering advisory services. This is not only true for the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, where new Governments have committed themselves to the rule of law, but also in other parts of the world where authoritarian or dictatorial rulers had to make place for democratically elected Governments. This opens new vistas for an active policy focused on a better respect for human rights. For we should realize that respect for human rights is not only a question of political will but that good govern-

ance, which is so closely linked with the human rights issue, asks for a structural approach.

Professor Baehr has meticulously scrutinized the various factors which determine foreign policy in the field of human rights. In doing so he has also taken into account other factors which play a preponderant role in foreign policy. In a world where there are new challenges, but at the same time reasons for serious concern, this book makes thought-provoking reading for all those who have committed themselves to the cause of human rights.

DR PETER KOOIJMANS
*Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands*

Preface

This book is about the relationship between human rights and foreign policy. Part I discusses this relationship in general; part II deals with a number of specific countries and regions.

The perspective of this book is a blend of realism and optimism. Realism means recognition of the fact that human rights are by no means the only consideration guiding foreign policy, plus a full awareness of the fact that human rights are still being violated in many parts of the world. More optimistic is the assumption of the universality of international human rights standards, or of at least a growing consensus in that direction. Non-governmental organizations play a significant role in this. Though written from a 'pro human rights' point of view, a genuine effort has been made to avoid subjective bias in the treatment of the subject. The personal views of the author are expressed in the concluding chapter.

The basis for this book was laid during a fellowship at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS) in Wassenaar in the 1980s, which led to the publication of *Mensenrechten: Bestanddeel van het Buitenlands Beleid*, published in Dutch in 1989 by Boom Meppel. Boom has graciously given permission to use the original Dutch text as a basis for this book. The text has been fully revised and updated. For obvious reasons this is especially true for Chapter 8 which deals with the former Soviet Union.

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PETER R. BAEHR

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