

post-1898 “ownership of distant possessions and [the] many sharp struggles for foreign trade,” Woodrow Wilson wrote in a widely used textbook, meant that “the President can never again be the mere domestic figure he has been throughout so much of our history.” As the United States “has risen to first rank in power and resources,” so the president “must stand always at the front of our affairs, and the office will be as big and as influential as the man who occupies it.” Wilson prophesied:

Men of ordinary physique and discretion cannot be Presidents and live, if the strain be not somehow relieved. We shall be obliged always to be picking our chief magistrates from among wise and prudent athletes—a small class.¹²

Roosevelt, the disciple of “the strenuous life,” seemed perfect for the role. He believed that only the president could conduct foreign policy. Congress was too large and unwieldy. Public opinion, TR privately declared, was “the voice of the devil, or what is still worse, the voice of a fool.” But he went to great lengths to ensure that public opinion was with him—or at least not against him. He, indeed, used the White House as a “bully pulpit,” went on frequent speaking engagements, and carefully cultivated powerful journalists in Washington. When a New York State Supreme Court justice once tried to limit the president’s power, TR dismissed him as an “amiable old fuzzy-wuzzy with sweetbread brains.”¹³

More directly, Roosevelt used the president’s power as commander in chief of the armed forces to dispatch U.S. troops as he saw fit in Latin America. Once when Congress refused to accept a treaty he had made, Roosevelt circumvented Congress with an “executive agreement.” Such an agreement could be one of two types: authorized by congressional legislation, or—as became too common—made by a president on his own authority. A little-known device until the 1890s, presidents have used it since far more than treaties because an executive agreement is not submitted to Congress, as a treaty must be. It is an agreement between the president and another government. The real difference between the two is that treaties are binding on all parties as long as they are in force, but an executive agreement is technically binding only as long as the president who signed it is in power. That was good enough for Roosevelt. He judged (correctly) that future presidents would uphold his agreements—in part because they would want their successors to uphold their deals. Most notably, TR ignored Sen-

ate opposition by taking over the Caribbean country of Santo Domingo between 1905 and 1907. One angry congressman exclaimed that Roosevelt had “no more use for the Constitution than a tomcat has for a marriage license.”¹⁴

But that was not entirely accurate. As a student of American history, Roosevelt had great respect for the Constitution. As a politician as well as student of his nation’s history, however, he also had great respect for the need for American expansionism. And that turned out to be the problem. Americans, historian Robert Wiebe has argued, embarked on a “search for order” between 1865 and 1920. That well might have been so at home; given the long economic depression, general strikes, and social upheavals that struck the United States during those years, they understandably wanted peace and quiet. But it was not the case abroad. In their foreign policies, Americans valued a search for opportunity over the search for order. In Cuba, Hawaii, the Philippines, China, and Central America—and especially during the 1901–1913 years, in Cuba, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, China, and Mexico—Americans demanded opportunity for their trade, investment, and security needs. In every instance noted, the result in these countries was upheaval and, in several instances, revolution. But U.S. officials did not back off. They continued to demand economic and other rights, even if the demands climaxed in massive disorder. They valued those rights over the disorder the demands helped cause. At that point, Americans then demanded a new, more vigorous presidency to guarantee continued opportunities for their growing economic machine—and, if possible, to restore order in these foreign countries. The presidents, led by McKinley, Taft, and—most flamboyantly—Roosevelt, used military force to guarantee continued opportunity and, they hoped, order. Thus was born the twentieth-century “imperial presidency.”¹⁵

In this new world for U.S. opportunity, Roosevelt was determined to use his considerable energy and powers to the limit. Thanks to Lincoln, the Supreme Court, McKinley, executive agreements, and the worldwide quest of Americans for opportunity, those limits stretched far. Roosevelt colorfully demonstrated Woodrow Wilson’s insight: an aggressive foreign policy created a strong president. And vice versa.

