

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT'S PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Richard E. D. Schwartz*

ABSTRACT

FDR promoted U.S. participation in the United Nations in several ways. In this article I focus on his use of mass communication to reach individuals and families in the U.S. In his "fireside chats," he empathically addressed widely experienced problems and then proposed solutions requiring publicly supported governmental actions.

In his first term, that technique gained Roosevelt popular support for the New Deal programs. In his second term, FDR turned the nation's attention to the international situation, drawing on the motivations he had earlier tapped. In the 1940 election, both major parties chose internationalist candidates, and Roosevelt was able in his third term (and brief fourth term) to develop the internationalist idea embodied in the United Nations.

INTRODUCTION

This article explores one of the major ways in which Franklin Delano Roosevelt contributed to the creation of the United Nations. In addressing the American public in his fireside chats, he established a style of leadership that sought to convert citizens' fear and anger into support for remedial policies. This technique, developed and demonstrated in coping with the Depression, later on followed a similar pattern in dealing with international problems.

Faced with strong isolationist sentiment, FDR began in the mid-thirties to emphasize to the American public the need for a world order that could ensure economic well being. Drawing on the trauma of the Depression, he linked material needs to international trade policies. Aggressive nations were criticized for interfering with free trade—thus

* Richard E.D. Schwartz is Ernest I. White Professor Emeritus at the College of Law, Syracuse University, and Senior Research Scholar at Yale Law School. He has also held positions at Northwestern University and the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is the founding Editor of the Law & Society Review. His publications include CRIMINAL LAW: THEORY AND PROCESS (with Joseph Goldstein and Alan M. Dershowitz) and UNOBTRUSIVE MEASURES (2d ed. with Eugene J. Webb, Donald T. Campbell, and Lee Sechrest). His special field of interest is the sociology of law, specifically law and society, the proliferation of democracy, and the world rule of law.

endangering American prosperity. Prosperity had been the rallying cry of Roosevelt's first term.

In a nation that had retreated from the international scene following World War I, isolationism dominated American attitudes toward the rest of the world. Roosevelt saw this as a problem, but did not address it during his first term. In 1937, at the beginning of his second term, Roosevelt began the process of redirecting public attention to America's relations with other nations. Characteristically, he combined negative and positive considerations—a description of the danger, followed by a generous vision of a better world—if this country would do what he recommended.

FDR envisioned a world at peace, with all nations secure and free. This vision was a projection to the world community of the goals he sought to implement at home. The Four Freedoms, memorably stated in his third inaugural, specified his ambitions for all the nations of the world. He also knew, as a realistic politician, that so grand a vision would be mere words unless he could find a way of implementing those ideals. To that end, the organizational instrument he conceived and helped develop was the United Nations. Roughly, the Four Freedoms were like the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence. The Charter of the United Nations did not, however, become the analog of the Constitution of the United States.

One central element that was absent in the U.N., but present in the U.S., was the concentration of power in a central government. The U.S. Constitution became an instrument that empowered the federal government to make and enforce laws. While that power was distributed among the three branches of government, it soon became clear that the federal government had the legitimate right to override the decisions of the states. The arbiter, as declared by Chief Justice Marshall, was to be the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court as interpreter of the Constitution would also have the power to invalidate statutes passed by Congress and signed by the President, if it found them to be unconstitutional. This was Marshall's position, which came to be accepted as the law of the land.¹

No such powers were vested in the United Nations. The Charter was an appealing document, to be sure. But the question was whether the U.N. would have the power to make laws, to implement them if necessary by force, and to adjudicate them. Whereas the United States government could do all of these things, the United Nations could do

1. *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137, 177-78 (1803).

none of them. Its powers were vested in the Security Council, whose resolutions could be vetoed by any of the five permanent members. Try as he might, Roosevelt could not create a world rule of law. Instead, he settled for what he could get: a compromise between a world rule of law and a return to the state of affairs that followed World War I. His compromise survived the Cold War, and continues for many to be the nearest we can get to a real world rule of law.

Recent events have shown the limitations of the United Nations. In the aftermath of 9/11, we can see more clearly the need for international controls that will work well. But we are uncertain as to what kinds of controls can be safely achieved. Many of us are convinced that we must move toward a world rule of law. To work successfully, however, law must have sanction power and must be supported by a strong belief that it is legitimate. How can we develop global law that would be entrusted with the responsibility to do equal justice for all?

