

A Global Parliament
Essays and Articles

Noteworthy Praise for
A Global Parliament: Essays and Articles

“At a time when many in civil society question the legitimacy of our international architecture, and globalization brings home the reality that no nation alone — mighty or modest — can hope to solve our interconnected challenges, the global community needs to reconsider its conduct of international affairs. Of fundamental importance is how to involve the will of the global polity. Professors Falk and Strauss offer fresh thinking and creative ideas for doing just that. This book is a must read for those who care about our common future.”

Mike Moore, Former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former Director General of the World Trade Organisation

“This collection brings together a decade of energetic advocacy for deepening democracy through a global parliament by Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss. It is brimming with insight, imagination and inspiration, but does not neglect the obstacles to and the tough practicalities of such a venture. This book offers both a timely injection of hope about and a blueprint for the creation of international democratic structures.”

Hilary Charlesworth, Professor and Director of the Centre for International Governance and Justice, Regulatory Institutions Network at the Australian National University

“Falk and Strauss, as we would expect of them, challenge what others perceive as ‘realism’, and in this book offer provocative analysis and proposals for the road forward in international relations and law. An important contribution to contemporary debate.”

Dame Rosalyn Higgins, former President of the International Court of Justice

“Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss lead the way in calling for a global parliament — a representative body that would have the scope and authority to address vital global concerns. Because democracy functions exclusively within national borders, no democratic authority is presently capable of dealing with the emergent transborder issues that so shape our global age. This needs to be put right, and Falk and Strauss tell us how it can be.”

David Held, Graham Wallas Professor of Political Science, London School of Economics

“International law will become a law of peoples only if the world's citizens are directly represented internationally. This book by Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss convincingly argues for such a democratic transformation in the structure of the international system and its most central institution, the United Nations.”

Vittorio G. Höfle, Paul Kimball Professor of Arts and Letters, University of Notre Dame, Indiana

“If Global Democracy is not — yet — an idea whose time has come, this book should nudge it closer. Falk and Strauss challenge all democrats to stretch their horizons: why shouldn't we aim for a global parliament?”

Peter Singer, Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics, University Center for Human Values, Princeton University

“This extremely timely volume represents ‘public scholarship’ at its best, visionary yet pragmatic, informative and insightful, inspiring and humane. Professors Falk and Strauss speak for me in the truly inclusive cosmopolitan voice of global humanity.”

Abdullahi A. An-Na’im, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law, Emory University

“This book by acclaimed professors Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss goes straight to the central topic of the twenty-first century: how to build a democratic world order in the age of globalization.”

Fernando A. Iglesias, Member of the Argentine Parliament, Professor, Universidad de Belgrano and Universidad de Ciencias Empresariales y Sociales

“Timely, refreshing and astute. I highly recommend this book, which provides ideas for a global parliament, as a means of promoting equitability as part of a new global order.”

Benjamin J. Odoki, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Uganda

“Be it the UN, the WTO or the World Bank, sovereignty pooling and international coordination has reached a climax. Now is the time to democratize these institutions and to involve the citizens. Falk and Strauss' academic and practical contribution to this process cannot be valued highly enough. This book should be fundamental background reading for all political leaders.”

Jo Leinen, Member of the European Parliament

A Global Parliament: Essays and Articles

By Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss

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by Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss

COMMITTEE FOR A DEMOCRATIC U.N.

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Editor's Preface

This collection of articles and essays by Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss on the creation of a global parliament is being published at a time of upheaval. The unprecedented popular uprisings in the Arab world mark an important milestone. In the words of Richard Falk, the outcome of this “fourth rupture in global governance since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989,” may determine the future “of self-determination in the entire Arab world, and possibly beyond.”¹ A considerable strengthening and revival of democracy in the world seems to be within the realm of possibility.

However, in this time of globalization no society is able to escape the impact of globally integrated economic and financial markets or of climate change. This makes democratic self-determination which is limited strictly to the nation-state difficult, if not impossible. As the author of this book's foreword, former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has pointed out, “democracy within the state will diminish in importance if the process of democratization does not move forward at the international level. Therefore, we need to promote the democratization of globalization, before globalization destroys the foundations of national and international democracy.”²

Falk and Strauss are among the very few academics in the world who have specifically dealt with the question of a popularly elected global body. What Boutros-Ghali has described as the “missing link of democratization” that is “almost completely neglected,”³ is exactly the subject of this volume.

The article “Toward Global Parliament” that was published by Falk and Strauss in *Foreign Affairs* in 2001 is thus far the one that is probably most cited on the subject. It is the first article reprinted in this volume but not the first that they published on the subject. This collection does not follow a chronological order. Instead, the texts are grouped according to overarching topics.