EAST, NORTH, AND SOUTH TO AN ISTHMIAN CANAL

TR knew what he wanted to do with his new powers. He immediately moved to realize the American dream of a U.S.-controlled isthmian

canal in Central America. First, however, he had to break the 1850 Clayton-Bulwer Treaty that made Great Britain a full partner in any canal project. Roosevelt and his first secretary of state (and close friend), John Hay, terminated that treaty. They did so while actually strengthening U.S.-British relations, despite events that tested the relationship. The tests occurred in South Africa, Alaska, and then Central America.

In South Africa, the British had become bogged down in a bloody struggle with the Boers between 1899 and 1902. The Boers (a Dutch word for “farmers”) had settled at the southern tip of black Africa in 1652. The British seized the South African cape in 1795 and instantly clashed with the austere, Calvinist, isolated, and fiercely nationalistic Boers. In the 1830s, the Boers undertook the great trek north to escape British control. They created their own independent nation. Then, as diamonds and other mineral wealth were found in the 1870s, the Boers’ region became a focal point for European colonial power rivalry, and the British moved in to reassert control. At that point, U.S. economic interests rapidly increased in the region. Between 1895 and the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899–1900, for example, U.S. exports to South Africa tripled to \$20 million. Americans also believed that the British were more progressive and better able to “civilize” the black Africans, who represented the large majority of South Africans.

All-out war between the British and the Boers erupted in 1899. To everyone’s astonishment, during “Black Week” of December, the Boer troops inflicted the worst military defeat on the powerful British forces in living memory. Most Americans, remembering 1776, sided with the Boers. But U.S. officials, while remaining officially neutral, strongly sided with the British. American bankers floated loans to pay one-fifth of England’s war costs. Roosevelt and Hay were shaken by the British defeats. “It certainly does seem to me that England is on the downgrade,” the president wrote privately. But he understood the need to champion Anglo-Saxon values. Roosevelt quietly supported the British and refused to send any aid to the Boers until London’s armies turned the tide and won victory between 1900 and 1902. TR received few rewards for his help in South Africa. As historian Thomas Noer concludes, the United States supported Great Britain to ensure the entry of American goods through an open-door policy in South Africa, a policy that Roosevelt thought the British supported. But despite U.S. pressure and the growing interest of American blacks in South Africa after 1900, “this policy failed: British domination resulted in a decline of American economic influence and did little to improve the lot of the black African.”¹⁶

British problems in Africa, however, did allow Roosevelt to score two victories closer to home. The first involved a disputed boundary between Alaska and Canada that became enflamed after gold was found in 1896. TR was furious at the Canadians for advancing what he considered to be an empty claim. “I’m going to be ugly,” he warned his British friends. The president finally agreed to allow “six impartial jurists” to arbitrate the dispute. He showed his determination to have his way by dispatching troops to Alaska. Then he appointed three Americans who were neither “impartial” nor “jurists,” but U.S. politicians who completely shared TR’s views. The Canadian prime minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, rightly denounced the appointments as “an outrage.” He named two Canadian members, and the British named their own lord chief justice—who promptly voted with the Americans and handed Roosevelt most of the land. The Canadians cried that they had been double-crossed. To the Americans and the British, however, maintaining their improving relationship was worth giving away what was a small, if valuable, slice of Canada. For not the first or last time, Canadian interests were sacrificed for the sake of U.S.-British friendship.¹⁷

The most significant victory over the British came after “Black Week” in South Africa. London officials reversed themselves and agreed to discuss doing away with the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. The U.S. Senate, never reluctant to kick the British Lion as long as it was already badly wounded, pushed events along by introducing measures to build an American-owned canal regardless of the 1850 pact. In early 1900, Hay and the British ambassador to Washington signed the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, which allowed the United States to build and own—but not fortify—an isthmian canal. The U.S. Senate indignantly rejected the treaty and told Hay to obtain the right to fortify as well. The secretary of state was furious with the Senate and especially with Democratic presidential nominee William Jennings Bryan, who led the opposition: “He struck at [the treaty] in mere ignorance and malice,” Hay wrote a friend, “as an idiot might strike at a statue because he happened to have a hammer in his hand.”¹⁸ Hay nevertheless had no alternative, especially after the new president agreed with the Senate. A second Hay-Pauncefote Treaty was signed in November 1901. The United States gained the right to fortify the canal.