Part of the problem lies in the diversity of cultures and civilizations that exist in the world. The United Nations was constructed on the assumption that the most powerful nations would support a world order if they could veto any action of the organization that redounded to their disadvantage. That idea worked fairly well for a while, because it satisfied the needs of the major powers, leaving the less powerful to suffer mostly in silence from a variety of ills: poverty, immense inequalities, civil war, and massacres.

More recently, however, these diversities have presented the world community with problems not readily handled by the United Nations. Using modern technology, many nations can become—if not major powers—major threats to the peace and security of the world. We have the example of a major power taking on a smaller state on grounds that Iraq represents a threat to the security of the major power. The U.S. and its allies, the coalition, went to war with Iraq on the claim that Iraq was developing and might use weapons of mass destruction.

The type of danger envisioned is not imaginary. Nor is it limited to sovereign states. Indeed Al Qaeda demonstrated on September 11, 2001, that a small group of people could devise methods by which to destroy enormous buildings and large numbers of victims. Many of us, experts and lay people, believe that this demonstration can be followed by even more destructive attacks.

The efforts of the United Nations to handle this danger have not been impressive. After months of argument, the United States could not carry the nine votes out of fifteen that might have given a clear U.N. sanction to a U.S. led war against Iraq. Even if such a vote could have been obtained, a resolution from the Security Council would apparently

have met with a veto from France, at least, and possibly from two other permanent members of the Security Council: Russia and China. The decision of the United States to go ahead anyway, citing Resolution 1441, which had been unanimously passed, has not been accepted by the opposing nations or their populations as a clearly legitimate act.

All of these events suggest that the U.N. machinery proved unequal to the task of controlling Iraq, controlling the United States, or adjudicating the dispute between the two. For an organization dedicated to preserving the peace, the war between Iraq and the U.S. led coalition represents a serious failure. How might that war have been prevented?

My assumption in this analysis is that war has become too dangerous to be freely used as an instrument of policy. To avoid wars in the future, some methods must be considered that could minimize, control, or entirely eliminate wars between sovereign states. What is needed instead of war is a concert of nations, widely supported, that reduces the likelihood of conflicts, increases the reward of cooperation, and outlaws the use of violence by conspirators or by rogue states.

To achieve these goals, a real World Rule of Law (WROL) appears to be our best bet. It need not cover in detail all desirable conduct. Given the diversity of civilizations, and the need for freedom from oppressive controls, only the most important norms might plausibly at first be enforced by a world rule of law. It would be difficult enough to focus on genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and terrorism. These could be outlawed and evenhandedly enforced under certain conditions. To be successful, those rules must reflect a strong consensus, and must be adjudicated in a way that is widely accepted as just.

To achieve a world rule of law will require more than the evidence that it is badly needed. We have seen genocide and ethnic cleansing occur. We can anticipate that they will occur again. The question is: How can their frequency be reduced and perhaps eliminated? Some heinous acts have been handled and virtually extinguished in the past. Piracy is under control and slavery has been minimized. In each case, international cooperation has played a part. Outlawing these practices and punishing the violators, even after adjudication by ad hoc tribunals, has helped to attach repugnance to such acts. Now it becomes important to identify as crimes the anti-social acts of our times and to punish those who violate them.

In such an effort, many will turn to the United Nations. It is an international instrument that has accomplished very important goals. To add to its considerable achievements, it could conceivably develop an effective world rule of law. But the U.N. record so far has not fully succeeded. It may have the vision that is needed, but it suffers from at

least one blatant weakness that prevents it from serving as an effective world rule of law. That weakness is the uncontrolled availability of the veto. Yes, the VETO.

We know pretty well how that provision was included in the Charter of the United Nations. Indeed, without the veto, the United Nations might never have come into existence. The veto, accorded to the five permanent members of the Security Council, served to recognize that certain nations had more power than others, and that together that power could help to stabilize the world order. The history of how the veto came about is an important inquiry, about which much has been written. To me, it looks as if FDR did the best that anyone at that time could have done. He settled for what was possible: the closest he could come toward a world rule of law.

It seems, however, that the U.N. as it now exists is no longer adequate to the compelling task of ensuring world order. Major change is needed. It can come through evolutionary changes in the U.N., by radical revision of the U.N., and/or by pursuing alternative routes toward a world rule of law. In any of these developments, leadership will be needed. And the leadership must come in part, but only in part, from the United States, currently the world's remaining superpower.

