

Let's Revive F.D. Roosevelt's Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter

by Alfred de Zayas,* Geneva



Alfred de Zayas
(Photo ma)

The current US, UK, EU and NATO policies vis à vis Russia and China violate the letter and spirit of the UN Charter as well as many prior declarations and commitments and treaties which are at the basis of modern international law.

Too many war profiteers around us

Western policies of “exceptionalism” and “unilateralism” have fed directly into an atmosphere of intransigence and hostility, which makes reasonable discourse about dialogue and compromise sound like cowardly “appeasement” or even treason.

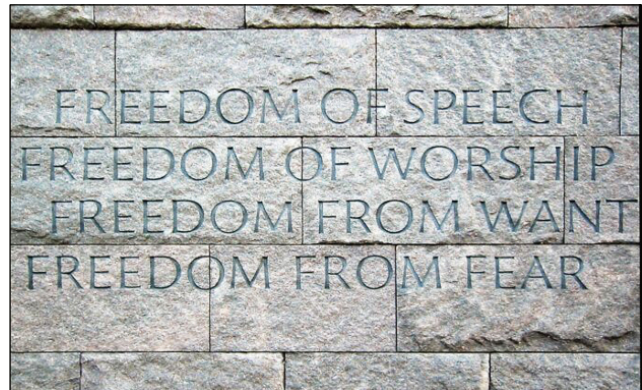
As it happens, “appeasement” is the only road humanity can take in the nuclear age. It is the road that our ancestors mapped in the UN Charter, when “we the people” demanded measures to spare succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

Our leaders, however, are simultaneously provoking two nuclear powers with vast stockpiles of nuclear weapons and means to deliver them. This is highly undemocratic, because people do not want war and do not consent to needless provocation. People want and are entitled to peace and prosperity. It is the corporate “elites”, the military-industrial-financial complex who want war. Indeed, there are too many war profiteers around us.

Mainstream media: attack dogs or watchdogs?

What is particularly preoccupying is that sedate voices like those of emeritus Professor *Richard Falk* at Princeton, Professor *Jeffrey Sachs* at Columbia University or Professor *John Mearsheimer* at the University of Chicago, are be-

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The Four Freedoms of Franklin D. Roosevelt.
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ing drowned by the fake news and the propaganda disseminated by “narrative managers” in the mainstream media, who seem to prefer the role of attack dogs over that of watchdogs.

The deliberate escalation of tensions against Russia and China entails multiple violations of the Purposes and Principles of the *United Nations*, ILO, WHO and UNESCO. Moreover, such escalation has led to violations of the *Statute of Rome*, namely aggression, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The current US and UK administrations are acting in a manner incompatible with *Franklin Delano Roosevelt's* “Four Freedoms”, expressed in his state of the union address of 6 January 1941, and re-enacted, together with *Winston Churchill*, in the *Atlantic Charter* of 14 August 1941.

Freedom of speech

For instance, the massive censorship of Russian information sources including *Sputnik* and RT, violates *FDR's* first freedom, namely freedom of speech, which necessarily entails the freedom to access all information, the freedom to know what is relevant so as to develop an opinion, our own judgment, that we can express. Freedom of speech is not limited to echoing whatever nonsense we heard the night before on CNN or BBC.

“Freedom from want”

The draconian US sanctions policy is incompatible with *the third freedom* declared by Roosevelt – “Freedom from want” – which, translated into

contemporary terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants – everywhere in the world.

This means *inter alia* food security, access to water and sanitation, affordable energy, freedom to engage in trade and freedom of the seas. Among the obvious adverse impacts of US, UK and EU sanctions are famine, desperation and death.

The sanctions imposed on dozens of countries including Belarus, Cuba, Nicaragua, Russia, Syria, Venezuela have already caused tens of thousands of deaths and constitute a crime against humanity within the meaning of article 7 of the *Statute of the International Criminal Court*.

“Freedom from fear”

The US, UK, EU policies are also incompatible with FDR’s Fourth Freedom, “freedom from fear”. It is remarkable that human rights ngo’s like *Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch* have not focused on *Peace as a Human Right*.