But where was the canal to be located? Official U.S. commissions between 1876 and 1901 recommended Nicaragua as the cheapest and most efficient route. Its rival, Panama (a province of Colombia), might have been cheaper, but the French company that owned rights to that route (Compagnie Universelle du Canal Interocéanique) demanded over

\$100 million. By 1901–1902, however, as the second Hay-Pauncefote Treaty took effect, the company fell under the control of two shadowy, skilled lobbyists who changed the course of isthmian history. Philippe Bunau-Varilla was a Frenchman with extensive contacts in Panama and Washington. William Cromwell was senior partner in the influential New York law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell; he enjoyed access to powerful leaders in Washington politics and New York finance. The two men reduced their company's asking price to \$40 million. Then, in June 1902, they pushed through Congress the Spooner Amendment, giving Roosevelt the right to pay \$40 million to the company and purchase a six-mile zone in Panama from Colombia. The lobbying of the two men had received heaven-sent help when a Nicaraguan volcano suddenly erupted and endangered the proposed route. Bunau-Varilla quickly put a picture of the volcano (which the Nicaraguans had, unfortunately for themselves, printed on their postage stamps) on the desk of everyone in Congress.

The secretary of state negotiated the Hay-Herrán Treaty that gave Colombia \$10 million plus \$250,000 annually for the six-mile zone. The Colombian legislature, however, rejected the pact and demanded more money. In truth, the Colombians hoped to stall until 1904, when the French company's charter was to revert to Colombia. The Latin American country would then gain—and Bunau-Varilla and Cromwell lose—\$40 million. Roosevelt blew up. All his considerable racism appeared. He refused to have those “banditti” in Latin America publicly humiliate and rob the United States. In truth, as Richard L. Lael observes in his important study of U.S.-Colombian relations, U.S. officials seemed ignorant of Colombia's deep problems as it emerged from a costly civil war, and “none of them seemed to realize, or seriously consider, the possibility that U.S. actions, as seen from Colombia, could legitimately be perceived as interventionist, dangerous, and imperialistic.” Roosevelt instead spread the word that he would not be displeased if Panama revolted against Colombia. The Panamanians needed little encouragement. Since at least the 1880s, they had developed a strong nationalist movement that repeatedly tried to obtain independence. As Panama grew more restless, U.S. armed forces had become extraordinarily active. One estimate concludes that those forces had spent a total of about 200 days ashore in Panama in various forms of intervention during the second half of the nineteenth century. It was the longest U.S. occupation of any foreign area until 1898.¹⁹

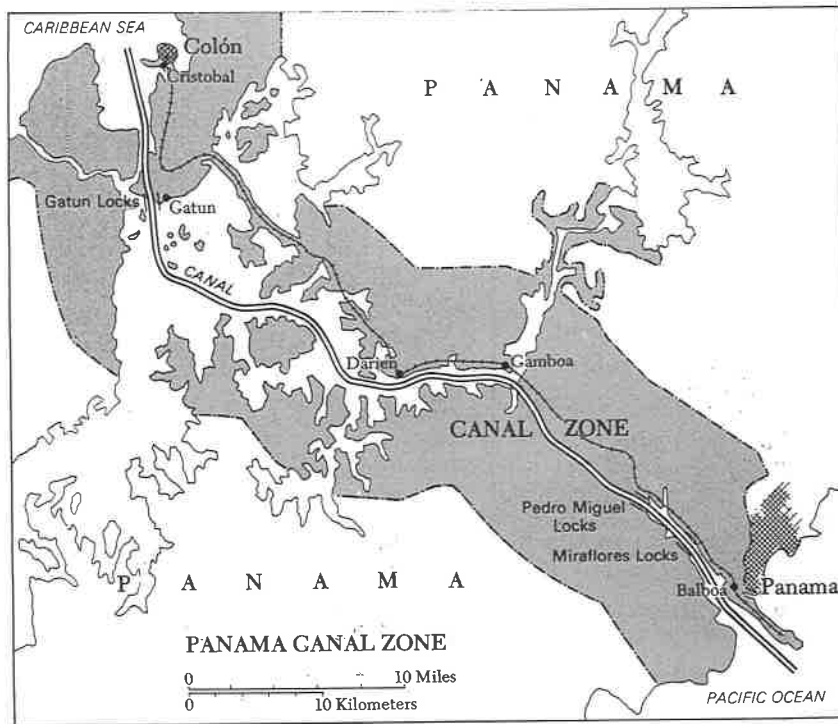
Under Bunau-Varilla's guidance and with Washington's support, the Panamanians again revolted in November 1903. This time, the U.S.