FDR led the nation from isolationism to internationalism. As the head of a democracy, he needed the consent of the governed. Long before Pearl Harbor, he began to prepare the American public for American participation in international affairs. He did more than prepare the nation for war. He saw the need for an international order to preserve the peace. Similar qualities of leadership, I submit, are currently needed if a next step is to occur—this time meeting current needs for a secure and peaceful world.

I. DOCTOR NEW DEAL BECOMES DOCTOR WIN THE WAR

In these difficult times, recalling FDR's lessons of leadership can help. The parallels to our present situation are striking. Roosevelt faced two major problems: depression at home and aggressive fascism abroad. He acknowledged in repeated addresses to the American people the existence and severity of these problems and then proposed ways for dealing with them. Remarkably he showed the public how the two problems and their solutions were related to each other.

In this paper, I plan to examine FDR's communication technique, as evidenced in one of his fireside chats. I will then briefly sketch his handling of domestic and international political issues through a combination of policy, politics, and personal relations. My focus is

more on the strategies he developed than on the detailed tactics he used, though both were important.

A. *Roosevelt the Public Psychologist*

Much in the record suggests that Roosevelt was a master of public psychology. He faced the task of securing support for policies that were unfamiliar, or (worse) that could be portrayed as having been tried and failed. To overcome these barriers, he reminded people of the need and then showed how the need could be effectively met by new initiatives. He used this strategy to secure public support first for his domestic measures and then for his international policies.

When he took office in 1933, Roosevelt recognized the great dangers facing the country at home. He believed that this nation was in jeopardy. The Depression had reached a state that threatened the survival of the banking system, as people everywhere rushed to withdraw their savings. He enumerated the problems in some detail:

Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone. More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence; and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.²

These dangers Roosevelt faced with equanimity, sharing with the nation his view that we have “nothing to fear but fear itself.”³

While that phrase has been widely quoted, it is worthwhile to note the paragraph in which those words were included. This is what he said:

This great nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that we have **nothing to fear but fear itself**—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified

2. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Inaugural Address of the President (Mar. 4, 1933), <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/fdr-inaugural/#documents> (last visited Dec. 30 2005).

3. *Id.*

terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.⁴

Thus FDR begins with the assurance that all will be well. He knows it will because of the historical record: in the past, “this great nation” has endured.⁵ This phrase invokes the identification of the individual with the nation and its history. The individual need not face these difficulties alone. He and she are, after all, part of a nation—one that has been historically successful. Yet, Roosevelt identifies a present danger, that the nation must be concerned about excessive fear that is, “nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror,”⁶ emotions that should indeed be feared. The danger that such terror brings is that it “paralyzes needed efforts” to cope with the underlying problems.⁷ Then he goes on to describe the antidote to that fear. He proposes to reverse the terror by giving a name to the nameless, providing a reasoned analyses of the problem, demonstrating that the fear itself is unjustified and urging that it be replaced by confidence that the troubles of the nation can and will be overcome.

Drawing once again on the past, he points out that there have been many times of trouble, “dark hour[s] of our national life.”⁸ He comforts those who are frightened by pointing out that, in the past, comparable troubles have occurred. And he generalizes about the way such crises have been overcome. Historically, “a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with the understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory.”⁹ Those two ingredients are needed again. He will supply the “frank and vigorous leadership,”¹⁰ but leadership alone is not enough. The people themselves must supply the understanding and support if his leadership is to work.

The idea that extreme fear can diminish adaptive capacity is plausible. Panic can disorient people from taking those measures that could save their lives. Antonio Damasio, a prominent neurologist, presents evidence to that effect from the brain dysfunction cases he describes in *Descartes' Error*.¹¹ A.H. Maslow theorized, with

4. *Id.*

5. *Id.*

6. *Id.*

7. Roosevelt, *supra* note 2.

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.*

10. *Id.*

11. ANTONIO R. DAMASIO, *DESCARTES' ERROR: EMOTION, REASON, AND THE HUMAN BRAIN* (1994).

convincing evidence, that human beings have a “hierarchy of needs” such that higher functions of reason and positive social relations depend on the lower order of needs being satisfied: food, shelter, and physical security in particular.¹² These writings tend to confirm FDR’s insight, initially stated at the very beginning of his first term.

