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ROOSEVELT'S MAN IN EUROPE

Lewis Einstein (1877–1967) was a little-known diplomat who became one of Theodore Roosevelt's closest advisers on European affairs. Roosevelt's attraction to Einstein derived not only from a keen writing style and considerable fluency in European history, literature and politics, but also from his instinct for anticipating the future of European rivalries and for the important role the United States could play there in preserving peace. The two men shared a perspective on the twentieth century that saw the United States as a central arbiter and enforcer of international order—a position the majority of Americans would accept and promote only after the Second World War. The relationship between Roosevelt and Einstein sheds light on the rising status of American diplomacy and diplomats and their self-image vis-à-vis Europe at the turn of the twentieth century.

Theodore Roosevelt presents a challenge for the diplomatic historian. Despite his reputation as a martinet, Roosevelt put much energy as president into peacemaking, and did well at it. The rationale and methods of his Great Power diplomacy are generally attributed to his sense of mission and adventure, pursued as much for their own sake as for the advancement of his and his nation's interests, largely in Asia and Latin America.¹ Less appreciated has been a more subtle, and possibly grander, ambition, which was to preserve and augment the powers of maneuver—or what Americans have traditionally understood as neutrality—in a twentieth-century geopolitical setting by proactive, rather than purely restrictive, means. Accordingly, he also paid a great deal of attention to Europe, to its various rulers and its problems, and, most of all, to its relative weight in world affairs.²

Roosevelt, moreover, was one of the first American politicians of his generation to recognize the need for and advocate establishment of a professional diplomatic corps. His successor, William Howard Taft, has received more credit for this, by overseeing the establishment of geographic bureaus and other reforms in the State Department. But Roosevelt's former attorney general, Philander Knox, devised these reforms as Taft's secretary of state. For all that, Roosevelt's governing style was personalistic, even idiosyncratic. Based upon a diplomatic approach that best resembled the work of a keen amateur, he set about recruiting men to lay the foundation for a modern diplomatic service that would outlast his presidency. One of them was a young New Yorker named Lewis Einstein.

I

Einstein (1877–1967) came from the city’s German-Jewish gentry; his family’s fortune was in newspapers and textiles. One sister married a Seligman and then the archaeologist Charles Waldstein; another married the Columbia scholar Joel Elias Spingarn. The family was known to Roosevelt and Elihu Root, who followed and aided Einstein’s career.³ He was ill-suited for business. His interests and vocation were literary, and he considered himself, above all, a humanist. Indeed, from 1906 to 1913 he edited *The Humanist’s Library*.⁴ Roosevelt later described him as “one of the men whose work has kept alive the fine tradition of the union between American diplomacy and American letters which is illustrated by such names as those of Lowell and Motley, of John Hay and Maurice Egan.”⁵ Einstein would go on to write more than a dozen books on subjects ranging from Lewis Cass to Italian gardens to Napoleon III.⁶

Einstein had been precocious. He was fluent in French, Italian and German and earned a master’s degree from Columbia in history. At the age of twenty-five he published his first book, *The Italian Renaissance in England* (1902). Einstein’s mother sent a copy to the president. After reading it, Roosevelt supposedly said, “I would particularly like to put in the public service a man of the tastes indicated by such a book as this.”⁷

The career decision was well-timed. Whatever inclination Einstein may have had for business (or the capacity to simulate one), it was soon thwarted by scandal. He had fallen in love with Helen Ralli, an Anglo-Greek divorcée several years his senior. His family—especially his conservative father—reacted strongly in opposition. Einstein was more or less disinherited. If he sought honor and success, he would have to go elsewhere.