“Man's greatest liberty with nature,” the cutting of the Panama Canal, was a crucial step in building twentieth-century U.S. military and economic power. In the photo, the battleship Ohio sails through the passageway that opened in 1914.

warships prevented Colombian troops from landing in Panama to quell the revolt. Roosevelt recognized the new nation two days after the rebellion started. He signed a treaty giving Panama \$10 million plus \$250,000 a year for rights to a ten-mile-wide strip that cut the country in half. The United States fully guaranteed Panama's independence. U.S.-Colombian relations did not return to normal until a treaty gave Colombia \$25 million in 1921, two years after Roosevelt's death removed the loudest objection to making the pact.

Roosevelt and Hay found ingenious excuses for their actions in November 1903. They claimed that the 1846 treaty with Colombia gave the United States the right to maintain freedom of transit across the isthmus. The treaty did so, but certainly not against Colombia, which owned Panama and with whom the United States had made the 1846 pact. Nor did the treaty require Colombia to allow a canal to be built. Another rationale for the action was offered by TR's close friend, Oscar Straus, who claimed that the 1846 treaty was “a covenant running with the land”—regardless of whether Panamanians or Colombians owned



the land. A State Department lawyer dismissed Straus's interpretation with the joke that it turned out to be a "covenant running (away!) with the land." The real reasons for Roosevelt's action were his determination to build a canal and the U.S. naval power that enforced his will. As for the Panamanians, they gained independence but lost part of their country. They soon claimed title over the ten-mile-wide strip, but the United States effectively closed it off and controlled the territory. John Hay justified U.S. rights with the phrase "titular sovereignty," a claim so vague that Washington officials could not define or defend it when Panamanians demanded the return of their land (and the canal) in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁰

At a cabinet meeting, TR vigorously gave his reasons for taking the canal zone, then loudly challenged his advisers: "Have I defended myself?" Elihu Root answered, "You certainly have Mr. President. You have shown that you were accused of seduction and you have conclusively proved that you were guilty of rape." Roosevelt, of course, would never admit to having doubts about his act. He had overcome Colombia's opposition. He also overcame domestic opposition. But leading

newspapers, led by the *New York Times* and the Hearst journals, claimed (in Hearst's words) that the "Panama foray is nefarious. Besides being a rough-riding assault upon another republic over the shattered wreckage of international law and diplomatic usage, it is a quite unexampled instance of foul play in American politics."²¹

Most Americans, however, overwhelmingly approved Roosevelt's actions. They cared about the canal, not about the means he used to acquire it. TR made "the dirt fly," as he put it, and in 1906 paid a personal visit to witness the construction. It marked the first time a president had ever left the United States while in office. Roosevelt saw miraculous engineering feats being performed as the waterway cut through Panama's mountains and lakes. The United States was completing the biggest construction job in history. He also watched medical history being made as American scientists discovered how to find and kill the mosquito that caused malaria and yellow fever, diseases that had destroyed the French effort in the 1880s. With the opening of the canal in 1914—"the greatest liberty Man has ever taken with Nature," in the words of British ambassador James Bryce—the distance between New York and San Francisco by boat shrank from 13,615 miles to 5,300 miles. U.S. merchants and warships now moved easily between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. And Americans grew even more sensitive about disorder in the region surrounding their canal.