Fear may be supplemented by defensive mechanisms. To avoid panic, people can resort to well established habits. These, too, may not solve the problem. In a famous experiment, social psychologist Stanley Milgram showed how he could induce experimental subjects to behave with enormous cruelty toward others if so instructed by believable authority figures.¹³ Another social psychologist, Solomon Asch demonstrated that group pressures could induce people to express judgments (about the length of lines) in ways that violated the unmistakable evidence of their eyes.¹⁴

Roosevelt was no social psychologist. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes was right, however, in his characterization of FDR as having a first-class temperament. That temperament was demonstrated in his “fear itself” speech, and in the ways that he helped the nation to overcome that fear. He used the same method over and over again: to propose and pursue a course of action that had the best possible chance of solving the fearsome problem. In his speeches and fireside chats, he would regularly analyze the problem and suggest a path toward its solution. The paths he suggested were not invariably followed—but the mere suggestion that there was a way to deal with the difficulty helped to focus attention on solving the problem. People are less given to panic or dismay if they think there might be a solution. In this way, Roosevelt brought structure to the political process.

FDR’s achievement in calming fear and anger was a significant achievement. In light of history, it might seem as if his positive accomplishments were the result of social forces that made them inevitable. Yielding that much to history tests credulity. What happened may fairly be judged inevitable only on the dubious assumption of complete determinism. Other countries were moved in the 1930s in very different directions. Germany followed the path pioneered by Italian Fascism, with Hitler far exceeding the example set by Mussolini. Spain

12. ABRAHAM H. MASLOW, *TOWARD A PSYCHOLOGY OF BEING* (3d ed., J. Wiley & Sons, 1999) (1962).

13. Stanley Milgram, *Behavioral Study of Obedience*, 67 *J. ABNORMAL & SOC. PSYCHOL.*, 371, 371-78 (1963).

14. Solomon E. Asch, *Effects of Group Pressure Upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgment*, in *GROUPS, LEADERSHIP AND MEN: RESEARCH IN HUMAN RELATIONS 177* (Harold Guetzkow ed., 1951).

and Portugal adopted a similar pattern. The other new form of government, Communism, exhibited its totalitarianism in the Soviet Union through a series of purges and show trials. It took hold in other parts of the globe, Mexico being an early example. After World War II Communism was fostered by the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, and flourished in Africa and Asia following the withdrawal of the Western empires.

In all of these instances, support of the population was recognized to be important, a necessary element for success. And there were similarities in the methods used. The radio became a powerful instrument for persuasion in all of these countries. But the direction differed markedly. Nations that had a history of participation in the choice of a leader were exposed to diverse opinions. By contrast, totalitarian states banned the expression of views that did not support the existing authority. Operating under the principle of freedom of speech, Roosevelt could not squelch his opposition. Father Coughlin, Gerald L.K. Smith, and Gerald Winrod had no difficulty gaining a hearing for views that virulently opposed the New Deal.

Roosevelt's success, as noted, required that he persuade people that he had answers to public concerns, and that he could implement those answers. There can be different opinions on how well his policies succeeded, domestically and internationally. My own view is that he succeeded remarkably well. But the point to be emphasized is that he persuaded the public by acknowledging their concerns and developing ways of meeting those concerns. He did not follow the path of the totalitarian leaders, whose solutions were justified by a very different psychology.

Here, psychological terms may be useful in characterizing the difference in leadership styles. The totalitarians used fear and anger very differently than Roosevelt. FDR tried to calm fear, and direct attention to solutions that would solve problems that were producing fear. The totalitarians, by contrast, used fear and anger to justify aggression.

B. Roosevelt the Integrator

In his first term, Roosevelt justified his assurances to the public by devising and implementing many programs. The story of the domestic New Deal programs has been told in fulsome detail in several books.¹⁵ The purpose of these programs was to provide jobs, housing, and social

15. See, e.g., ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, JR., *THE COMING OF THE NEW DEAL* (1959).

security—and to develop national parks and economical power. Though each program required substantial federal expenditures, FDR supported the outlay by citing the need that these programs met. That spending appears initially to have stimulated the economy along lines analyzed initially by John Maynard Keynes,¹⁶ although Roosevelt's usage derived less from theory than from pragmatic considerations.

Roosevelt's reputation as the originator and guide of the New Deal gave him widespread support in the 1936 election. A recession and resistance in Congress created difficulties, but the achievements of the first term carried over into the second. It was in the second term, 1937 – 1940, that Roosevelt used his first-term credit to move the population from domestic to international concerns.