Appointed to the diplomatic corps in 1903, he was posted to Paris as a third secretary, then on to London and Constantinople. Three years later he had his career break when he was named the secretary of the delegation to the Algeciras conference, which had been called to settle a Franco-German clash over Morocco. Kaiser Wilhelm II had challenged French control over the protectorate and simultaneously tested the strength of the freshly signed Anglo-French entente. The crisis had become so acute by the end of 1905 that it appeared to some people that France and Germany would go to war. The conference was called instead. Germany had no allies among the major European powers, apart from Austria-Hungary. By invoking the language of the Open Door and appealing to the statesmanship of Roosevelt, the kaiser attempted to bring the United States in onto his side. He would be disappointed.

The experience, judging by Einstein’s memoir, served him as a kind of crash course in what became known as the Old Diplomacy—a formal, largely secret form of international statecraft dominated by European princes, ministers and cabinets.⁸ In fact, there turned out to be less of this than he expected. He must have arrived feeling intimidated, but any such sensation was soon to leave him. He was not impressed. Unlike other such gatherings, the most recent being the Congress of Berlin, there was no Disraeli or Bismarck present at Algeciras. To him it was like arriving after the party had gone and encountering only stragglers. One was the superannuated Italian delegate, the Marquis Visconti Venosta, whose own career had begun in the service of Metternich and who commented that he saw no ambassadors at the conference, only lawyers.⁹ The head of the American delegation, Henry White, was not a lawyer, and this may have been one reason Einstein had kind things to say about him. Others, apart from the British delegate, Arthur

Nicolson, did not measure up. "The world today," Einstein later recalled, "when diplomacy is carried out often by threat and insult, has less and less use for intermediaries who understand each other's language and are personal friends." Familiarity over the course of the three months at Algeciras tended to have a different effect, although it was not really clear what that was: "Frenchmen and Germans might be on the eve of war, but meanwhile they slept under the same roof and grumbled together over their fare in the same public rooms."¹⁰ Ultimately, he concluded, the conference "turned out to be little more than an elaborate bit of stagecraft partly used to register certain results that were obtained elsewhere, and still more as a useful expedient which had extricated France and Germany from a highly dangerous muddle" but had demonstrated, nonetheless, "the immense value of pompous and well-staged negativeness ... [that] serves to allay political passion."¹¹

The role of the American delegation at the conference was circumscribed tightly by the president, who dealt directly with the three principal European ambassadors in Washington: Cecil Spring-Rice, Baron Speck von Sternburg (whom Roosevelt, a long-time friend of both, nicknamed "Springy" and "Specky," respectively) and Jules Jusserand (no recorded nickname). The delegation at Algeciras meanwhile was ordered to watch, wait and otherwise do what it could to resist being enlisted by Germany in driving a wedge between the British and the French. Roosevelt's "personal sympathies," according to Einstein, "were entirely for France," but "he proposed to keep an even keel." White was uninformed of Roosevelt's conversations with von Sternburg and Jusserand; the only people in whom the president confided, again according to Einstein, were Secretary of State Root and Henry Cabot Lodge. "Alone, unaided, and unsuspected," Einstein wrote, "Roosevelt in the Moroccan crisis gave the measure of his diplomatic skill. Congress knew nothing, the country knew nothing, his own agents knew nothing, the world knew nothing, of all he had done to preserve peace."¹² Root's modest instructions to White were to "keep friendly with all. Help France get what she ought to have but don't take the fight on your shoulders." To Einstein, "This sybilline piece of advice from the pen of a great lawyer was almost too wisely unilluminating."¹³ The policy probably suited him just fine. He could hone his powers of observation without carrying great responsibility. As the youngest member of the delegation, moreover, he could just as easily proclaim the mission as having been educational.

In the event, he said, it ended with an "optimistic prognosis."¹⁴ There would be no war, not yet. Even so, it marked a "decisive moment" for the great powers, including the United States, which saw a hint of the future.¹⁵ Einstein was quick to realize it. "The first thunderclap of the Great War exploded" there, he later wrote. "Germany made trouble ... because she felt ill-tempered at her place in the world."¹⁶ Whatever his inclinations had been before the conference, serving there had further convinced him that his country had an important diplomatic role to play.