A GREAT DEPARTURE: THE ROOSEVELT COROLLARY

Long before he obtained the canal area, TR understood the importance of the most hallowed of U.S. foreign policies, the Monroe Doctrine, and how it had to be enforced. "There is a homely adage that runs 'speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far,'" he told the Minnesota State Fair audience in 1901. "If the American nation will speak softly and yet build and keep at a pitch of the highest training a thoroughly efficient navy, the Monroe Doctrine will go far."²²

The danger to the doctrine no longer was British expansionism. London officials were preoccupied with Africa and Europe. The danger came from two other sources. The first, Germany, was not obvious and worried mainly U.S. military planners. Modern U.S. military planning began in 1900, when McKinley established the navy's General Board. (It was created largely so that war hero Admiral Dewey could occupy himself with war games instead of running against McKinley for the presidency.) In 1905, Secretary of War Elihu Root created the



Don't forget that in the mild Dr. Jekyll there lurks the unsafe Mr. Hyde
—Milwaukee News

This cartoon of 1904 from the Milwaukee News—"Don't forget that in the mild Dr. Jekyll there lurks the unsafe Mr. Hyde"—is not only critical of Roosevelt the campaigner, but also indicates why cartoonists loved to draw the always active, colorful president.

Army General Staff. That year, an interservice planning group, the Joint Army and Navy Board, was also set up. A global foreign policy needed sophisticated military planning. In the most sensitive region, the Caribbean, the planners grew to fear the growing navy and imperial ambitions of Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany. The kaiser was getting at cross-purposes in Europe, Africa, and Asia with England, TR's closest ally. Historians later discovered that in 1899, the kaiser actually ordered plans drawn up for possible war against the United States. A lack of ships forced him to stop the planning.²⁵

The second danger to the Monroe Doctrine was well known, even blatant. Frequent revolutions in the smaller Caribbean–Central American nations were an open invitation for Germany and other powers to intervene to protect their citizens—and perhaps to stay indefinitely. Much as the United States feared Soviet involvement in Latin American revolutions after 1960, so Americans feared the European presence in the area long before the Russian Revolution of 1917. At first, in 1901–1902, Roosevelt thought that the Europeans were justified in intervening to protect their citizens and property and to collect just debts, as long as they did not remain. Then in 1902–1903, Germans, French, and British took TR at his word and used force to collect debts owed to them by Venezuela.²⁴

An uproar ensued in the United States. It grew when the International Court of Justice at The Hague ruled that the Europeans acted within their rights. The U.S. State Department warned Roosevelt that

the ruling put "a premium on violence" and undermined the Monroe Doctrine.²⁵ The Europeans had been careful not only to keep the president informed of their plans, but even to indicate their recognition of the Monroe Doctrine. Roosevelt nevertheless knew he was in a tight spot. He could not tolerate major European intervention in the region, but if he opposed it, the Europeans would demand that he make the Latin Americans behave properly. "These wretched republics cause me a great deal of trouble," he lamented.²⁶

His moment of decision came in 1904. In Santo Domingo, whose harbors and customhouse Americans had been eying since at least 1870, U.S. business groups came into conflict with German and French interests. The U.S. minister to Santo Domingo, William F. Powell, used the threat of Germany to convince the U.S. government to intervene directly on behalf of American bankers and shipping companies. These foreign rivalries in turn triggered internal disorders. In late 1904, TR declared that he intended to stop the threat of possible revolution. He arranged the payment of debts to Europeans by seizing the customshouses. The president announced his policy to Congress in December 1904. Reviewing major themes of post-1865 as he gave a history lesson to Congress, TR stressed his belief in the obligations—and rights—of "civilized" nations as he outlined what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine:

It is not true that the United States feels any land hunger or entertains any projects as regards the other nations of the Western Hemisphere save such as are for their welfare. All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous. . . . Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power. . . . We would interfere with [Latin Americans] only in the last resort, and then only if it became evident that their inability or unwillingness to do justice at home and abroad had violated the rights of the United States or had invited foreign aggression to the detriment of the entire body of American nations.²⁷

Roosevelt's action pleased U.S. businesses in the country as well as the president, Carlos Morales, whom they supported. But many Santo Domingans disliked the idea of the United States having a blank check to interfere in their affairs. Morales finally had to sign the treaty while



This Argentine cartoon, published in a Buenos Aires newspaper in early 1905, provides a growing Latin American view of U.S. foreign policy. An Uncle Sam figure, with the head of Theodore Roosevelt, reaches throughout the hemisphere with the heavy hand of the Monroe Doctrine. Santo Domingo is depicted as the small island below Cuba and between Uncle Sam's hands.