We have already seen how FDR sought to convert fear into a motive for supporting the New Deal programs. His radio broadcasts to individual households gave him an opportunity to gain understanding and approval of the measures he advocated at the national level. More was involved in reaching individuals and families. He was linking the concerns and interests at that level with the policies he was recommending for the larger society.

Strengthening that connection—between the micro and the macro level of society—has always been a problem for large-scale societies. As societies grow in size, they tend to lose the solidarity based on common experience and social similarity. Classic sociologists (notably Ferdinand Tonnies and Emile Durkheim) and anthropologists (Robert Redfield in particular)¹⁷ have pointed out that the resultant diversity requires some mechanisms for holding a diverse society together. FDR emphasized in his first term the problems that were widely shared during the Depression. His problem in the second term was to find themes that were equally compelling. The opportunity and the need to do so came in the form of global concerns.

In this regard, however, the task of persuasion was a difficult one. Isolationism had provided a rationale for ignoring the rest of the world. Much of the population of this country had come from Europe, fleeing one or another form of difficulty: poverty, discrimination, tyranny. The dominance of the aristocracy of the Old World no longer held sway in the New World. And while American streets proved not to be lined with gold, there was a belief in opportunity for most of the population that was fostered by a number of American institutions.

16. JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES, *THE GENERAL THEORY OF EMPLOYMENT, INTEREST, AND MONEY* (1936).

17. ROBERT REDFIELD, *THE FOLK CULTURE OF YUCATAN* (1941).

Opportunities of this kind, however, led many to reject the pretenses and problems of Europe, whence most immigrants and their descendants had come. As to the rest of the world, an even stronger aversion was found. American ethnocentrism was at least as strong as its counterparts abroad. FDR faced a complex task. He needed to reach ordinary citizens, whose voice and votes were crucial if his international concerns were to be popularly supported.

Roosevelt's strategy was multifaceted. He seemed able to identify potential opposition with relative ease. At the level of the elite, he used his personal charm to reassure. He identified powerful people who were or might be opposed, cultivated them and in many cases brought them into his camp. Those he could not persuade or charm, he let go. Several of them turned into overt opponents; others simply "took a walk." For Roosevelt, however, defections and acquisitions of powerful people were only a part of the game. The crucial question was how the ordinary members of the society would react.

When he turned to the international sphere, early in his second term, FDR faced the problem of leading the millions of ordinary citizens to support an international approach. This was where his leadership succeeded most effectively. He took the principal asset of his first term, his manifest concern for ordinary citizens, and used it as a base for leading the nation from isolationism to internationalism. To show how this worked, we can analyze his fireside chat of October 12, 1937.

Virtually any of FDR's speeches illustrates these two characteristics: statement of a problem and the suggestion of a way to solve it. Here are some quotations from a radio speech to the nation—a so-called fireside chat—from October 12, 1937, delivered after a national tour.

1. There is a national problem: "danger spots of poverty and instability."

"[The President] must look beyond the average of the prosperity and well-being of the country, because averages easily cover up danger spots of poverty and instability."¹⁸

2. Why does he concern himself with national problems?

"Anyone charged with proposing or judging national policies should

18. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address of the President Delivered by Radio from the White House (Oct. 12, 1937), <http://www.mhric.org/fdr/chat10.html> (last visited Dec. 30, 2005).

have first-hand knowledge of the nation as a whole. For a President especially, it is a duty to think in national terms.”¹⁹

3. How does he know about these national problems?

“That is why I have taken trips to all parts of the country. Last summer I visited the Southwest. This summer I made several trips in the East. Now I am just back from a trip all the way across the continent, and later this autumn I hope to pay my annual visit to the Southeast.”²⁰

4. What does he suggest by way of solution to the danger spots of poverty and instability? He seeks prosperity that will benefit all, and not just in the short term.

“[The President] must not let the country be deceived by a merely temporary prosperity, which depends on wasteful exploitation of resources, which cannot last. . . . The kind of prosperity we want is the sound and permanent kind which is not built up temporarily at the expense of (any) a section or any group.”²¹

5. And how is that long-term prosperity obtained; how to bring an “ever higher standard of living for the people of the United States”? Here, FDR emphasizes the need for world-wide trade:

“By a series of trade agreements, we have been attempting to recreate the trade of the world . . . that plays so important a part in our domestic prosperity.”²²

In the parts of the October 12 fireside chat quoted above, FDR describes a large national problem: unequal distribution of wealth among the regions of the country. He also touched, with less emphasis, on the poverty of particular groups within a region. His solution is one that holds promise for all: to increase the prosperity of the nation as a whole.

