and classical liberal thought as a viable basis for public policy. However, these were primarily economic, social and intellectual trends, not political ones, and if the evidence is considered carefully, it is not clear that any of them entirely escaped the framework of progressive thought. How deeply did progressivism transform American politics? Did Theodore Roosevelt's campaign truly set the tone for the following century? Milkis's work offers an excellent starting point for answering these questions.

Kevin Walker
Emmanuel College

The Lost Promise of Humanitarian Intervention

BASS, GARY J. *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention*. New York: Knopf, 2008. 509 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-3072-6648-4; $17.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-3072-7987-3.
doi:10.1017/S1537781411000156

Gary Bass has produced an admirable study of the changing nature of humanitarian intervention and thought in the "long" nineteenth century. *Freedom's Battle* focuses largely on how Europe and to a lesser extent the United States responded to major atrocities and crises from the 1770s through the early twentieth century. Bass does a remarkable job of making connections between modest and large-scale (mostly military), humanitarian-oriented incursions. As he examines these conflicts and a resulting new vision of human rights (primarily the right to live unmolested by governments or factions), Bass perceives a decline in the "tradition of humanitarian intervention that once ran deep in world politics" (3).

Bass's goal is to use historical analysis to illuminate current debates about humanitarian intervention and in doing so he draws, unexpectedly, on Theodore Roosevelt. In his 1904 State of the Union address, Roosevelt defended robust rights-oriented interventionism: "There are occasional crimes committed on so vast a scale and of such peculiar horror" that in "extreme cases action may be justifiable and proper" by "force of arms . . . to put a stop to intolerable conditions" (3). Roosevelt argued that Americans must insist on defending U.S. citizens' rights and freedoms around the world, yet he also underscored the deep reservoirs of American sympathy for oppressed Armenians and Jews and his own implicit efforts to take action on their behalf. Sounding the clarion call for military

might, Roosevelt proclaimed, "Our protestations upon behalf of peace would neither receive nor deserve the slightest attention if we were impotent to make them good."[1]

The actual U.S. record of humanitarian intervention in Roosevelt's expansionist "big stick" era was far from one of unalloyed altruism, as any scholar or student of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era is bound to point out. Bass claims, however, that the imperial and avaricious impulses underlying global engagement have been overstated at the expense of how an authentically humane commitment to global intervention developed in the nineteenth century. He delineates three overarching themes: First, "humanitarian interventions are not just newfangled experiments from the 1990s" (5). Second, "freedom at home can help promote freedom abroad. As domestic liberalism grew up in Britain, the United States, and, to some extent, France, the governments there found their foreign policy being pushed by their own homegrown freedoms" (6). Third, "there is something to be learned from the way that diplomats in the nineteenth century managed the practice of humanitarian intervention" (8).

Bass aims at a popular audience by leveraging history to verify that there "really is such a thing as humanitarianism" (19). He locates it in a long tradition of international moralizing, then he seeks to demonstrate that interventions couched in the language of "humanity" are something that "realism cannot explain away" (3–8, 19). Bass reveals a complicated portrait of the emerging politics of human rights. The motivations behind numerous interventions often encompassed a range of strategic, imperial, religious, ethno-racial, and commercial factors along with core elements of humanitarianism. Some of the most compelling sections of *Freedom's Battle* deal with this messy set of rationales and the unintended consequences of tackling a humanitarian project in a distant land. Excellent early sections of the book explore the Greek revolution of the 1820s, and subsequent sections cover massacres and the role of interventionism in Syria and Bulgaria throughout the century.

This book has much to offer in linking nascent American humanitarian thinking to rising global economic and military power and in situating these intellectual and structural changes within a broader Western and historical perspective. One superb, concise chapter examines American responses to

[1]Theodore Roosevelt, Annual Address, Dec. 6 1904, *American Presidency Project* document archive, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29545.

the Armenian genocide. As the horrors of the mass Turkish genocide of Armenians became widely known in the fall of 1915—headlines proclaimed the immense tragedy: "500,000 Armenians said to have perished"—American popular opinion turned dramatically toward the Armenian cause. In response to public pressure, Woodrow Wilson, derided by Bass as "the American Gladstone," issued statements but took little meaningful action.

Pitting Wilson against Roosevelt in a personal struggle over the Armenian issue and foreign policy more broadly, Bass demonstrates Roosevelt's firm commitment to Armenia. Roosevelt waged a national campaign against what he saw as the Wilson Administration's neutrality, ineffectual relief efforts, and impotent diplomacy. Though Wilson lobbied personally and pushed diplomatically for pressure against the Turkish government from 1915 to 1918, these efforts appear remarkably weak given the scope of crimes known then. Indeed, Roosevelt, always hawkish and decisive, cited the atrocities in Armenia to justify a call in October 1915 for immediate U.S. military intervention in Turkey. He donated $1,000 from his Nobel Peace Prize funds to support Armenian relief and earmarked the donation to an activist who "has never sought to excuse or justify what I regard as our inexcusable dereliction in duty in having failed to declare war on Turkey" (332).

During the brief period after World War I that historian Erez Manela termed the "Wilsonian Moment," Armenian leaders continued to seek U.S. help and protection but to no avail. Engagement with works by Manela or Frank Ninkovich might have enhanced Bass's account of Armenia's place in the dynamic cosmopolitanism of late-nineteenth-century U.S. internationalist development as well as Wilsonianism and post-World War I geopolitical maneuvering.[2] Ultimately, Bass argues that U.S. inaction and the series of events regarding Armenia from the 1890s to 1920s shine a bright light on the catastrophic limits of U.S. political will: "Wilson's abdication in the face of genocide in 1915 set the stage for a century of democratic U.S. indifference to the need for humanitarian intervention" (376).

Freedom's Battle makes the case for stronger commitments to intervention in exceptional instances of human suffering. Bass cautions that the lessons of nineteenth-century interventionism rest in nations' desire and ability to limit the "size and duration of their military missions," set "spheres of

[2]Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York, 2007); Frank Ninkovich, Global Dawn: *The Cultural Foundations of American Internationalism, 1865–1890* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); and Ninkovich, *Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy since 1900* (Chicago, 1999).

influence" to oversee human rights, and establish "multilateral practices of consultation" to spread the burdens of protecting rights across nations and peoples (8, 380–82). In all, *Freedom's Battle* is an impressive and also thoroughly polemical book. Historically, it encourages an examination of the nineteenth century to understand the historical roots of contemporary Western humanitarian interventionism. Politically, it decries major democracies today for appearing no more likely than previous great powers to shoulder the crucial responsibilities of containing and preventing humanitarian disasters and maintaining a humane world order.

Christopher McKnight Nichols
University of Pennsylvania