



60 Years Later, Is It a Free World?

On January 6th 1941 the United States' President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to the U.S. Congress about the globally emerging principles of civil liberties. He mentioned the four fundamental freedoms of humankind, which later inspired the United Nations Charter: Freedom of speech and expression, Freedom of worship, Freedom from want, Freedom from fear.

President Roosevelt was speaking in Washington DC, but he was speaking on and to the whole world. In fact he repeated at the end of every one of the four definitions of freedom his vision "everywhere in the world". There was neither an emerging "globalization" at that time nor any emotional feeling of the end of the second Millennium. But Roosevelt had a strong sense of urgency: "That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation".

The President's estimate on the time required to build a truly free world was proved wrong by history. Many political leaders in the following cold-war era fought for one or two freedoms they preferred, forgetting the others. Even today, in a much less ideologically divided world, there are political leaders in G8 countries who think that "Freedom from Want" is just a communist goal, a kind of non essential optional for the free world.

Roosevelt concluded his speech by saying that "The world order which we seek is the cooperation of free countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society". 60 years later a humankind where governance of global public goods will be truly cooperative is still in the making.

I am glad and honoured to launch our new magazine on human development, which will share experiences of practitioners who are applying the blunt simplicity of Roosevelt's grand vision.

Readers, including nay-sayers, are welcome to contribute facts and opinions. It's a free world!

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