6. During the talk, FDR introduced another problem, an international one. In the beginning of his remarks, there are two sentences that express his concerns about the state of the world.

As he is speaking about danger spots in this country of poverty and instability, wasteful exploitation of resources, and the solution through

19. *Id.*

20. *Id.*

21. *Id.*

22. *Id.*

2005] **Roosevelt's Psychological Contribution to the U.N.** 225

trade that will bring long-term prosperity, he adds this sentence: “[The President] must think not only of keeping us out of war today, but also of keeping us out of war in generations to come.”²³

That sentence is quite out of context. Having alluded to prosperity for “generations to come” in this country, he goes on to say—it seems to burst out—that something else might threaten future generations to come in this country. Then he ties the two themes, domestic and international, together. The first sentence has already been quoted, but its repetition shows how, in one paragraph, he puts the two themes together:

“The kind of prosperity we want is the sound and permanent kind which is not built up at the expense of [any] section or any group. And the kind of peace we want is the sound and permanent kind, which is built on the cooperative search for peace by all the nations which want peace.”²⁴

7. Having intertwined the two themes, FDR goes on to deal with each in turn. By the end of the chat, he reiterates the prosperity theme and in the same sentence focuses on the international problem.

“As we plan today for ever higher standards of living for the people of the United States, we are aware that our plans may be most seriously affected by events in the world outside our borders . . . but we know that if the world outside of our borders falls into the chaos of war, world trade will be completely disrupted.”²⁵

8. With that introduction, he goes on to emphasize that more is involved than the disruption of trade and the diminution of prosperity. There is the larger issue of human values. We cannot “view with indifference the destruction of civilized values throughout the world.”²⁶ That danger, however, can be dealt with by a strengthening of *fundamental decencies*. Here is the basic theme:

“The development of civilization and of human welfare is based on the acceptance by individuals of certain fundamental decencies in their relations with each other. And, equally, the development of peace in the world is dependent similarly on the acceptance by nations of

23. Roosevelt, *supra* note 18.

24. *Id.*

25. *Id.*

26. *Id.*

certain fundamental decencies in their relations with each other.”²⁷

9. At that time—in 1937—FDR had little to suggest as to how the positive values of “fundamental decencies” could best be achieved. It would take time and insight before his hope could lead to an organization that might serve that end.

“Ultimately, I hope that each nation will accept the fact that violations of these rules of conduct are an injury to the well-being of all nations.”²⁸

Roosevelt concludes this fireside chat with a reminder that he had been close to world events from 1913 to 1921. His work in government had given him the chance to observe in detail the efforts and the failures of Woodrow Wilson to make World War I “the war to end wars.” From that experience, Roosevelt says, “while I learned much of what to do, I also learned much of what not to do.”²⁹ In retrospect, one can infer that he was already thinking about a new war to end wars. The years that followed, 1937 to 1945, provided many opportunities to develop the vision implicit in his fireside chat of October 12, 1937. The vision of that time had to be more fully elaborated and more widely disseminated.

But the vision by itself is never enough. Vision must be rendered into structure if it is to make a big difference. Just as mind requires body, so must ideas be embedded in institutions. Roosevelt recognized the need for a structure that could foster and maintain the peace. And he was not willing to wait until the coming war was over before envisioning and implementing the peace. From 1937 to his death in 1945, FDR worked constantly on the problem. What he came up with was the concept of the United Nations, as a structure within which his vision of the Four Freedoms could be implemented.

Whether the United Nations will become the instrument he hoped it would is not yet clear. It was a best effort to build a structure acceptable to the major holders of power in the geopolitics that would follow victory in World War II. Roosevelt’s approach was to consult the major allied powers and to fashion a structure that all could accept. That involved many compromises, some of which might in the end make the U.N. incapable of sustaining his vision of a peaceful world.

The U.N. concept that emerged during this period reflected in

27. *Id.*

28. Roosevelt, *supra* note 18.

29. *Id.*

many ways FDR's experience with government in America. One way of understanding his efforts to build the U.N. is to notice how he (and other Americans) used concepts from the U.S. background to structure the new international institutions. What emerged, however, was far from a reproduction for the world of the American model. Roosevelt knew that any such construct would surely fail. A pragmatist, he worked for what was feasible. He may have hoped to come close to the American model on a world scale, but he was well aware of the barriers that would prevent this. He was not one to make the best the enemy of the good—so he settled for the best he could get.

