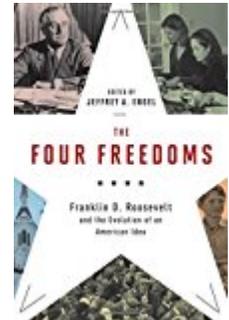


**Jeffrey A. Engel, ed.** *The Four Freedoms: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Evolution of an American Idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 248 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-937621-6.



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Jeffrey A. Engel, founding director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University (SMU), has assembled five scholars to discuss Franklin D. Roosevelt's four freedoms, from World War II to the current national security state. Engel provides the introduction as well as chapter 1, which sets the context for FDR's enunciation of the four freedoms in his 1941 State of the Union message. Linda Eads of SMU, a former deputy attorney general in Texas, considers freedom of speech; Tisa Wenger of Yale University discusses freedom to worship; Matthew Jones of the London School of Economics examines freedom from want; and Frank Costigliola of the University of Connecticut analyzes freedom from fear. William Hitchcock of the University of Virginia summarizes what he calls "the strange career of the Four Freedoms since 1945" in the final chapter.

All of the essays are exemplary, though each of the four freedom examinations are narrowly conceived analyses rather than comprehensive histories of how Americans have thought about

and implemented each freedom domestically and internationally. Engel's introduction sets the pace by offering that "freedom" is a highly contested term and that FDR "sold Americans on his vision of freedom, and ... made the four freedoms central to the way ensuing generations defined freedom," which required governmental intervention even as Americans failed to implement his ideals at home and abroad (p. 13). Engel jumps from FDR to President Bill Clinton, then presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama to make salient points about freedom, government, and foreign affairs (while introducing the subsequent chapters), but in doing so he overemphasizes the impact of presidents on history while deemphasizing the fifty years between FDR and Clinton. Although the essays do not neglect that history as much as the introduction does, they tend to follow Engel's lead. This makes the volume less useful for those who do not specialize in post-World War II US history.

Although originally disconcerting, this is not a serious flaw, for the quality of the essays overcomes it easily. Engel opens with an essay that

puts Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech into the context of both the Great Depression and the looming world war, explains what FDR meant by the four freedoms, and tracks popular acceptance of them through Norman Rockwell's iconic *Saturday Evening Post* illustrations. Engel also introduces his central theme: that a paradox arose when Americans tried to instill their concept of freedom around the world. To make the four freedoms secure at home meant imposing an "informal empire" throughout the world (p. 185). This empire is itself partially defined by those freedoms.

The essays vary widely in their approach, but all argue a particular point rather than narrate a linear story. Eads examines freedom of speech through its legal history. She posits that the 1960s divided that legal history between a previous concern for protecting the community and a later concern for protecting the individual. She also examines current restrictions on speech in the United States and other nations that appear to bring the rights of the community back to the fore. She ends by noting that FDR's specific impact on that trajectory is ambiguous at best.

FDR's freedom to worship, according to Wenger, articulated a reconceptualization of religion in the nation. Certainly FDR retained the centrality of religious belief to the American identity that had pertained throughout the nineteenth century, but he signaled that hegemonic Protestantism had to allow Catholics and Jews to integrate as cultural Americans. Rockwell's *Freedom to Worship* illustration reflected this new tripartite arrangement. Like Rockwell's painting, Wenger incorporates African American religion but struggles to find solid footing. At the end, she seems to make her analysis of African American religion into a cat's paw for a timid discussion of the trouble other Americans have with according Islam an equal place. She offers no real discussion of how agnosticism, atheism, and smaller denominations fit.

In "Freedom from Want," Jones looks at the impact English economic policy and war aims, particularly the English debate on an "economic bill of rights," had on FDR (p. 127). He then examines how an American policy of prosperity at home and increasing standards of living as a diplomatic tool abroad affected the subsequent half-century. FDR's basic concept that freedom from want was economic security and that it relied more on an ideology of individual opportunity rather than on collective action was the foundation for American diplomacy during the Cold War. Jones argues that FDR abandoned his radical position of 1941 that favored mass democracy operating through government auspices when it became necessary to harness big business to prosecute the war. The price that big business extracted was privilege, domestically and in economic diplomacy. Dr. New Deal articulated the four freedoms in 1941; Dr. Win-the-War added a fifth—freedom of market economics—that dominated postwar America and its diplomacy. Jones points out example after example of how the ideology of a free market was at odds with many domestic and foreign economic programs into the 1980s, but he handles the history of the 1980s and 1990s too rapidly.

Costigliola's chapter, "Freedom from Fear," quickly abandons that soothing idea to examine, chillingly, how Roosevelt and his successors used fear to secure agreement with their policies. Costigliola notes that from FDR's 1933 inaugural address, and based on his terrifying struggle to recover from polio, he threaded the needle between stoking a paralyzing inchoate anxiety and promoting channeled fear in order to mobilize the body politic. Even his Four Freedoms speech was a tool to harness popular fear of authoritarianism in service of securing the sacrifices fighting the war required. Costigliola follows FDR's successors as they, too, stoked fear to promote anti-Communism, the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine, Mutually Assured Destruction nuclear policy, military adventurism, and the silly civil defense

strategies of basement bomb shelters and classroom duck-and-cover drills. When the Cold War ended in the late 1980s, he writes, Americans transferred their foreign affairs anxieties to the threat of terrorism identified with Islam. Costigliola notes that these anxieties, and America's engagement with the world after World War II, had less to do with Norman Rockwell's vision of "freedom from fear" than they did with Henry Luce's vision expounded in his "American Century" essay in *Life* magazine. Luce's Pax Americana became an informal empire that, ironically, did not secure freedom from fear for late twentieth-century Americans.

In his chapter, "Everywhere in the World: The Strange Career of the Four Freedoms since 1945," Hitchcock summarizes the history and fate of the freedoms FDR articulated in 1941. He rightly claims that FDR "proposed nothing less than the globalization of the New Deal," an idea that appealed to the industrialized world but that failed when applied elsewhere (p. 193). Driven by an ideology of Americanism—the values he saw that the nation shared—that he wanted to impart to the world, FDR could not control the future. He, therefore, based his war aims and ideas about the postwar world on the past. Unfortunately, World War II and the Cold War set a new world order and economy into motion. Domestically, many of the New Deal programs endured even as anti-New Dealers red-baited them, and other Western nations retained or expanded their own social democracies replete with freedom, and even the Soviet Union copied the rhetoric of Western freedom as it defined freedom according to its own policy needs and history. Hitchcock tracks the rhetoric and implementation of the four freedoms through the Cold War and, more interestingly, through the anticolonial wars that followed World War II and the stumbling of the American economy after 1969. His is a sad tale of promise unfulfilled, and probably unfulfillable from its outset. Nevertheless, Hitchcock reminds us that "to honor Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, we must do

so by recalling that they were a product of a remarkable time in American life" (p. 217).

This volume will not satisfy a general reader seeking a narrative of the postwar world viewed through the lenses of the four freedoms. It will satisfy those who are cognizant of those narratives but want to see how these very particular but prosaic American concepts—freedom of speech, freedom to worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear—fared in the highly altered world that followed FDR's articulation of them in January 1941.

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