

A Democratic World Order

From Streit to the Present

JOHN RICHARDSON



John Richardson, a graduate of Harvard Law School, has served as Assistant Secretary of State, CEO of Radio Free Europe, founding staff member of the United States Institute of Peace, and founding Chair of the National Endowment for Democracy.

At Harvard in the 1940s, I joined “Union Now” and “Union Now With Great Britain,” popular movements led by Clarence Streit advocating a merger of the major democracies as a force for peace and security in the face of the Nazi onslaught in Europe.

After the war, what little attention I paid to the outside world centered on the emerging United Nations system and in Clarence Streit’s intriguing idea of moving toward a democratically based world order.

The first President Bush was ridiculed when he suggested, following the brief 1991 Persian Gulf War with Iraq, that our triumph heralded a ‘New World Order.’ That skepticism was justified. Americans instinctively knew there was no vision, no idea, no strategy, to make that victory a signifi-

cant step toward a better world. Both President Clinton and the second President Bush have too often been similarly ridiculed, in America and abroad, as trigger-happy incompetents, unable to capitalize constructively on American pre-eminence.

Too many American political leaders fail to appreciate the necessity of working over the

After the war, what little attention I paid to the outside world centered on the emerging United Nations system and Clarence Streit’s intriguing idea of moving toward a democratically based world order.

long term with like-minded leaders of other democratic nations to develop international decision-making arrangements reflecting our shared values and responsive to the human needs of our rapidly shrinking ‘global

village.’ The contrast is striking with the wisdom displayed by those who visualized and created the United Kingdom, the European Union,

Canada, Brazil, Australia, as well as Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) bolstering European recovery after World War II.

What is to be done? What should be the long-range global vision and strategy guiding the policy makers of the United States and other responsible governments as they make tough foreign policy choices?

To make such fundamental policy choices, more than tactical skills and courage are required of our Presidents and Congressional leaders. Management gurus have been telling us for a generation that without a long-range vision, clear goals, and appropriate strategies, organizations are not likely to get very far. Lacking thought and debate about what kind of world we want for future generations, we Americans and our friends abroad are not likely to get very far either. Our government, like others, would continue to react to situations as they arise rather than steadfastly pursuing strategies and tactics designed to move us toward the long term vision of a harmonious world of democratically governed nation states, working collaboratively together within democratically based institutions. But for such an approach to be accepted by democratic nations around the world, leadership is crucial, and only the US Government provides an adequate platform, given American power and prestige. A President and Congress willing to proclaim such vision and strategy, establishing such a sense of direction for Americans and other freedom lovers around

the world, will have some potent precedents to build on.

I believe it is only a question of time before an American President will have the foresight and courage to challenge the skeptics, to make history, by using the ‘bully pulpit’ to move America and the world toward a clear vision of human solidarity to be achieved through a democratic world order. The recently formed democratic caucus in the UN General Assembly provides a first crucial step toward the eventual limitation of UN Security Council membership to genuine democracies. The Security Council might thereafter rely on NATO to enforce its decisions, with all that would mean for global peace and security.

Americans, together with hundreds of millions of others around the world who share our faith in liberty, would gladly work toward a world of cooperating, and ultimately, integrating sovereign self governing nations. Their democratic governments would collaborate, based on shared national values, through existing and new international institutions, in a long term movement toward regional federations and, ultimately, a global, democratically-based federalism. Since human rights, the rule of law, social justice, free elections, free markets, and peace are especially attractive to people denied them, such a global political movement would also weaken tyranny wherever it exists.



Destruction of the Berlin Wall, 1989
ITAR-TASS News Agency, 1989

The recently formed democratic caucus in the UN provides a first crucial step toward the eventual limitation of UN Security Council membership to genuine democracies. The Security Council might thereafter rely on NATO to

This is no panacea. Prudence compels us, as argued by Richard Haass' book, *The Opportunity – America's Moment to Alter History's Course* (Public Affairs, 2005) also to pursue 'integration' with other important countries, regardless of their democratic credentials. There will always be blunders, failures, disasters, as well as achievements, in the long road ahead. But as the rate of change toward greater integration in all global systems – technological, economic, social, cultural, and political – continues to accelerate, the only critical mistake would be to fail to establish such an American sense of direction and leadership in world affairs.

American business, labor, and civic leaders, teachers, clergy, journalists – indeed citizens in every walk of life – can contribute to a positive outcome by finding ways now both to demonstrate their support and to increase American 'soft power' to help achieve that goal. Through this and other channels, momentum for positive change can, and I believe will, grow until American political leaders accept their responsibility to employ our power to move the world toward peace, justice, security, and freedom – toward human solidarity – through democratic

development, collaboration, and integration.

This sums up what I have learned about American and world politics since I floated down under a parachute into battle across the Rhine near the village of Wesel, Germany, on a bright Sunday morning in March, 1945.

Long before that, my mother had engraved the message of Tennyson's prophetic lines from his poem 'Locksley Hall' in the memories of her five children:

*For I dipt into the future, far as human eye
could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder
that would be;*

*Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and
the battle-flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of
the world. □*

From John Richardson's recently published memoirs, A New Vision for America, pp. 167, 221-2, 241-5 (complete bibliographical information below).

A NEW VISION FOR AMERICA: Toward Human Solidarity Through Global Democracy

By John Richardson
Foreword by John C. Whitehead

*ADST-DACOR Diplomats and Diplomat Series,
Ruder Finn Press, 2006*

