Introduction

> Readers might judge for themselves what share the individual possessed in creating or shaping the nation; but whether it was small or great, the nation could be understood only by studying the individual.
>
> Henry Adams[1]

> Every great achievement in every field was a vision before it became a reality.
>
> Henry Kissinger[2]

An old specter has reappeared on the American horizon: conflict and upheaval in the Old World. After a half-century hiatus, history is stirring. Old grievances, ambitions, and neuroses are once again at play. An era of uncertainty lies ahead. Americans cast a wary eye toward post–cold war Europe, East Asia, and their festering internal problems and wonder what kind of contribution they will be called on to make – what kind they can afford to make – to the solution of the European Question. For Americans, by and large, that question has been how to protect the rest of the world – or at least their own political and social experiment – from Europe's destructiveness, if not necessarily to save Europe from itself.

The United States today seems torn between two possible remedies: on the one hand, to try to continue circumscribing the autonomy of the European powers and maintaining the degree of tutelage over European affairs to which it has grown accustomed; on the other, to foster greater European initiative and self-reliance, come what may. American energies are finite and increasingly demanded elsewhere, but a basic doubt remains: left to their own devices, will the Europeans act in their own

1. Henry Adams, *A History of the United States of America During the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 406.
2. Henry Kissinger, "What Kind of Atlantic Partnership?" *Atlantic Community Quarterly*, 7, no. 1 (Spring 1969), 38.

best interests and those of the United States? Despite authoritative disclaimers, America's "historic ambivalence" persists.[3]

The purpose of this book is to unravel the complex skein of American attitudes toward Europe by looking at several of the most important strands. In the process it casts some light on the sources of America's lasting ambivalence and doubt. The method is biographical. This is not because the history of the world is but the biography of great men, but because, as Henry Adams suggests, individual lives illuminate the texture and broader tendencies of the time. It is also because – though here Adams might have disagreed – "at crucial moments, at turning points, when factors appear more or less equally balanced, chance, individuals and their decisions . . . can determine the course of history."[4] More precisely, the method is what might be called partial biography, the investigation of a single, albeit crucial, aspect of several individual lives, in this case the development of their outlooks on the European Question. The book is intended not simply to elucidate what its main characters thought about Europe but to explain how they came to think it. It explores the connection between their experience of Europe and Europeans, on one hand, and their political outlooks, on the other. It is not a general history of transatlantic relations, but a set of essays on the varieties of twentieth century American experience of Europe.

It could be argued that Franklin Roosevelt, George Kennan, and Dean Acheson together constitute a somewhat arbitrary and ultimately subjective choice, and it would be idle to pretend that the roughly equal space devoted to the three reflects their relative historical weight. In the grand scheme of things Roosevelt obviously ranks first, Acheson second, Kennan a distant third. Nor are their lives and achievements readily comparable: Roosevelt was a professional politician, Kennan a diplomat-intellectual-aesthete, Acheson a lawyer-statesman. A study of this kind might have included Carl Schurz, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Stimson, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, Cordell Hull, William Bullitt, Adolf Berle, Sumner Welles, Harry Truman, John Foster Dulles, George Marshall, Robert Taft, Dwight Eisenhower, Paul Hoffman, Charles Bohlen, Averell Harriman, and perhaps many more.

Yet – given the limited space in which to hang them – a triptych

3. George Bush, Commencement Address, Boston University, May 23, 1989, Department of State *Bulletin*, July 1989, 18–19. In this speech the president acknowledged a "historic ambivalence" in the United States with respect to European unity but claimed that his administration was of one mind in supporting the European Community's 1992 initiative and eventual political unity.
4. Isaiah Berlin, quoted in Ramin Jahanbegloo, "Philosophy and Life: An Interview," *New York Review of Books*, 39, no. 10 (May 28, 1992), 51.

of large and detailed portraits may reveal more about the American experience of Europe than a row of smaller sketches. Each of the three subjects displayed a set of deeply rooted and typical American attitudes. Each embodied an alternative approach to Europe, corresponding to a phase of U.S. policy in the 1940s. Each represents a continuing tendency in American thought and behavior. These approaches, or "visions" – a word to be defined presently – were Roosevelt's partial internationalism, aiming to arrange the retirement of Europe from world politics while avoiding direct U.S. entanglement; Kennan's partial isolationism, aspiring to restore Europe's centrality and autonomy through temporary U.S. engagement; and Acheson's accommodating interventionism, establishing the United States as a permanent power in Europe at the behest of European and American interests.