The reflections and arguments of Falk and Strauss on a Global Peoples Assembly or, synonymously, on a Global Parliamentary Assembly (GPA), are still topical and an indispensable contribution to the debate on global democracy. Some of the basics of their approach are widely shared by advocates of a UN Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA). For instance these include reference to the European Parliament as a model and the strategy of following an incremental approach that starts with a largely consultative assembly and proceeds to the eventual goal of a democratic global legislative system.⁴

But there are differences too. Falk and Strauss for example argue that a small number of twenty to thirty countries that are geographically, culturally and economically diverse could initiate the parliamentary project by agreeing on an intergovernmental treaty that provides for the establishment of a directly elected GPA. Over time, as more and more countries join the project, the assembly would gain more and more global democratic legitimacy.

By contrast, advocates of a UNPA usually envisage that the body could be created by a decision of the UN General Assembly pursuant to Article 22 of the UN Charter, that all UN member states would participate, and that initially it would be composed of delegates chosen from within national and regional parliaments. Direct elections would then be introduced in later stages.

These and other different viewpoints enrich the debate, and it is far from clear which proposals will eventually win the day. With this publication we want to make the work of Falk and Strauss better accessible and hope to generate new interest.

We would like to express our gratitude to all those who have helped to make this publication possible. In particular, we would like to thank Marianne Obermüller and the Earthrise Society in Munich, Germany, for their financial support.

Andreas Bummel

Committee for a Democratic U.N.

¹ Richard Falk. "Egypt's Berlin Wall moment." Al Jazeera Online, February 8, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/02/20112795229925377.html>.

² Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Message to the Campaign for the Establishment of a UN Parliamentary Assembly," May 16, 2007. <http://www.unpacampaign.org/documents/en/-BBG200705.pdf>.

³ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "The missing link of democratization." *OpenDemocracy*, June 9, 2009. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/boutros-boutros-ghali/UN-parliament-global-democracy>.

⁴ See, for example, Dieter Heinrich, *The Case for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly*. Berlin: Committee for a Democratic UN, 2010 [1992]. <http://www.kdun.org/88/>.

Foreword by Boutros Boutros-Ghali

During my term as Secretary-General of the United Nations I spent a great proportion of my time dealing with the dual concerns of peace and development. I laid out many of my thoughts and initiatives regarding peace in 1992, when at the request of the Security Council I submitted *An Agenda for Peace*. Similarly, a year later at the request of the General Assembly I laid out my primary thoughts and initiatives regarding development in *An Agenda for Development*.

Trying to lead the way toward the reforms I suggested was quite difficult, and I came to recognize that the key to overcoming reform gridlock in both areas is democracy. Regarding peace, if no democratic institutions exist to channel popular discontent, confrontation and oftentimes violent conflict will result. Likewise, regarding development, all over the world entrenched elites whose power is unchecked by democratic institutions bleed economies dry, and in the absence of institutions of popular accountability, their ability to impede development cannot be effectively countered.

Having recognized the connection between development and peace on the one hand, and democracy on the other, I decided that I should also explore the role of the United Nations in democratization in more detail. It was a bumpy road as my mandate to produce a third agenda was challenged, but finally, two weeks before my departure from the United Nations, I finished my *Agenda for Democratization* and arranged for its distribution in the UN system.

What I argued for in this agenda, among other things, was democratization among nations. "If democratization is the most reliable way to legitimize and improve national governance," I noted, "it is also the most reliable way to legitimize and improve international organizations."¹ How can the United Nations as the world's most universal political organization be a credible and effective promoter of democracy at the national level if it does not pursue the same principle internationally in its own sphere?

Today, fifteen years after the publication of the *Agenda for Democratization*, and in light of the mass movements for democracy, most recently in the Arab world, this question takes on great salience. As more and more decisions with far reaching domestic implications are made at the intergovernmental level, democracy to be effective must extend beyond state borders. How exactly this can be done calls for a great deal of creative thought, but

such thought has not been forthcoming. In fact, most commentators on global governance seem hopelessly mired in the existing system. This is why the arrival of this book that gathers the essays and articles by Professors Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss on a Global Parliamentary Assembly is a breath of fresh air.

What is presented in the pages that follow is not only a thoughtful and comprehensive exploration of how a global parliament would help correct for the dysfunction of the present global system, but it is also a clear-headed pragmatic blueprint for achieving such a parliament.

I cannot overstate the importance of this rare inquiry into this most crucial global governance challenge of our time: how to adapt parliamentarianism to the global system. As I argued in the *Agenda for Democratization*, “by carrying the views and concerns of their constituents to the international arena, parliamentarians offer a direct channel for increasing the legitimacy, responsiveness and effectiveness of international organizations.”²

Over the past fifteen years, the call for increased participation of parliamentarians in international affairs has gathered more and more momentum. In 2007, this culminated in the Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly which I have supported wholeheartedly from the very beginning.

I am convinced that in the years to come the popular struggle for democracy will become a major force on the global stage. It is high time that the establishment of a Global Parliamentary Assembly is put onto the international agenda. When it is, this work by Professors Falk and Strauss will have laid the groundwork for implementation.

¹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Supplement to reports on democratization. Report to the 51st Session of the United Nations General Assembly. 20 December 1996, para. 66.

² *Ibid.*, para. 87.