

Creating the American Century

In his last work before his death in 2014, American historian Martin J. Sklar analyzes the influence of early twentieth-century foreign policy makers, focusing on modernization, global development, and the meaning of the “American century.” Calling this group of government officials and their advisers – including business leaders and economists – the “founders of US foreign policy,” Sklar examines their perspective on America’s role in shaping human progress from cycles of empires to transnational post-imperialism. Sklar traces how this thinking both anticipated and generated the course of history from the Spanish–American War to World War II, through the Cold War and its outcome, and to post-9/11 global conflicts. The “founders’” legacy is interpreted in Wilson’s Fourteen Points, Henry Luce’s 1941 “American Century” *Life* editorial, and foreign policy formulation to the present. Showing how modernization has evolved, Sklar discusses capitalism and socialism in relation to modern democracy in the US and to emergent globalizing forces.

Martin J. Sklar (1935–2014) was an American historian best known for originating the concepts of corporate liberalism, the disaccumulation of capital, and the capitalist/socialist mix. His books include *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890–1916: The Market, the Law and Politics* (Cambridge, 1988) and *The United States as a Developing Country: Studies in US History in the Progressive Era and the 1920s* (Cambridge, 1992). Sklar was the founding editor of several journals and a former Professor of History at Bucknell University.

Creating the American Century

*The Ideas and Legacies of America's
Twentieth-Century Foreign Policy Founders*

MARTIN J. SKLAR



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Five Secretaries of State, 2005–1902: Back to the Future

Development, transparency, and democracy reinforce each other. That is why the spread of freedom under the rule of law is our best hope for progress . . . this is a time of unprecedented opportunity for the transatlantic Alliance. If we make the pursuit of global freedom the organizing principle of the twenty-first century, we will achieve historic global advances for justice and prosperity, for liberty and peace. But a global agenda requires a global partnership . . . history does not just happen; it is made.

Condoleezza Rice, 2005

The fascinating thing, when you have served in this office [Secretary of State] is . . . that, however different one's approach when one enters, one comes to be united in a realization that the national interest of the United States is not something that can be invented in every administration. The national interest of the United States in the search for peace and progress in the world has some fundamental aspects to it. And so we are driven back to certain core principles.

Henry Kissinger, 1997

For the bigger part of the [twentieth] century, the world had witnessed a titanic struggle between two visions of the future. Both were revolutionary: one based on freedom and flexibility, the other based on central power and control . . . It was as though a gigantic experiment had been conducted and the world was the laboratory. One group of countries had organized themselves through totalitarian and repressive government, with . . . an economy planned

vi *Five Secretaries of State, 2005–1902: Back to the Future*

and managed from the center . . . The other group of countries organized political life more or less openly, with the rule of law and elected leaders and with economic systems based on markets, incentives, and private property . . . The situation in foreign affairs [by the end of the 1980s] had been transformed in one of the truly revolutionary periods in the international politics of the century. A sea change of immense importance had occurred.

George P. Shultz, 1993

In the nineteenth century an international system of sorts not only kept the peace for a century but also provided highly successful economic working agreements. It brought about the industrialization of Europe and of many other parts of the world – our own country, for one . . . This was accomplished by the export of capital, primarily by Great Britain, but also by all of Western Europe . . . a system for the export of capital, much greater than our present . . . efforts, is necessary. The system has been destroyed which expanded the power of Western Europe . . . One to replace it will be devised, managed, and largely (but not wholly) financed by the United States; otherwise, it is likely to be provided by the Soviet Union, under circumstances destructive of our own power.

Dean Acheson, 1958

The “debtor nation” has become the chief creditor nation. The financial center of the world, which required thousands of years to journey from the Euphrates to the Thames and the Seine, seems passing to the Hudson between daybreak and dark.

Every young and growing people has to meet, at moments, the problem of its destiny . . . The fathers are dead; the prophets are silent; the questions are new, and have no answer but in time . . . The past gives no clue to the future. The fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? We are ourselves the fathers! We are ourselves the prophets! The questions that are put to us we must answer without delay, without help – for the sphinx allows no one to pass.

John Hay, 1902

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> ix
Prelude: American Century and World Revolution	xi
PART ONE. ORIGINS	
1 The Philippines, China, and US Global Objectives (The Conant Factor)	3
2 A Panel at the AEA	65
PART TWO. THE FOUNDERS’ AMERICAN CENTURY: THE TALE ONCE-TOLD	
3 World History: Evolving Cycles of Empires	109
4 US History: In the Evolving Cycle	116
5 Twentieth-Century World Politics and the US Role: Moving Beyond the Cycle to Universal Evolution	120
PART THREE. HISTORY’S AMERICAN CENTURY: THE TALE TWICE-TOLD	
6 1898 to 1941: American Century – Birth and Awkward Youth	129
7 World War and Cold War: American Century – Young Adulthood	139

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
8	Post-Cold War and 9/11: American Century Arrived	149
9	American Century Fulfilled and Revoked, or Nullified: From Empires to a Universal Humanity? Or, Cycles Forever?	162
	PART FOUR. BRINGING HISTORY BACK IN	
10	History in the US; the US in History	175
	<i>Index</i>	235