The president evidently was of a similar mind. "I know Springy thinks I am inclined to fall under the influence of the German Emperor," he wrote, "but he is quite wrong. I like the Emperor very much in a way, but I don't trust him, and am not in the least affected by the ridiculous messages he makes Specky bring me."¹⁷ Specky was not the only one. Just a year earlier, Jusserand had written, "Mr. Roosevelt is not without sincere sympathy for France, but he knows her poorly. I shall apply myself to inform him better."¹⁸ Einstein credited Roosevelt with convincing the French to collaborate at the conference and with

making the most of ambiguity vis-à-vis Germany. He did so quietly, shrewdly. This worked in good part, according to Einstein, because of the president's reputation. "Roosevelt was then at the height of his fame, with a prestige immensely enhanced by his recent success in having brought the Russo-Japanese war to an end," he observed. "This may explain why the Kaiser tried to enlist the President's help, without stopping to realize that Roosevelt's private views about the Moroccan question had already been formed." Indeed, Roosevelt, in Einstein's account, flipped the table on the kaiser and his attempt to borrow—or expropriate—an American slogan. By his invoking the principle of the Open Door, in effect the "Kaiser wanted Paris to know that in a real pinch England would be of no use to her, and he counted on finding some support in France for this idea." He was wrong. The reason, Einstein concluded, was that Germany was "the only great nation never to feel quite certain of her position and therefore alternat[ed] with an uneasy violence between extremes of effacement and of dangerous arrogance.... The wish to grab and yet to defend the 'Open Door,' the desire to humiliate France and yet to separate her from England, were contradictory aims that were interwoven in a confused jumble." In other words, "the Kaiser's previous attempt to win Roosevelt over to his side now became a boomerang."¹⁹ A. J. P. Taylor has made a similar claim:

This reliance on the United States was perhaps the fundamental blunder of German policy at Algéciras. The Germans overlooked the fact that the Americans, in so far as they were indifferent, would not estrange France for the sake of something that did not matter to them; and in so far as they were concerned ... they would prefer the side of the Anglo-French entente. The only method by which the Germans might have persuaded Roosevelt to play an active part (as he had done between Russia and Japan) would have been to threaten war with France; and this threat, though it might have made Roosevelt act, would not have made him act on the German side.²⁰

What did this say about the state of European diplomacy? Had the United States at last come to recognize its place in it, play by its rules and quickly come to master it? Or had the European diplomatic system grown stale, even broken, in the hands of German power? Put differently, while Roosevelt was busy reconstructing the viability of balance-of-power diplomacy in Asia, it was on the verge of disintegration in Europe at the hands of a revisionist state that appeared to care little for the stability of the European system. The language of the Open Door is just one indication that the kaiser entertained seriously the idea that what had appeared to work for the United States in Asia could work for Germany in Europe and that together the two rising powers could overtake and eclipse the reigning empires of the day, Britain and France. This could begin at Morocco and extend, as leverage, toward a deal with Russia over Korea and Manchuria.²¹

Einstein had been right about the kaiser. The Germans who hinted at this strategy had not thought it through and had misread Roosevelt and his instinct for "forceful and impartial righteousness."²² Nor did they understand the American concept of the Open Door: in spite of the anticolonial implications of its language, it was meant primarily to ensure American access to Asian markets—namely, the China market, by upholding the balance of power there, not by overturning and replacing it with another. It was basically a conservative policy. So the United States adapted itself to the state of the European system, not the reverse, and helped to underwrite its extension to Asia in the name of

peace, not rivalry. The Open Door, in other words, was the means by which the system could be sustained in emphasizing “balance” over “power” and in terminating the competitive logic that had hitherto governed world politics.²³ It was no longer possible or useful to draw a dialectic between European peace and extra-European conflict. The world by now was too small, and the United States as the leading extra-European power had confronted its responsibilities in both realms, as Roosevelt would have it.