U.S. warships protected him from his own people. That, however, turned out to be the least of TR's problems, for next the treaty was rejected by the U.S. Senate: it refused to throw an American protectorate over the restless country. Roosevelt effectively thumbed his nose at the Senate by signing an executive agreement with Morales. U.S. government agents and bankers, led by J. P. Morgan and Kuhn, Loeb and Company, took over control of Santo Domingo. They paid off the debt owed the Europeans.

Roosevelt saw his action not as imperialism, but as work that a "policeman" must do to maintain order among less civilized people. As he privately wrote a friend in 1904:

I want to do nothing but what a policeman has to do in Santo Domingo. As for annexing the island, I have about the same desire to annex it as a gorged boa constrictor might have to swallow a porcupine wrong-end-to. . . . I have asked some of our people to go there because, after having refused for three months to do anything, the attitude of the Santo Domingans has been one of half chaotic war towards us.²⁸

The gorged-boa-constrictor analogy was appropriate, given that the United States was trying to digest Hawaii; the Philippines (which TR was beginning to see as "our Achilles heel" because it was so vulnerable to such powers as Japan), Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Panama. All had been brought within the American orbit within just six years.

But a gorged boa constrictor also wants peace and quiet. Roosevelt's corollary marked a historic break from Monroe's doctrine and anticipated U.S. policy toward Latin America for the rest of the twentieth century. It did so for five reasons. First, Monroe's message had supported Latin American revolutions, but TR's opposed them. Second, Monroe had urged nonintervention in those revolts by all outside parties, including the United States. Roosevelt, however, declared that he would directly intervene to maintain "civilized" order. Third, Monroe had seen U.S. economic power acting in a traditional marketplace—that is, buying and selling according to rules set by the home country. But Roosevelt used his economic power to control that marketplace and bring it under U.S., not home-country, control. (One senator who bitterly opposed TR's action sarcastically observed that the U.S. Navy rallying cry had been that of a commander in the War of 1812: "Don't give up the ship boys"; now, however, a U.S. naval officer could cry: "We have met the enemy and they are ours. Advance the bid on Dominican bonds.")²⁹ Fourth, because Monroe had argued for keeping out of internal Latin American affairs, he had no need for the use of military power. But Roosevelt's policy depended on force. Between 1898 and 1920, U.S. troops entered Latin American countries no fewer than twenty times. Those nations were seen less as neighbors in the hemisphere than problems to be managed militarily. Finally, because Monroe's policy had urged abstention, Congress had no role and the president did not have to be concerned about constitutional problems with the legislature. Roosevelt, however, followed a course that constitutionally required obtaining Congress's assent (to pursue such policies, for example, as making war on foreign nations or making treaties to operate their customshouses). But he simply ignored Congress when it opposed him. His actions drew power out of the legislative branch and pulled it into the executive.

The Roosevelt Corollary opened a new era in hemispheric relations. Latin Americans fully understood. They moved to curb TR's claims. In 1907, the so-called Drago Doctrine (named after Argentina's foreign minister Luis María Drago) became accepted international law. It declared that no nation could use force to collect debts. TR strongly opposed the Drago dictum and finally acquiesced only after it was rad-

ically weakened. In 1911, the United States even expanded its new version of the Monroe Doctrine. Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge from Massachusetts, a close friend of Roosevelt's, learned that a Japanese company was angling to buy strategic Mexican territory. The Lodge Corollary, passed in a Senate resolution, declared U.S. opposition to the sale of any strategic area to a nonhemispheric company that might be an agent for a foreign government. The Japanese firm had earlier lost interest anyway, but the State Department used the resolution to discourage similar ventures after 1911. The Monroe Doctrine resembled U.S. industry and the president's powers: it grew larger all the time.