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Nao Hauser

Prelude: American Century and World Revolution

On February 22, 1902, the 170th anniversary of the birth of George Washington, Frank A. Vanderlip delivered an address to the Commercial Club of Chicago titled, “The Americanization of the World.” The Chicago financial editor-journalist, who in 1897 became assistant secretary of the Treasury in the McKinley administration, had directed the financing of the war against Spain under the eminent Chicago banker and close friend and mentor Secretary of the Treasury Lyman J. Gage. Vanderlip was now vice-president of the Rockefeller-aligned National City Bank of New York, protégé of Wall Street titan James Stillman, and in 1909 would succeed Stillman as the bank’s president. Vanderlip personified an intersecting of the spheres of intellect, government, and modern business in US foreign-policy making. On this occasion, he spoke to the assembled Chicago business, political, and civic leaders about his recent travels for the bank in Europe and England, and perspectives they cast upon the US role in world affairs.

Vanderlip reported the belief circulating among the knowledgeable and powerful across the Atlantic that the twentieth century would see “the Americanization of the world.” It was a phrase, he noted, “fine, round, full sounding,” that originated not “in the mouth of a bumptious Yankee, but was coined by a keen Englishman,” whom Vanderlip described as the “Radical of the Radicals,” the renowned editor of the journal *Review of Reviews*, William T. Stead, whose book, bearing the “full sounding” phrase as its title, was about to be published. Among Stead’s “extravagant predictions regarding our future,” Vanderlip said, were the Briton’s “assertions that we are to dominate not only the industrial and commercial

situations, but political events also, and even that England's greatest hope lies in frankly throwing in her lot with the Americans."¹

Indicating how seriously held, across the Atlantic, was this idea of American ascendancy, Vanderlip noted that "at the opposite extreme of political life in England," the editor of what he identified as "Great Britain's most conservative and influential newspaper" (probably the *Times* of London) told Vanderlip: "The thing that I see in the political future is the United States of the world. The century which has just closed is Great Britain's. The century which has just begun is yours. The growth and progress of America are irresistible."²

Vanderlip gave it as his "firmest conviction in America's ultimate destiny" that the Britons were right: "The twentieth century is America's century . . . we are to be the dominating influence in the industrial affairs of the world," he stated, "we may come to a dominating position in the financial affairs of the world in time . . . [and] we are rapidly coming to a dominating political position." The "Americanization of the world" meant "industrial progress . . . commercial invasion . . . growth, development, the conquest of markets and the extension of influence." America's global "commercial invasion" was a necessary function of its own national "industrial development," which had brought the US "to a point where the world's markets are of prime importance to us." As these trends continued, and as "we shall occupy easily the commanding position in many of the world's industrial fields," Vanderlip said, it "needs no prophet to see that we have before us a role of tremendous importance" in world affairs. "All this new power . . . carries with it new responsibilities, as power always carries responsibility." Americans, therefore, could not "look soberly at the conditions which have developed . . . without recognizing that we have come to an entirely new era in the national life."³

The world need not fear its Americanization, because, Vanderlip explained, in "gaining that predominance we will advance all other people with us," while at the same time "we have been and will be enlightened and advanced by every point of superiority which any other people possess." It followed that America's "broadening influence in industry, finance, and politics will carry to the other nations of the earth, not defeat . . . but will bring to them all better methods, better conditions, better standards, higher political ideals, and finer conceptions of liberty and good government." The rise of the US, in other words, would mean not the fall of others, but the rise of all. Global human progress would succeed to the age-old cycles of history. The US, in short, was a

nation of universal significance. “All mankind is joint heir to this heritage and the whole world will ultimately be the richer.” Indeed, only insofar as Americanization really did have this universal meaning “will the American spirit become predominant.”⁴

Regarding ways and means, Vanderlip designated the nascent American large corporation as the basic agency of global Americanization: “I believe in the great corporation. I believe there is no more effective way for us to impress ourselves on the trade situation of the world than through these great industrial units that can project into the world’s markets the strength of their commercial position with irresistible force.” Not by arms, but by the “revolutionary changes” inherent in global economic development, would Americanization conquer. “There may be bruises caused in the first readjustments which are a part of such revolutionary changes,” but they “will be forgotten in the material benefit the readjustment will ultimately bring.” Vanderlip acknowledged that “we may ourselves have the larger share” of the world’s developing wealth, but still its growth would be “great enough to permit substantial benefit” for all countries. In summarizing what he called “the American ideal” inspiring the world’s Americanization, Vanderlip stated: “A victory of the best methods in industry, commerce, and finance; an ascendancy because of the best and fairest understanding between capital and labor; a triumph of the highest ideals of liberty and of political duty and responsibility – that is what I conceive we should mean by the Americanization of the world.”⁵