The German kaiser did not imagine the world in this way, evidently. Einstein would go on to witness the longer-term implications of that failure. The nineteenth-century European system in the end would be overturned and replaced, and the European empires themselves would disappear. The chief beneficiaries eventually would be the United States, which had sought to reform and extend the system, and the Soviet Union, which had turned its back upon it, at least temporarily.

II

What explains the evident talent Roosevelt had for this diplomacy? Contemporaries were perplexed. Some chose to write it off as exhibitionism. “There was no reason why Roosevelt should have interfered,” an editorial in *Blackwood's Magazine* declared. “The interests of America were not imperiled.... The President, however, did not wait to be asked.... There are certain temperaments which find the temptation to interfere in other people's affairs irresistible.”²⁴ So, too, were students of his presidency. The adolescent image of Roosevelt propagated by his biographer, Henry Pringle, however, mostly gave way by the 1960s to a more complex and favorable picture.²⁵ Einstein earlier had adhered to one. Roosevelt's “character, so forceful, direct, and seemingly impulsive,” he wrote, “was far more complicated and intricate than is commonly supposed.”²⁶ Sympathetic depictions of TR have tended to emphasize the progressive Roosevelt in domestic affairs: his mastery of national politics as well as the power of the executive branch of government that he more or less reinvented for the twentieth century. It has been applied less frequently to his statecraft. Most accounts emphasize the assertive form over the substance of Roosevelt's thought and action, but in truth it is difficult to disaggregate so many strains of turn-of-the-century progressivism.²⁷ Roosevelt was a keen student and practitioner of politics beyond his nation's borders, certainly according to Einstein: “The Presidency gave Roosevelt the opportunity, in handling foreign policy, to reveal the only side of his talents which he himself may previously not have suspected. His success as a diplomatist came from combining the skill of a politician and the learning of a historian with the principle of a cowboy never to draw his gun unless prepared to shoot. The impression of resolution which by these means he attached to foreign policy raised the prestige of the United States to a height it had never before attained.”²⁸

An important guide for him was the naval theorist, Alfred Thayer Mahan; the influence of the latter upon Roosevelt and other would-be imperialists is well known to historians.²⁹ Underlying nearly all Mahanian dogma was the logic of *Machtpolitik*. Power had to be wielded, or lost. Its sources were natural, geographical and human—and finite. Leadership constituted the wise extraction of a country's sources of power and their management and maximization vis-à-vis other powers. That this was all more or less axiomatic for someone like Roosevelt goes without saying. Less obvious was the hierarchy of power in which he found his country after the Spanish-American War.

That, by contrast, remained open to interpretation and invention. The United States had acquired additional territory in the Caribbean and across the Pacific; such territory—and a wider scope of national prestige—had to be defended. Hence the commitment to building a Panama Canal, new coaling stations, a bigger navy and so on, not to mention a more proactive, or what some might call progressive, diplomacy.

The pursuit of a Mahanian strategy suggested three major principles: hegemony in the Western hemisphere, a balance of power in Asia and the maintenance of the United States' customary isolation from European power politics. Einstein, Roosevelt and like-minded compatriots thought and wrote about these principles at length.³⁰ With regard to the first, Roosevelt eventually articulated his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine; for the second, the Portsmouth Treaty and the Great White Fleet. But what of the third?