The three lives were interwoven and to a degree interdependent. Roosevelt and his foreign policy exerted a profound influence on the ideas and careers of both Kennan and Acheson. They were his political progeny – Kennan in a negative and Acheson in an ambiguous sense, to be sure. Kennan and Acheson themselves collaborated and clashed in their attempts to give shape to the post-Rooseveltian world in which they lived. Thus the three parts of the book may be read as separate essays; viewed together – with Roosevelt as the central panel – they make up a single story. Needless to say, a different trio – FDR flanked by, say, Welles and Marshall – would have told a different tale.

Part One of the book presents Roosevelt against the background of American "diplomatic culture" in the broadest sense – that is to say, the inheritance from the eighteenth century and the ideas, attitudes, and "tendencies of thought" out of which twentieth century foreign policy has been fashioned. The first chapter on each man deals with the formation of what might be called a personal sensibility, a unique, sometimes contradictory set of feelings and attitudes, bound together by the single personality, persisting throughout life, that inform and condition one's mature political outlook. The early chapters also treat the development of a more formal set of ideas, or worldview, concerning Europe.

Sensibility, in this loose formulation, helps to account for degrees of concern, familiarity, sympathy, empathy, and identification with Europe and is connected to firsthand experience and to family and proximate cultural influence. Worldview constitutes a link to deeper intellectual currents and a more general climate of opinion, including the state of diplomatic culture. The later chapters describe the gradual crystallization of three different visions of Europe under the pressure of world events and of direct responsibility within a particular political milieu. By vision

is intended a kind of ideal or ultimate design, representing the intermingling of emotional and intellectual influences, never – because of its strongly private and wishful elements – fully realized or realizable, but conditioning thought and action.

The later chapters also trace the fate of the three visions in confrontation with one another and early postwar reality in the United States and Europe. Accordingly, they analyze the reasons for the decline of Roosevelt's design in 1944–45, for Kennan's isolation after 1947, and for the merely fleeting triumph of Acheson's diplomacy in 1952. Each of the three figures departed from the scene with the taste of defeat in his mouth. At the same time, the legacy of each constitutes a vital part of recent American diplomatic culture. The conclusion of the book briefly takes up the postwar resonance of each of the three approaches as ways of dealing with the seemingly eternal European Question. If, as Kissinger observed, nothing great is achieved without a vision, great designs shattered by events or only imperfectly realized retain their power to influence the collective mind and to condition our future choices.

PART ONE

1

Franklin Roosevelt, Europe, and American diplomatic culture, 1882–1932

"Everybody was going to Europe"

"During that memorable month I basked in the happiness of for once in my life drifting with the tide of a great popular movement. Everybody was going to Europe – I too was going to Europe. . . . If I met a dozen individuals during that month who were not going to Europe shortly, I have no distinct remembrance of it now." The month was June 1867. Mark Twain's maiden trip to the Old World produced the popular travelogue and satire *Innocents Abroad*. The following summer, the young Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., was shepherded around London by a "grumblingly generous" Henry Adams. In 1869, it was the turn of ten-year-old Theodore Roosevelt. TR recalled that his "one desire was to get back to America," as he and his siblings – like typical Twain tourists – "regarded Europe with the most ignorant chauvinism and contempt." Twain, Holmes, and TR were part of the post–Civil War resumption of a transatlantic tourism that had taken thirty thousand Americans a year to Europe in the 1850s. James Roosevelt of Hyde Park, New York, his first wife, and son spent much of 1865 and 1866 on the Continent, where Roosevelt had toured extensively in his youth. Sara Delano (born 1854) lived for most of the late sixties in Paris and Dresden – where she attended finishing school – with her father, Warren Delano, a Hudson Valley squire who had made, lost, and regained his fortune as a trader and investor.[1]

What was the magnetic force of Europe? Or rather what was missing

1. Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad* (New York: Harper Bros., 1911), 11; O. W. Holmes to Harold Laski, Mar. 1, 1928, in Mark De Wolfe Howe, ed., *Holmes–Laski Letters, 1916–1935* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 1031; Theodore Roosevelt, *Autobiography* (New York: Scribners, 1913), 13. On U.S. tourism and the Roosevelts and Delanos abroad see Geoffrey Ward, *Before the Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882–1905* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), chaps. 1 and 2.

in the United States? In his biography of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James offered a classic mid-nineteenth century view: America had, according to James,

> no state in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools – no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow – no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class – no Epsom nor Ascot![2]

America, in short, had no past. Its aspiring artists, diplomats, sports enthusiasts, and country gentlemen naturally turned to Europe. Wandering in European museums and visiting European monuments might bring, for those willing to make the effort, new refinement. Even for those who were not, mingling with upper-class Europeans, acquiring European servants and possessions conferred social cachet. For practically anyone, Paris, Pau, and Saint Moritz offered vistas, amusements, and stimulations not to be found in the New World.