Vanderlip’s address to the Commercial Club of Chicago on that Washington’s birthday of 1902 may help us to realize that when Henry R. Luce in 1941 published his essay, “The American Century,” in the February 17 issue of his mass circulation *Life* magazine – a date exactly between the birthdates of Lincoln and Washington – he was engaging his editorial heart and mind in a US foreign-policy “tradition” already four decades old, not merely in the phrase but in a policy-making substance.⁶ In 1902, Vanderlip, like President Theodore Roosevelt, was looking forward to a beckoning future with an optimism strongly current in the US, and at odds with a troubled pessimism, a gnawing fear of a Western decline and decay, prominent in European, and even in some American, intellectual circles. In 1941, Luce was joining another President Roosevelt in recalling the US to its proper role in world history, at odds with a US recovering from economic depression and comforted in a psychic worldly withdrawal; at odds as well with a world succumbing to a regnant German and Japanese imperialism. In 1902, Vanderlip, like TR, was welcoming the impending birth of an American Century; in 1941, Luce,

like FDR, was seeking to rejuvenate an American Century from premature senescence and demise.

Luce's essay may be understood as part of a movement, submerged and on the defensive in the 1930s, to recall the US to its global mission, its "Manifest Duty," as Luce phrased it (in place of the older "Manifest Destiny"), against the "virus of isolationist sterility," which had "so deeply infected an influential section of the Republican Party." Luce emphasized the Anglo-American alliance in world affairs, with the US as senior partner, and now with Britain's full assent. He correlated an Americanizing globalization with both worldwide social democratic reform and the modernizing and preservation of US democracy itself: "The Party in power [Democratic Party] is the one which for long years has been most sympathetic to all manner of socialist doctrines and collectivist trends . . . the fear [among antiwar isolationists] that the United States will be driven to a national socialism, as a result of cataclysmic circumstances [i.e., a great war] and contrary to the free will of the American people, is an entirely justifiable fear." Nevertheless: "It can be said, with reason, that great social reforms were necessary in order to bring democracy up-to-date in the greatest of democracies." At the same time, neither President Franklin D. Roosevelt, nor the Republicans, nor the American people at large, were able to "make American democracy work successfully on a narrow, materialistic, and nationalistic basis . . . Our only chance now to make it work is in terms of a vital international economy and in terms of an international moral order." In this context, Luce explained, "In 1919 we had a golden opportunity . . . unprecedented in all history, to assume the leadership of the world . . . Wilson mishandled it . . . We bungled it in the 1920s and in the confusions of the 1930s we killed it . . . [but] with the help of all of us, Roosevelt must succeed where Wilson failed." Further: "This objective is Franklin Roosevelt's great opportunity . . . to go down in history as the greatest rather than the last of American Presidents . . . Under him and with his leadership we can make isolationism as dead an issue as slavery, and we can make a truly *American* internationalism something as natural to us in our time as the airplane and the radio" [Luce's italic].

As with Vanderlip, so with Luce, an American internationalism meant that the twentieth century was to be "a revolutionary century," not only "in science and industry," but also "in politics and the structure of society." It therefore meant "a revolutionary epoch," and "the world revolution." The very survival of US liberal democracy depended upon it; that is, the preservation and sustained vitality of US liberal democracy had become

Prelude

xv

a function of world revolution: “For only as we go out to meet and solve for our time the problems of the world revolution, can we know how to reestablish our constitutional democracy for another 50 or 100 years.” The American Century meant not the internationalism, or empire, of Rome, the Vatican, Genghis Khan, the Ottoman Empire, Imperial China, not that of Lenin or Hitler, nor even that of nineteenth-century Britain (these are all on Luce’s list), but the internationalism of “our Bill of Rights, our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, our magnificent industrial products, our technical skills,” and “an internationalism of the people, by the people, and for the people.” That is, it meant the universalization of democracy, human rights, liberty and equality, and progressive evolution, as understood in the modern Western political tradition, and in this sense, if “the world of the twentieth century . . . [were] to come to life in any nobility of health and vigor,” it had to be “to a significant degree an American Century.”

Whatever the differences of time and circumstances, and hence of wordage, style, and angle of appeal, the substantive similarities between the Luce and Vanderlip statements are striking, and particularly the themes of the US–UK alignment, progressive political and economic development, universality, world revolution, and the US as the driving force of world revolution. It may occur to the reader, as it has long occurred to this writer, that the agenda of US twentieth to twenty-first-century expansionism, imperialism, and internationalism has a distinct *left-wing* character, and moreover, that expansionism, imperialism, and internationalism have more strongly correlated with the Left side of US politics than the Right side through most of the nation’s history. (Think about it.)

Nevertheless, more is required to acknowledge the authenticity of a foreign-policy tradition and comprehend its meaning than even striking similarities in two statements, impressive as they may be in source and content, thirty-nine years apart. With this in mind, instead of applying from hindsight, or retrofitting, a preferred present-day meaning of “American Century” to past and current affairs, let us proceed *from* the past *to* the present in search of a historically evolving meaning in actual US foreign-policy making, and accordingly go back to policy-relevant thinking among US policy-forming leaders at the time around the turn of the twentieth century, when the US entered upon a new era in national and world affairs.