What he helped to create has survived. My purpose in this article has not been to appraise the success or failures of the U.N. Rather, I have focused on the leadership that FDR displayed in his efforts to achieve a viable world arrangement.

There may be some practical value to this kind of retrospection. In our time, the need for a viable concert of nations is urgent. The task of achieving an effective international order is enormously complicated. Perhaps the U.N. can evolve as the principal instrument. Many feel that it is the only game in town. Perhaps the U.N. will have to be replaced and a new start made. In either case, reforming the U.N. or replacing it will require vision, structure, and consensus. These were three requirements that FDR helped to meet. In the contemporary world, it is worth reminding, and re-reminding, ourselves of the lessons of leadership that can be learned from the lifework of that extraordinary man.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRESENT

From 1937 until his death, Roosevelt set the stage for the United Nations. A major accomplishment was to persuade the American people that this country must stay engaged in international affairs. The United Nations became a principal instrument for maintaining that engagement. It came into existence during his lifetime, both as a vision and as an institution capable to some extent of implementing that vision. To this day, it provides a forum in which diverse views can be presented and sometimes brought together in problem solving actions. It has helped to achieve a world consensus on ways of handling some major threats to world populations. Examples of positive U.N. contributions include care for refugees, identification of disease threats, and success in eliminating officially supported racism. All such successes accord with FDR's vision of an organization that could implement the Four Freedoms.

When I speak of success, I mean it in the context of FDR's vision. He saw the Four Freedoms as a set of goals that would require concerted action. His hope for achieving these goals was embodied in the United Nations. It has kept the vision alive and continues to work toward its fulfillment. Had the Axis powers triumphed in World War II, Roosevelt's vision of world order would have given way to the very different world envisioned by Hitler in his concept of the Thousand Year Reich. World War II constituted a crisis with monumental consequences. The world could have become totalitarian if the Axis had won. Instead, the Allied victory meant the end of colonialism and a commitment to the vision of a Free World.

The qualified U.N. successes, however, leave us far from being adequate for meeting the needs of the contemporary world. At every step along the way, new problems arise, together with new ways of solving them. When the problems rise to the level of crisis, we must ask more urgently than at other times, what is to be done. Is the vision adequate and are the institutions capable of fulfilling a currently needed vision?

Considered from the perspective of FDR's vision, the world is a long way from the promise of the Four Freedoms. Yet his vision continues to attract support. The ideas embodied in that formulation resonate in the aspirations of many peoples. So, also, do the organizational principles that Roosevelt assumed. Underlying the idea of free speech and freedom of religion are the constitutional concepts of the First Amendment. In addition to these rights, Roosevelt favored the capacity of societies to choose their leaders, as administrators and as representatives. The ideas set forth in the Constitution and memorably celebrated by Abraham Lincoln as "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" embodied the fundamental organizational principles by which these freedoms were to be achieved.

The combination of vision and organization that Roosevelt represented could not be rendered in the actual organization of the United Nations. He did insist on the importance of independence of nations from the colonial empires. Though this view was vigorously opposed by Churchill, it succeeded in becoming the reality for the empires of Western Europe: Great Britain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal. At the same time, however, Stalin insisted that the Soviet Empire be maintained and expanded. In accepting this, Roosevelt yielded to the principle of power. Historians continue to debate whether he could have done otherwise.

Over time, however, some significant changes have occurred. Stalin's insistence on Soviet domination of Eastern Europe created a

test, close to an experiment, that permitted a comparison between Communism and capitalist democracy. Migration from East Germany to West Germany far exceeded migration the other way. Famously, a wall was constructed to keep the East Germans from leaving. Ultimately the West German principles of governance extended to East Germany. Comparable shifts occurred throughout Eastern Europe, when conditions permitted the citizens to choose the form of government they preferred.

At this point, it looks as if Roosevelt's vision have increasingly found acceptance. But the process has taken time, and in many instances it has not gone in the direction he favored. The United Nations has done some things to facilitate changes in the direction he favored, and perhaps it continues be as successful an instrument as was possible. But the chaos threatened by the events of 9/11 suggests that a new effort is needed to continue in the direction FDR envisioned.