England, both part of the Old World and distinct from Europe, exerted its special attraction. There was "the antiquity, the impressiveness, the picturesqueness of England,"[3] the ties of language, culture, and blood. It was as a matter of course that American upper-class society emulated the English aristocracy, that it looked to its politics and culture, and that it adopted its mannerisms and forms. James's Lord Lambeth, hero of *An International Episode* (1878), "was handsome as certain young Englishmen, and certain young Englishmen almost alone, are handsome; with a perfect finish of feature and look of intellectual repose and gentle good temper which seemed somehow to be consequent upon his well-cut nose and chin." The young Bostonian Bessie Alden idealized Lambeth – at least for a time – just as the young Eleanor Roosevelt would find Lambeth's real-life contemporary, Lord Balfour, "charming in the way that a good many Englishmen are and very few of our own men."[4]

2. Henry James, *Hawthorne* (1879) (Ithaca, N.Y.: Great Seal Books, 1963), 34.
3. "He [Lord Lambeth] would be an unconscious part of the antiquity, the impressiveness, the picturesqueness of England, and poor Bessie Alden, like many a Yankee maiden, was terribly at the mercy of picturesqueness." Henry James, *An International Episode* (1879) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 62.
4. Ibid., 38. For Eleanor Roosevelt's 1917 remark see Joseph Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York: New American Library, 1973), 287.

James Roosevelt, corporation lawyer and gentleman farmer, patterned his estate along English country lines.[5] He was an avid collector of British social acquaintances: the Duke and Duchess of Rutland; the Earl of Berkeley; Sir Hugh and Lady Cholmeley of Easton Hall, Lincolnshire; Cecil Foljambe, the fourth Baron Hawkesbury (later Earl of Liverpool) of Osberton-in-Worksop, Nottinghamshire; Richard James Meade, the fourth Earl of Clanwilliam; and Henry George Edwardes, younger son of the third Baron Kensington. Cholmeley and Foljambe were onetime Liberal members of Parliament; Clanwilliam, an admiral of the fleet; Edwardes, a member of the British legation at Washington.

Politically, James Roosevelt was a Whig who had transferred his loyalties to the Democrats during the fifties crisis.[6] His choice of friends suggests that he was attracted by liberal noblemen, though neither he nor his first son (FDR's half brother), the socialite James "Rosy" Roosevelt, was very assiduous in the pursuit of political ideals. Sara Delano (she married James Roosevelt in 1880), FDR's adoring and omnipresent mother, came with her own European connections: her sister Deborah (Dora) Delano Forbes was a lifelong resident of Paris, and her own address book for the nineties included the Comte de Fleury, the Vicomte de Fontenay, and "Cousin" Hortense Howland, whose salon appeared in *À la recherche du temps perdu*.[7]

A closer look suggests, however, that the Roosevelt–Delano links with the Old World were superficial. Neither of Franklin Roosevelt's parents was versed in European history or artistic culture. The majority of their connections in Europe were relatives and other Americans. American society established itself abroad for the social season but

5. On "Mr. James" as English gentleman see Ward, *Before the Trumpet*, 50; Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Apprenticeship* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1952), 14; Nora Ferdon, "FDR: A Psychological Interpretation of His Childhood and Youth," Ph.D. diss. (University of Hawaii, 1971), 120.
6. In 1856 many northern Whigs voted for the Democrat James Buchanan rather than the Whig Millard Fillmore because Buchanan was seen as the candidate who could beat the Republican Fremont. Fremont's victory, it was feared, would provoke the secession of the South. Allan Nevins refers to New York Whigs-turned-Democrats as expressing "conservative union-saving and business-saving sentiment." *Ordeal of the Union* (New York: Scribners, 1947), 2: 506, 511. This seems apt in James Roosevelt's case. In voting to defeat Fremont he was also voting to defeat the candidate of "Know-Nothing" (anti-Irish) sentiment.
7. See Rita Halle Kleeman, *Gracious Lady: The Life of Sara Delano Roosevelt* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1935), chap. 8; address book contained in the Roosevelt Family Papers, Sara Delano Papers, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library (hereafter FDRL). Howland was a Frenchwoman who had married a brother of James Roosevelt's first wife. See Elliott Roosevelt, ed., *FDR: His Personal Letters, 1905–1928* (hereafter, *PL, 1905–1928*) (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1948), 18.

remained largely separate.[8] For most of their lives, transatlantic travel for the Roosevelts and Delanos was recreation; it was also a kind of ritual serving to confirm their place in *American* society vis-à-vis *Americans* like themselves.