Einstein also was known to be a “disciple” of Mahan, and this made him unpopular among some of his diplomatic colleagues.³¹ In fact one could argue that he was more than a disciple; had his writings been read more widely, he may have become known as Mahan's diplomatic counterpart, yet one who emphasized the importance of the transatlantic economy, and who took seriously the new implications of the United States' stake in Europe as the foundation, or at least the *sine qua non*, of its world power. At one point he urged nothing less than moving the boundary of the Monroe Doctrine all the way to England (as would be done, in effect, by mid-century, coinciding, as his biographer has put it, with the final demise of Prussianism).³² “Isolation,” in American parlance, had been more an art than a science and had more to do with insulation and neutrality than with physical, economic, or even diplomatic isolation *per se*. With regard to Europe, it meant, since the days of George Washington, resisting the contagion of European problems, specifically wars, but did not necessarily prescribe a stance of immunity or passivity.³³ Einstein drew a distinction between actual isolation and an isolationist state of mind brought about either by ignorance or by the supposed luxury of free security. In his view, the “European balance of power has been such a permanent factor since the birth of the republic that Americans have never realized how its absence would have affected their political status.”³⁴ Both he and Roosevelt insisted that the conditions that had underwritten isolation, or what the diplomat called “the self-deceptive plea of a disinterested aloofness,” had changed with the accumulation of so much power.³⁵ Still, the basic principle remained the same. The United States had to act more assertively “as the natural arbiter of nations,” in Jusserand's words, now more by direct involvement in European affairs than by masterly, or simply ignorant, inactivity.³⁶

What did this mean in practice?

Starting with Algeciras, it meant principally three things. The first was to firm up the Anglo-American relationship on the basis of shared interests and methods, which had begun to include backing for a nascent global system of international laws, customs, norms and, later in the Woodrow Wilson years, institutions. The second was to use this as leverage, along with the American economy, to position the United States as the broker between France and Germany, however much it may have favored one or the other. As Taylor has put it, “The United States had emerged from isolation; she had discovered that she had no quarrel with England and France but that Germany threatened her future prosperity.”³⁷ And the third was to cast American interests in Europe globally. That is, the two sets of relationships were inseparable and mutually dependent, and no longer merely a projection through a particular Eurocentric lens: what the United

States did in Europe and with the European powers was by then connected to U.S. global interests; what it did in Asia had a direct impact in and on Europe. This latter principle would hold for the rest of the twentieth century—as when, for example, the Korean War became the cause of both U.S. and German rearmament, and the institutionalizing of the North Atlantic Treaty as NATO.

As to Europe itself, Einstein argued that the United States had to play a heavier role in balancing or offsetting what may have appeared to other powers as incompatible interests and, ideally, to help transform them into complementary ones. American detachment need not preclude a sophisticated recognition of the wider factors at play in the European system or the occasional intervention. For example, Einstein later remarked that the United States had erred in not recognizing Bulgarian independence. This recognition could have become the basis for American underwriting of a railroad linking the Russian and Ottoman empires, which would have reduced the two empires' incentives to clash with each other and with Austria-Hungary in the Balkans. (For his part, Roosevelt was said to be pro-Austrian; Einstein less so.)³⁸

To sum up, the United States was by now a power with global responsibilities and vulnerabilities. These centered on Europe. But they were neither confined to it nor entirely dependent on the actions of European powers. And so, somewhat against a strict construction of Mahanism, the United States had to merge the three strategic imperatives. American policy had to tie the balance of power in Asia more explicitly to that in Europe, which would most likely demand the end to any semblance of isolation from the politics of the other great powers. The United States would also need to preserve its dominance of the Western Hemisphere. In other words, the Monroe Doctrine had been reformulated, according to historian Max Edling, for “a world where the United States was an empire among empires, rather than a republic among monarchies, and where the promotion of civilization rather than republicanism was the primary foreign policy goal, [in which] a Monroe Doctrine stipulating a longitudinal divide between fundamentally different and inherently antagonistic political regimes in the Old and the New World no longer made sense.”³⁹