Perhaps the vision must be renewed and revised. Are the Four Freedoms sufficient in today's world? They do not include an important addition: freedom from ignorance. But the absence of literacy and education in many parts of the world undercuts the capacity to understand and to participate in self governance, making some populations especially vulnerable to dictatorship. And the domination of religious and political ideologies over science and reason inhibits the kind of compromise that helps to contain internecine antagonism and unilateral domination.

It would be comforting to believe that all such problems would disappear if we only had a world rule of law. But law itself rests on legitimacy. A few well-trained experts cannot automatically convey the value of a democratic law making and enforcing system. Moreover, the law can be distorted if the balance of power is upset. That can happen not only by the abuse of governmental power, but also by the rise of unchecked corporate influence or by the emergence of an enormous mobility-blocking gulf between the wealthy and the poor.

Even so, a world rule of law might well be seen as legitimate if it takes on manageable tasks, with institutions suited to the job. In that light, the World Court has demonstrated a considerable capability in dealing with disputes between nations. Many have suggested that the International Criminal Court would be a step in the right direction, although this has been vigorously contested by the present U.S. Administration, as it withdrew from participation.

This is not the place to get into a detailed discussion of the means for moving toward a world rule of law. We can, however, learn from the leadership of FDR at an earlier time that vision and institution

building are both needed if a global order is to develop and thrive. He managed to take advantage of every opportunity to move the nation toward international participation, linking that course to the needs of ordinary citizens in their day to day lives. He was able to gain support for war preparation by anticipating the danger and then using it for successful mobilization of effort when the nation was attacked. And while that was happening, he never stopped planning and working for the initiation of the institution that helped to make possible a world order, when the war ended.

In our present situation, leadership of comparable quality is needed again. This time, the world situation seems far more complicated. In Roosevelt's time, the choice was between compromise with the Axis and war. After Pearl Harbor, the decision for war was inevitable. Roosevelt's preparation of the nation strengthened the unity of the nation, contributing to vigorous execution of the war and widespread support for the sacrifices it entailed.

FDR converted the resulting unity into support for his postwar plans. Politically, FDR's plans for the United Nations might have run into opposition. As early as 1940, however, it became clear that isolationism would not dominate the Republican Party. Prior to the Republican convention of that year, Senators Robert A. Taft and Arthur H. Vandenberg, two leading candidates for the nomination, had established themselves as isolationists. At the convention, they found themselves in competition with a newcomer to politics, Wendell L. Willkie. Willkie opposed Roosevelt's domestic policies, but clearly identified himself as an internationalist. His nomination and vigorous campaign made clear that the nation had by the summer of 1940 shifted from isolationism to internationalism.

After the election, bipartisan support for Roosevelt's international plans continued. Willkie himself symbolized that support, working within the Party on behalf of internationalist candidates and policies. He brought out a widely read book whose title, *One World*, carried an unmistakable message. Willkie also served as FDR's representative to the Soviet Union, China, and England—the nations that, with France, were to become the permanent, veto-holding members of the U.N. Security Council.

If Willkie's success indicated the power of the internationalist theme, Senator Vandenberg's career gave even more striking evidence. Arthur Vandenberg clearly identified himself in the 1930s as an isolationist. His thinking shifted after the Republican convention of 1940—and especially after Pearl Harbor. During the War, he led the Republicans in Congress to unite behind the President not only to

support the war effort, but also to join in planning for the United Nations. He was a delegate to the San Francisco conference that established the U.N., and continued to support it as a leading member and chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. As Senator, he gave a powerful speech supporting the United Nations at a time when the crucial decision was to be made.

In January 1945, Vandenberg declared this position to the Senate, "Our oceans have ceased to be moats which automatically protect our ramparts." He went on to say that he supported the United Nations because he wanted "a new dignity and a new authority for international law. I think American self-interest requires it."

Senator Vandenberg's shift to an internationalist position was influenced by a number of factors that are difficult to assess. Two elements that seem to have entered, however, can be related directly to the influence of FDR. The first was the clear shift of the American public to an internationalist position. A politically successful senator was bound to note that change. As suggested above, American internationalism was attributable, in part, to Roosevelt's speeches as a way of reaching the American public—literally and figuratively—where they lived. The other factor that seems clear is Senator Vandenberg's relationship with the President, as indicated and furthered by FDR's choosing him as the President's representative in several meetings in which the United Nations organizational plans were formulated. Roosevelt appears to have had the knack of charming people, at the same time assessing their policy orientations.