In the New York social hierarchy, the Roosevelts stood somewhere between the oldest Hudson Valley families (Roosevelt's great-grandfather moved north from Manhattan in 1818) and more recent – and far richer – arrivals, the Belmonts, Vanderbilts, and Astors. By the eighties, there was no break between feudal-mercantile society – Edith Wharton's "small and slippery pyramid" – on the one hand, and new industrial wealth, on the other. FDR's half brother, for example, had married Helen Astor. Still, old distinctions were dear to people like Wharton's Mrs. Archer, who traced "each new crack in the [pyramid's] surface and all the strange weeds pushing-up between the ordered rows of social vegetables," and to Sara Delano Roosevelt, who disapproved of the frivolity of Rosy Roosevelt and his set.[9] Old New York was convinced that it had upheld a simpler standard of moral conduct and had been more self-satisfied and self-contained.

Self-contained, inter alia, with respect to Europe. Compared with the new late nineteenth century money, the older families were temporally remote from Europe and independent in taste and outlook. Paris dresses were prized, but first laid away for two years to avoid the impression of slavery to foreign fashion.[10] Even if they had had the money, the Roosevelts and Delanos would have been above building baroque revival palaces on the Hudson River. Of Springwood, the Roosevelt's Hyde Park estate, it could be said that there was "wealth without symptoms . . . nothing for show and very little for . . . the senses but a great *aisance*."[11] The house today suggests unpretentious and unabashedly colonial tastes. Except for Sara's Dresden china, there is little trace of imported art or adornment. The dominant motifs are naval and nationalistic, with an emphasis on American exploits in the struggle for autonomy from Europe.

Anti-British nationalism had long been cultivated by both families.

8. Ward, *Before the Trumpet*, 37.
9. On Sara and Rosy see ibid., 197, note 10. The favorite pastime of Rosy's set was carriage driving. Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920) (New York: American Library ed., 1962), 48, 205. On the Roosevelts' place in New York society see Joseph Alsop, *FDR, 1892–1945: A Centenary Remembrance* (New York: Viking Press, 1982), 29–42.
10. Wharton, 207.
11. Felix Young to his sister Eugenia on the home of their Boston cousins, in Henry James's *The Europeans* (1878) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 60.

The Roosevelts descended from the Dutchman Claes Martenszen van Rosenvelt, who settled in New Amsterdam more than a decade before its seizure by the English in 1664. A century later, the prosperous merchant and sugar refiner Isaac Roosevelt, whose portrait was hung above the mantel at Springwood, broke ranks with most of the New York elite and supported independence. The Delanos were descended from the Belgian Huguenot Philippe de La Noye, who settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1621. FDR's great-grandfather, Warren Delano, was a sea captain who had been interned in a British prison ship at the end of the War of 1812. His grandfather, Warren Delano II, was removed to safety when the British threatened to bombard the Delano home at Fairhaven, Massachusetts. He became senior partner in the firm of Russell and Co., the leading American rival of British interests in the Chinese opium trade.[12]

On top of old colonial resentments, Great Britain's prodigious nineteenth century power and smugness gave rise to feelings other than admiration among cultivated American travelers.[13] James Roosevelt was too even-tempered a gentleman to have left evidence of envy or resentment, but it is clear that there were limits to his idealization of England. In March 1894, he wrote the Reverend Endicott Peabody, recent founder of the Groton School, lamenting that his son's English governess had not been a success: "I should prefer a New England man. . . . Have we in this country any men with the culture and training of Englishmen, combined with the high standard and character of the American gentleman?"[14] The distinction between English and American gentlemen was not made casually: the American stood on a higher moral plane. Here was a glimpse of the primordial mistrust and condescension toward Europe embedded in family tradition.[15] The New

12. For FDR's own recollections on this theme see Elliott Roosevelt, ed., *FDR: His Personal Letters*, vol. 2: *1928–1945* (hereafter *PL, 1928–1945*, 2) (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1948), 942–44. See also Ward, *Before the Trumpet*, chaps. 1 and 2; Freidel, *The Apprenticeship*, chap. 1.
13. Henry Adams remarked on meeting Kipling, "One felt the old conundrum repeat itself. Somehow, somewhere, Kipling and the American were not one, but two, and could not be glued together. The American felt that the defect, if defect it were, was in himself. . . . All through life, one had seen the American on his literary knees to the European. . . . It was in the nature of things." *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918), 319.
14. James Roosevelt to Peabody, Mar. 5, 1894. Copies of Materials from Other Repositories, Endicott Peabody Correspondence with FDR and Eleanor Roosevelt, FDRL.
15. James Roosevelt's own father had nearly forbidden his son to make the Grand Tour of Europe in the late 1840s for fear of the risks he might run. See Ward, *Before the Trumpet*, 30. See also Sara D. Roosevelt, as told to Isabel Leighton and Gabrielle Forbush, *My Boy Franklin* (New York: Long & Smith, 1933), 14.