A consideration of this thinking, and its manifestation in policy and events, may serve to indicate a need, or at least a motive, to pursue

further inquiry into a set of interrelated questions: (1) the extent to which early twentieth-century US foreign-policy thinking *anticipated* major trends in twentieth-century world politics and the challenges and choices these trends would pose to US foreign-policy makers; (2) the extent to which the general trend of world politics and the US role in world affairs during the course of the twentieth century may have *realized* basic objectives in the thinking of early twentieth-century policy-forming US leaders; (3) the extent to which, more than having anticipated, this early twentieth-century thinking may indeed have *generated* and *shaped*, major trends and the general course of twentieth-century world affairs; (4) the extent to which, in other words, the US was not merely *reactive*, but decisively *proactive*, in world affairs; and (5) the extent to which the US role was deliberately and authentically revolutionary, or indeed the decisively revolutionary force, in world affairs. The inquiry may accordingly shed more light on the extent to which, and in what ways, the term, “American Century,” may usefully help to describe, other than ironically, satirically, pejoratively, ornamentally, or triumphally, the course of world affairs during the twentieth century, and equally, if not more so, their prevalent trends in the twenty-first.

In both Vanderlip’s usage and Luce’s are to be found two ways in which the “American Century” could play on the stage of world history: first, in that of the US becoming the leading, dominating, or “hegemonic” world power, as with Britain in the nineteenth century; and second, whether with or without a US hegemony, in that of twentieth-century world affairs increasingly and ultimately evolving in accordance with long-term US foreign-policy initiatives and objectives. A less dramatic, or less journalistic, way of stating the matter, a consideration of this thinking may reveal strong threads of continuity in the US role in world affairs from the 1890s to the 1990s and beyond, weaving into coherent patterns alike of historical continuity and epochal departures.

The thinking under consideration here, of which Vanderlip’s and Luce’s may be taken as representative extracts, ranged more broadly and ran more deeply than indicated by interpretations associated with such thematic terms as “Social-Darwin imperialism,” “end-of-the-frontier expansionism,” “TR realism,” and “Wilsonian idealism.” It was a trend of thought that was crystallizing and coming to prominence among US policy-forming leaders in the years around the turn of the twentieth century and the early years of the new century before World War I. Intellectually appealing as these other interpretations have been, if we cast the arc of our inquiry at a wider angle to include a larger universe of policy-forming intellect

and activity, other, more vitally formative and enduring dimensions of thought may become visible.⁷

It makes some substantial difference to conceive this thinking not as a fixed paradigm, but as a *set of thinking*, itself plastic and evolving, consisting in turn of components themselves varying and evolving, and which as a whole undergoes, as in the case of the individual's passage from birth and infancy to adulthood and maturity, continuous change in both responding to, and making, historical circumstances, and through that change, maintaining and realizing an essential identity.

The set of thinking, as it emerged around the turn of the twentieth century and in the early years of the century before World War I, may be found expressed in publications, state papers, and private papers, of such US leading figures as, in alphabetical order, and far from a complete list of eligibles, the following: Brooks Adams, Henry Carter Adams, A. Piatt Andrew, William J. Calhoun, John Bates Clark, Charles A. Conant, Herbert Croly, Henry P. Davison, Charles Denby, Lewis D. Einstein, Frederic Emory, John Foord, Arthur Twining Hadley, Hugh H. Hanna, John Hay, David J. Hill, Jacob Hollander, Edward M. House, Francis M. Huntington-Wilson, Jeremiah W. Jenks, Edwin W. Kemmerer, Philander C. Knox, J. Laurence Laughlin, Henry Cabot Lodge, Alfred Thayer Mahan, William McKinley, Edward S. Meade, Walter Hines Page, George W. Perkins, John R. Procter, Paul S. Reinsch, George E. Roberts, Theodore Roosevelt, Elihu Root, Leo S. Rowe, Edwin R. A. Seligman, Leslie M. Shaw, Sidney Sherwood, Herbert Knox Smith, Henry L. Stimson, Willard D. Straight, William Howard Taft, Frank A. Vanderlip, William English Walling, Paul Warburg, Frederick Wells Williams, Woodrow Wilson, Leonard Wood, Carroll D. Wright. Many more names could be added to the list.

Names such as these will suggest to those familiar with the US history at the time that the persons engaged in the set of thinking here under discussion included, in a large proportion, senior national political leaders, advisers to them, and appointees to national policy-forming or policy-implementing offices and commissions – that is, persons not merely exerting influence, or indirectly affecting policy, in some indeterminate degree, but directly engaged in its formulation and implementation.