THE FATEFUL TRIANGLE: THE UNITED STATES, CHINA, AND JAPAN, 1900–1908

Roosevelt fervently believed that the American future rested on events in Asia—the new Far West—as well as on those in the Western Hemisphere. He had led the fight to take the Philippines and completely supported the open-door policy. His beliefs were bolstered by his close friend, Brooks Adams. Grandson of John Quincy Adams, Brooks was a brilliant eccentric who believed that he had discovered a historical “law” proving that the world’s money center had moved ever westward over a thousand years. Following the sun, it had jumped from the Mediterranean to Paris and then to London. Now, he believed, it was poised once again to bestow greatness and wealth on a people. The only question was whether it would turn west to New York, or lurch east toward Germany and Russia. Brooks Adams saw the 1898–1900 triumphs “as the moment when we won the great prize. I do believe that we may dominate the world, as no nation has dominated it in recent time.”⁵⁰

But to reach, then remain at, the peak of world power, Americans had to conquer the world’s greatest market and cheapest labor supply: China. And to do that, Adams told Roosevelt, the United States had to use its vast resources—but also strong government involvement—to build the cheapest, most efficient transportation system to carry its goods to Asia. “We must have a new deal . . . , we must suppress the states, and have a centralized administration, or we shall wobble over,” Adams declared. Or, as he told TR, Americans “must command the terminus in Asia—if we fail in this we shall break down.”⁵¹ The president responded in July 1903 that he agreed: “We must do our best to pre-

vent the shutting to us of Asian markets. In order to keep the roads to these terminals we must see that they are managed primarily in the interest of the country.”⁵² Out of such ideas emerged laws, pushed especially by Progressives such as TR, that created new central-government agencies to regulate the railroads and make the society more efficient.

In foreign policy, such ideas led Roosevelt, Hay, and Adams to try to guarantee an open door to the China market by supporting Japan (who seemed to agree with U.S. aims) and opposing Russia’s attempts to colonize Manchuria and control Korea. Secretary of State Hay believed that if TR gave the Japanese “a wink,” they would “fly at the throat of Russia in a moment.” When some Americans feared such a “wink” might make Japan supreme in Asia and perhaps create disorder inside Russia, Hay dismissed the critics as members “of that highly respected family, the common or barnyard ass.” Roosevelt warmly supported the historic 1902 alliance between Japan and Great Britain, which further isolated Russia in the Far East. And as the rivalry between Tokyo and St. Petersburg grew hot, TR sided with Japan.

In 1904, the Japanese launched a surprise attack that destroyed most of Russia’s Pacific fleet. Americans supported Japan. Leading Jewish bankers who had vivid memories of Russia’s recent anti-Semitic attacks provided war loans to Tokyo. The Japanese government worked through these bankers to float the first major foreign-government loan ever offered to American investors.⁵³ In the bright glow of Japan’s early victories and TR’s Latin American triumphs in 1903–1904, few doubted his policies. One who did, however, was Henry Adams. The brother of Brooks, a close friend of the president’s, and perhaps the greatest of all American historians, Henry Adams eerily prophesied in 1904 that Americans—and the world—had stumbled down the wrong road:

Everybody is interested, and excited, and all are anti-Russian, almost to a dangerous extent [he wrote privately]. I am the only—relative—Russian afloat, and only because I am half-crazy with the fear that Russia is sailing straight into another French revolution which may upset all Europe and us too. A serious disaster to Russia might smash the whole civilized world.⁵⁴

In 1905, Henry Adams’s prophesy began to come true. Revolution erupted in Russia. The tsar smashed it, but other European monarchs grew worried. They had asked Roosevelt to try to mediate a peace, and TR agreed, in part because he feared that Japan lacked the resources to fight a long war against Russia. He called the two sides to meet at