This is what the *Spanish Association for International Human Rights Law* promoted in its “Declaración de Santiago”¹ of 10 December 2010, which built on General Assembly Resolution 39/11 of 12 November 1984 and eventually became the draft Resolution on the Right to Peace,² adopted by the *Advisory Committee of the UN Human Rights Council*, subsequently torpedoed by the US, UK and EU delegations who argued in the *Intergovernmental working group on the right to peace* that there was no such thing as a right to peace, and that the *Human Rights Council* was in any event the wrong venue.

The Resolution eventually adopted by the *General Assembly (GA)* on 19 December 2016³ was significantly less than what the GA had already recognized in 1984. Similarly, every initiative in the *UN Conference on Disarmament* has been disemboweled by the US, UK, EU and NATO countries, as if they were telling the world: “we actually prefer war”.

In my capacity as *UN Independent Expert on International Order* I attended all meetings of the Human Rights Council working group and was appalled to hear the patently wrong arguments made by the US, UK and EU delegations, arguments that a first-year law student would already recognize as “fake law”.

“Freedom from fear” necessarily means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation should be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbour—anywhere in the world.

Article 6 of the *Non-Proliferation Treaty* commits all States who possess nuclear weapons to negotiate in good faith toward nuclear disarmament. But it seems like the nuclear powers, whether NPT members or not – including China, Russia, US, UK, France, Israel, India, Pakistan, are bent on imposing fear and terror on the rest of humanity.

Principles laid down in the Atlantic Charter

The US, UK, EU and NATO sanctions policies against Russia and China are similarly incompatible with the principles laid down in the Atlantic Charter, namely:

1. Territorial adjustments must be in accord with the wishes of the peoples concerned (e.g., by referendum in Nagorno Karabakh, Crimea and Donbas). If the ideological leaders of the Western powers refuse to recognize the fact that the vast majority of the Crimean population does NOT want to live in Ukraine after the unconstitutional 2014 *putsch*, they should invite the UN to organize and monitor a new referendum. Back in March and June 1994 I was the UN representative for the parliamentary and presidential elections in Ukraine. Without a doubt, the population in Crimea and Donbas speaks and feels Russian).
2. All people have a right of self-determination (e.g. in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo – but similarly in Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria). This right of self-determination was incorporated into the UN Charter and countless Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions. It is also common article 1 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.
3. Trade barriers must be lowered. The sanctions regimes imposed by the US and its allies essentially have destroyed the benefits of globalization for millions of people and permanently dislocated the supply chains, and energy sources, leading to a drop in international trade, gross domestic product, bankruptcies and unemployment.

4. Global economic co-operation and advancement of social welfare must be the rule, not the exception.
5. All countries who endorsed the *Atlantic Charter* committed themselves to work for a world free of want and fear.
6. All countries committed to advance freedom of the seas in the sense of Hugo Grotius' *Mare liberum*.
7. All countries agreed to the disarmament of aggressor nations and a common disarmament after the war.

Bridges must be built

It is the tragedy of the post-World War I generations that the noble principles contained in President *Woodrow Wilson's* 14 Points, were flouted in the *Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain* and *Trianon*, leading directly to World War II. It is the tragedy of the post-World War II generations that the goals proclaimed in the *Four Freedoms* and in the *Atlantic Charter* were abandoned. It is the tragedy of our post-Soviet Union generation that our leaders did not keep

their 1989–91 promises to *Mikhail Gorbachev* and deliberately chose the path of provocation and NATO expansionism, resulting in the tensions leading to Russia's illegal aggression against Ukraine and the proxy war being fought by NATO against Russia – till the last Ukrainian.

Why did our leaders not heed the advice of *George F. Kennan, Jack Matlock, Richard Falk, Jeffrey Sachs, John Mearsheimer* and *Henry Kissinger*?

In order to get out of the mess to which our leaders have brought us, bridges must be built – not only for the belligerents to escape, but for the belligerents to talk to each other.

Source: <https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/09/01/lets-revive-fdrs-four-freedoms-and-the-atlantic-charter/>, 1 September 2022

¹ <http://www.aedidh.org/sites/default/files/Santiago-Declaration-en.pdf>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-right-peoples-peace>

³ <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2017/01/the-right-to-peace-from-ratification-to-realization>