As individuals and ensemble, they represented an emergent *social-institutional milieu*, interconnecting spheres of government, business, intellect, the law, journalism, civic association, the military, and higher education, in which individuals often worked in more than one of the spheres, either serially or simultaneously. The new milieu included a

growing corps of *service savants*, who although increasingly academia-based by 1900, were not yet as commonly so as by the later twentieth century, and who engaged as professional experts, not merely as elite citizens, in policy formulation and implementation. In other words, they represented expanding and intersecting spheres of policy-forming activity, which in the US at the time involved a growing number and a social density sufficient to forming a qualitatively new critical mass in US society, politics, and government. It was an early crystallization of a social-institutional milieu, which, while encompassing many subsidiary disagreements and varied perspectives, involved mutual acknowledgment and liaison, and a shared set of thinking, as a matter of professional dignity, obligation, and routine, or as Secretary of State George P. Shultz has phrased it, an “institutional memory,” grounded in what Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has referred to as “core principles.” Increasingly, the milieu functioned both to generate and to shape policy making, day-to-day and over the long run. As an emergent social-institutional milieu, it was becoming, in effect, a new “tradition” or “establishment” in foreign-policy making, having roots in evolving class relations and in past experience and traditions, but also embarking on distinctive departures corresponding with the passage from one era of US history to another, or as Vanderlip had phrased it, to “an entirely new era in the national life.”⁸

One of the implications of this is that it is fundamentally mistaken, or *ahistorical* – that is, not grounded empirically and contextually in the actual historical circumstances and events – to think about, or explain, the course of US foreign-policy making in terms decisively of a singular president or a handful of “influentials,” or “Wise Men,” or in terms of categories like (TR) Realism vs. (Wilsonian) Idealism, Isolationism vs. Internationalism, Liberalism vs. Conservatism, and more recently, Multilateralists vs. Unilateralists, Hawks vs. Doves, Hard Power vs. Soft Power, Right-wingers vs. Liberals, Neo-Conservatives vs. Realists, and so on. All these perhaps there were, but if so, as subordinate and ephemeral variables of an evolving social-institutional milieu forming and imposing an “institutional memory,” embedded in “core principles,” and working in a concrete historical context.⁹

The set of thinking under consideration here was in essence historical in method and content. This is quite apart from whether or not one considers the thinking to be “good history,” or agrees or disagrees with it. It sought to comprehend the present as a result of the past, and on that basis to anticipate the probable course of history in the future. In this way, by in effect defining the present historical era in terms of its

Prelude

xix

past derivation and feasible future tendencies, leaders could know, or at least decide with greater confidence, *what is to be done*, that is, what objectives and policies, short- and long-term, were possible, desirable, or necessary, and what was to be abandoned, changed, or rejected.

This runs counter to a widely held view that Americans are ahistorical in mentality and culture, or as it is often jocularly put, that they have a short – perhaps one-week – memory span. If so, it would truly make Americans “exceptional,” and indeed, it is a way of disparaging Americans and, in effect, dehumanizing them. Actually, and counterintuitive to some readers as this may be (whatever the case in recent years, to which we return at the end of the book), Americans in general, and especially the politically and civically engaged citizenry and their leaders, have been among the *most* historically conscious of the world’s peoples. Americans have been a people so little self-contained, so little formed or unified, *as a nation*, by remote common habitat, ethnicity, religion, custom, or legendary tradition, that thinking historically about their nation and its place in the world has been a matter of identity itself, of success and survival, of life and death. The more “rooted” a people, the more their identity may be a matter of kin, fixed legend, place-specific time, and timeless place, and less a matter of the flow, causal relations, purpose, and meaning of historical ideas and events across place and time. The more “rootless” a people, the more historically minded they will think and act, if they are to form a coherent society, nation, and civilization, and the stronger the tendency to combine a national identity with a universal-human history.

Progeny of Abraham, for example, those who became the Jews, “rootless” and wandering, then in bondage, then again wandering, emigrants and immigrants, over four centuries, and becoming a “mixed multitude” (Exodus 12: 38–41), fighting among themselves and conquering others, before becoming a settled nation, *invented* history, the *Old Testament* – along with the Talmud their Covenant with God, with the past, with one another, and with the future, a people of the just law, constantly disputing, interpreting, and changing the law, and keeping it all the same. The first great secular historians and lawmakers came from among peripatetic, emigrating, imperial Greeks and Romans of antiquity seeking to forge a common (cosmopolitan) civic identity.¹⁰ Christianity, arising among the Jews, was early spread by peregrinating evangelizers – emigrants and immigrants – a universal religious identity, sown and grown in earthly time and events, across and among the many Greek, Roman, and “barbarian” peoples, societies, and cultures. Western civilization: rooted in

the interplay of the “rootless” Judeo-Christian, Hellenic, and Roman traditions – faith and reason, law and history.

It is not without significance, and it is worthy of contemplation, that US identity begins with wandering “Old Testament” Protestants, heirs also to the Greek and Roman heritage, establishing a new Zion in a new Promised Land, with its city upon a hill and country-Whig soul – both the sacred and the profane. At the heart of American national identity are the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution – the national Covenant, along with its history and jurisprudence, the “Old Testament” and rule of law, a law always made and remade, interpreted and reinterpreted, always changing and always the same – a Republic, “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,” a people not so much law-*abiding* as law-making, law-changing, law-keeping, and law-centered: a people engaged in a continual creative tension and rejuvenating dialogue between original intent and changing circumstances, between “the fathers” and “the sons,” between a prior necessity and free will, between universal truths and variable principles, between constancy and progress, between the prophets and the practicalists, between present and past and future – in short, the very stuff of the historical mind. Historical discourse becomes, for the people of Abraham Lincoln, as with the people of Abraham, the core of US national identity, of US civilization. The nation of immigrants (including those held in bondage and emancipated), the nation of wanderers – from abroad and thence within and abroad again (new frontiers and open doors) – is a nation peculiarly of *historical* identity, and it forms the vital substance of its culture, its politics, its very coherence as a society. Hence, the lure of “multiculturalism” – really multiple *monoculturalisms* – and disdain of teaching and learning a *national* history, resonate among those who seek the *dis*-integration, the vanquishing, or the disappearance, of the United States.¹¹

The set of thinking considered here placed US affairs in the context of the nation’s own past history and development, in that of world history, and not only in that of contemporary world history but also in that of the history of the world – human history – from ancient times. It was *not* “American Exceptionalist” in kind. It viewed US history, however unique in some ways, as with every society, as nevertheless exemplary of universal-human evolutionary norms, patterns, or laws. On the universal-human scale, according to the thinking, US history represented a relatively advanced stage of evolution or development attained, for *historical* reasons, by “Anglo-Saxon” or Anglo-American and some other western European and transatlantic societies – those designated as exemplifying

“Western Civilization” – but a stage of development that was of universal access, and that therefore other societies, given the right historical conditions, were attaining to (for example, Japan), or would attain to, sooner or later.

The set of thinking may best be recognized both as rooted in the prophetic religio-historical tradition, and as a member of the growing body of nineteenth- to twentieth-century Euro-American cumulative-evolutionary thought, and on that account, as being in principle universal in application, that is, in principle, not racially, ethnically, or nationally exclusive, however much it acquired, in the usage of various thinkers and policy makers, the taint and corruption of racism or a “Eurocentric” chauvinism. It ranked stages of human history on a scale of lesser to greater development, lesser to greater advancement, less modern to more modern civilization, in accordance with cumulative-evolutionary premises. In this regard, there were essential similarities between the Americans here referred to – let us call them the American Twentieth-Century *Foreign Policy Founders* – and such nineteenth-century “Old World” thinkers as George W. F. Hegel, Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, Alexis de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, Henry Maine, Wilhelm Roscher, Gustav Schmoller, and Walter Bagehot. The later historical stages, exemplified by Britain, parts of western Europe, the United States, and some others, ranked as more advanced, consisting as they did of a more modern and higher civilization than the earlier stages, which if extending into modern times exemplified decadence and backwardness (for example, the Ottoman Empire, the Qing Empire of China, the czarist Russian Empire, Mughal India, the Spanish Empire, Ethiopia). Still, the countries of the later, higher stage displayed to the lesser developed societies, and by implication, to the world at large, their future, that is, if they happened to evolve along modern lines, or chose to do so, or were made to do so. As Marx said of Germany’s future, in its relation to the more industrialized Britain of the mid-nineteenth century: “*De te fabula narratur!* [the story is about you] . . . The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.”¹²

The set of thinking, accordingly, brought into common usage, in both scholarly and political spheres, in the US, a discourse and concepts regarding the classification of societies corresponding with their evolutionary progress, associated with such terms as “modern,” “pre-modern,” “advanced,” “backward,” “development,” “developed country,” “undeveloped country,” “less developed country.” The discourse and concepts

correlated closely with a transatlantic scholarly trend of thought that eventually came to be systematized and known as modernization theory.¹³

The set of thinking included perspectives that rendered world history since ancient times as understandable in terms of an evolving succession of predominant empires, which in rising and declining made their contributions to a process of cumulative human development. These perspectives resided in studies and ideas that critically explicated, assessed, and affirmed modern empire, as having some characteristics in common with past empire, but as having acquired other characteristics that substantially differentiated a more advanced modern empire from past modern and pre-modern empire: the term *imperialism*, instead of empire, more forcefully denoted dynamic or developmental processes of evolving sociocultural interrelations, rather than an inert or static entity, and hence came into some more common usage in the 1890s and early twentieth century.¹⁴

The differentiating characteristics of advanced modern imperialism could be viewed as holding the prospect of world history proceeding to a post-empire, or a post-imperialism, stage of development, and thus of humanity entering upon a profound departure in its historical development, one of epochal proportions, revolutionary both in substance and in implications – leading to a *novus ordo seclorum*.¹⁵ Such a departure, or “exceptionalism,” which some eighteenth-century US founders hopefully attributed to their new republic (in that case, a breaking of the Polybian cycle of political forms) could now be viewed as applicable not simply to one “exceptional” nation, but to a global humanity moving beyond the age-old evolution via the cyclical rise and decline of successive dominant empires, to a post-empire, noncyclical, and progressively evolving world order. This outlook was not an American Exceptionalism, not envisioning something outside or beyond universal processes, norms, or imperatives of historical evolution, even if the US might, by historical circumstance, be temporarily positioned to play an exceptional or uniquely singular role.

In this context, if the US was the most advanced of nations and poised to succeed to Britain’s position in world affairs, the “American Century” held the prospect, first, of the US rising to the position of the leading or dominant world power, with a continuing global spread of “Americanization” – that is, “modernization” – which, second, by its very nature, would eventually make not only unnecessary, but also impossible, dictation by the US, or any single nation or group of nations, in world affairs, and hence inaugurate a post-imperialism world: a world liberated

from cyclical repetition for a progressive universal-human evolution, in short, a new world order, a revolutionary evolution. Thus, the “American Century” as world revolution, and a twice-told tale: the second (post-imperialism) fulfilling by superseding the first (US as hegemonic). Twice-told also, in the *founders’* telling, and then in *history’s* telling, in the play of actual events throughout the twentieth century and as they were tending in the twenty-first.

Far from the end of history, this “American Century” implied a continuation of history, even if, and precisely because, it represented a new phase of human evolution, even a new departure, but then, again, not an end of history, but at the least a progressive variation on the evolving cyclical pattern or, presumptively and preferably, an inauguration of a new, universalized stage of cumulative-evolution. It may be recalled that Marx did not believe that the socialism-communism he anticipated represented an *end* of history, but quite the contrary, a *beginning* of what may be considered a more fully human, or more authentically human, history, prepared for by the past and evolving, or developing, from it. This part of his thinking may be considered presumptuous, arrogant, naive, even silly, but it was not an end-of-history outlook. In the larger sense, the Americans were Marxian, and Marx was American. The US and the “American Century”: the marriage of Locke and Marx, yielding the revolutionary trinity (once again, twice-told) of: (1) the laws of nature – and nature’s God; (2) the social contract – and the Covenant; (3) historical evolution – and creative Reason and Law in the world (Logos), or, in the German – pace Hegel and Pope Benedict XVI – *Geistische Vernunft*.¹⁶

Thus in Thy good time may infinite reason turn the tangle straight,
 and these crooked marks on a fragile leaf be not indeed.

W. E. B. DuBois, 1903

Notes

1. “The Americanization of the World. An Address delivered before the Commercial Club of Chicago, February 22, 1902, by Frank A. Vanderlip, Vice-President of the National City Bank of New York” (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1902), p. 2. A copy of this address, published as a fifteen-page pamphlet, is in the Vanderlip Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York City. On the Spanish–American War financing, see Vanderlip’s interesting and informative article, “Lessons of Our War Loan,” *Forum*, XXVI (Sept. 1898), pp. 27–36. The National City Bank was a principal forerunner of today’s Citibank within the larger Citigroup.

2. "Americanization of the World," p. 2.
3. Ibid., pp. 2, 4, 14. Cf. Vanderlip, *The American Commercial Invasion of Europe* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1903).
4. "Americanization of the World," pp. 14, 15.
5. Ibid., pp. 14, 15.
6. Henry R. Luce, "The American Century," *Life*, vol. 10, February 17, 1941, pp. 61–65.
7. The application of the frontier-expansion-Open Door theme to a comprehensive interpretation of the history of twentieth-century US foreign relations was a major historiographical milestone, because it opened the way to new research and fresh perspectives of sustained viability and influence, for better or worse. It is proper and necessary to recognize William A. Williams here for his seminal work in this respect, for example, his now classic book, first published in 1959, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., and subsequent editions by other publishers in various years). On his powerful impact on historical research and writing, especially at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in the 1950s–1960s, see, e.g., Lloyd C. Gardner, ed., *Redefining the Past: Essays in Diplomatic History in Honor of William Appleman Williams* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1986), Part I: Essays by William G. Robbins, Bradford Perkins, Ivan R. Dee, and David W. Noble, pp. 3–62. Williams emphasized the prominence in American policy-forming thought of the idea of Empire – on seemingly everyone's tongue now, but at that time disdained in prevalent academic and intellectual discourse – an idea prominent also in this book, as the reader will see, in considering the thinking of US leaders about US and world history, but the treatment of the idea of Empire here is not entirely the same as that by Williams, nor that by those wagging their tongues with it today – or moving their cursors – leftward and rightward.
8. The phrase and concept "institutional memory," at George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1993), pp. 33, 34. Henry Kissinger's point about "core principles" is at: "Foreign Policy Priorities on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century," *Third Annual Conference of Rice University's James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy*, Houston, TX, October 16, 1997 (typed transcript), p. 16. The other conference participants included former Secretaries of State Baker and Warren Christopher, former President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, former US President George Bush, and, by videotape, Secretary of State Madeline Albright.
9. This is neither to disdain, deny, nor detract from the importance of eminent individuals ("great persons") and the roles they play, and have played, in history – in indelibly shaping historical events and trends – but rather to suggest they are best understood not as idiosyncratic, singular, or *deus ex machina* "forces," but rather as forceful leaders participating in a strongly based social-institutional milieu acquiring or already carrying a broad intellectual/moral authority, and hence a governing legitimacy, in the society at large. It is thus that their successes and failures may bring great benefits and tragedies, joys and sorrows, progressive advances and ruinous disasters, which would not be the case were they idiosyncratic or "exceptional."

10. Cf., e.g., William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 193–194ff., re-development of Ionian (Greek) civilization and the creation of the polis, with similar currents shaping Roman civilization; and Nicholas Ostler, *Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin* (New York: Walker and Co., 2007), ch. 1, pp. 3–20.
11. Not *e pluribus unum*, but *ex uno multos*. From their standpoint, Barack Hussein Obama was their 2008 presidential candidate of choice, and his election signified the beginning of the end of the United States of America (Old Empire). Regarding the people of Abraham: “. . . the Old Testament writers . . . endowed history with immense importance, far greater importance than it had ever assumed in any previous culture. The God of Israel has made a pact, a covenant, with Israel; the working-out of this covenant year after year is history. [Par.] . . . the existence and purpose of man . . . becomes didactic and instructive about the future, with which the past is inseparably linked. The writing of history, then, became the driving force of action.” Michael Grant, *The Ancient Historians* (New York: Scribner’s, 1970; Barnes and Noble, ed., 1994), pp. 10–11, and see pp. 78–79. Also, McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, pp. 160, 161: “The historical writing of the Hebrews was infused with the religion of Yahweh, whose hand was seen guiding events . . . The biblical account of the exodus from Egypt is a striking example of the view that God revealed himself through history . . . [Par.] As a deity directing the course of history, Yahweh was unique in the Middle East . . . [Par.] The prophets became the pre-eminent spokesmen for the religion of Yahweh in early Hebrew society . . . [Par.] Yahweh controlled the destiny not only of his chosen people, but of all mankind . . . Thus the prophets expanded the idea that God revealed himself through history to make him supreme over all the world.” My comment: a historical national identity combined with a universal-human history. Cf., also, Thomas Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1998), esp. Introduction, and chs. 3–4, 6–7; Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), pp. 16–20, 91–92; Ilana Pardes, “Imagining the Birth of Ancient Israel: National Metaphors in the Bible,” in David Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), pp. 9–41, at pp. 9–12, and David Biale, “Introduction to Part One: Mediterranean Origins,” in *ibid.*, pp. 3–7; Paul K. Conkin and Roland N. Stromberg, *Heritage and Challenge: The History and Theory of History* (Wheeling, IL: Forum Press, 1989), pp. 3–6. Regarding the people of Abraham Lincoln, cf. Lincoln’s 2nd Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862: “The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present . . . As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.” Yet: “Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history . . . In giving freedom to the *slave* we assure freedom to the free . . . We shall nobly save or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth.” (Lincoln’s italics, elisions mine, other punctuation *sic*.) And Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863: “Four score and seven years ago [1776] our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Yet: “. . . we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new

birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” My comment: In keeping faith with God, the fathers, the old, and preserving the Covenant (Declaration of Independence, the Constitution), i.e., in knowing history and staying its course, not escaping it, we must think and act *anew*, be born again (new birth) in freedom. And as with Lincoln’s Hay (prescript, above), we are now ourselves the fathers, the prophets – the makers of history and the historians – the questions are new and have no answer but *in time*: revolution in and with evolution, in and with history, not outside or erasing or forgetting it.

12. Karl Marx, “Preface to the First German Edition of the First Volume of *Capital*,” in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works in Two Volumes* (Moscow: FLPH, 1951), Vol. I, pp. 407–408.
13. In the usage of modernization theory, these rather socially mobile terms gradually displaced the older static terms, “civilized” and “uncivilized.” Cf. M. J. Sklar, *The United States as a Developing Country* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), chs. I, II.
14. Among those whose historical writings comprehend this distinction between static entity and dynamic socio-cultural interrelations, or cultural diffusion, see in particular, Thomas Sowell, *Conquests and Cultures: An International History* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), chs. 1, 6, et passim.
15. For the pioneering work on post-imperialism and its relation to stages of historical development, see the writings of Richard L. Sklar, as displayed, e.g., in *African Politics in Postimperial Times: The Essays of Richard L. Sklar*, ed. Toyin Falola (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002); and see David G. Becker and Richard L. Sklar, eds., *Postimperialism and World Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999); and D. G. Becker *et al.*, eds., *Postimperialism: International Capitalism and Development in the Late Twentieth Century* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987).
16. Or, the marriage of Old World Locke/Smith/Mill and Hegel/Marx/Bagehot, yielding the New. The ahistorical, literalistic, and abstract-logical mode of understanding, in matters of this sort, is either/or; the historical, metaphorical, and evolutionary-logical mode is both/and. *Geistische Vernunft* may be translated as: Living (evolving) Reason in the world, i.e., in world history; hence, human history as a coherent, and ultimately universal, process of cumulative-evolution, and thus as progressively developmental, and in terms of the prophetic religio-historical tradition, redemptive and salvational. The (1), (2), (3) of the “revolutionary trinity” in the text above, has its analogue in (1) the Father, (2) the Son(s), and (3) the Holy Spirit.