Einstein was not the only person to have foreseen this necessity. Archibald Cary Coolidge published his book, *United States as a World Power*, in 1908; Walter Lippmann promoted the concept of the Atlantic Community less than a decade later.⁴⁰ But Einstein gave them an important focus in diplomacy. He was, in Taylor's not entirely uncharitable description, “among the first to formulate it clearly in print. He is therefore entitled to the credit for having involved the United States in two World Wars.”⁴¹ His view's clearest expression came in an article he wrote in mid-1912, a remarkable work that “suffered a strange obscurity.”⁴² He had trouble placing the essay in the United States. After having been rejected by both *The Atlantic* and the *North American Review*, it was published in the British magazine *National Review*.⁴³ This may have been more appropriate, in fact, because Einstein argued for a stronger commitment to the survival of Britain and British power. Anglo-German rivalry, if settled in favor of the latter, would almost surely threaten the United States “and every other nation in the world.”⁴⁴ He predicted that the looming war would begin in Belgium and that it would be long. Only in 1918 did the essay gain some notoriety in Einstein's own country. That year Columbia University Press published it in a volume for which Roosevelt wrote the foreword, noting there that the ideas were “proof of a prescience in world politics very rare among American

statesmen. He foresaw the war. He foresaw our entry into the war.”⁴⁵ This was no exaggeration, according to George Kennan, who added, “One could search long in the American political literature of the period for anything equal to those documents in maturity of judgment, mastery of material, analytical power, and brilliance of insight.”⁴⁶

Einstein described British and German aims and ambitions as the natural result of each nation’s place in the world with language that would become common among the self-described realists of Kennan’s generation. “Paradoxical as it may seem, the grave danger of the present relations between Great Britain and Germany lies in the fact that there is no real difficulty between the two Powers,” Einstein asserted. “Both Powers are logical and right in their attitude.”⁴⁷ Each power had reasons to hesitate; each had ambitions vis-à-vis the other. Either one could win, but most likely only after a long and very costly conflict. “Whatever the future of this situation,” he concluded, “a far-sighted statesmanship compels the United States ... to take cognizance of the possibility of a conflict breaking out in the near future between Great Britain and Germany, and to consider in what manner we would be affected by it... A struggle between the two nations ... cannot leave America indifferent. In too many regions of the world would our interests be affected by its reality.”⁴⁸

What might Roosevelt have done with this knowledge had he still been in office? According to Einstein, he would have intervened to forestall a declaration of war by Britain, which may have succeeded in mobilizing “all neutral nations” to defend Belgium, thereby preventing a wider war.⁴⁹ TR probably agreed but, at the time, did not speak out as loudly as he might have done.⁵⁰

III

Einstein’s career before and after the war proceeded through fits and starts. Respected but at a distance, he was not a natural member of the club. One of its mandarins, William Castle, later described him as being “a little too cordial, altogether too pompous—but in an amusing way—probably conceited, but with real intelligence and a good deal of charm. I can well understand ... that people would like him very much. I certainly should, especially if I did not have to see him all the time.” He conceded, moreover, that he could “recognize Einstein’s ability.” However, “I could never be found of him because his racial characteristics are too strong—not in looks but in his over-unctuous manner. He also is inclined to be a little too complimentary to sound sincere.”⁵¹

Einstein was no WASP, but to suggest, as Castle did, that this was the main reason for his difficulties with the diplomatic establishment is too facile. There were two other reasons: one was his direct tie to Roosevelt and his intellectual compatibility with the president—which partly went against the grain of the establishment and its prevailing biases toward Europe. The other was that no such diplomatic club existed in name. It may have looked and sounded like one, but it more resembled an informal network of associates and cliques than a professional grouping or organization with precise criteria for membership. Strictly speaking, Einstein was a member of it but he did not meld with it, at least in Washington; and the memory of that would linger across the remainder of his career.

From Costa Rica, where he had a brief tenure as minister, Einstein in 1912 left again for England, after which he was, in Kennan’s apt synopsis, “packed off, during the war he

had so brilliantly forecast, to handle the dreary details of prisoner-of-war protection in Turkey and Bulgaria.” These chapters in his memoir are the most crowded and interesting. Written so many decades later, they convey a proper sense of diplomatic detachment but also suggest the force of emotions that Einstein must have confronted in the thick of so many damaged human lives, including his beloved wife, who suffered “a serious nervous breakdown ... caused by the anxieties of the war.”⁵² In 1921, President Harding repaid his sacrifice by naming him minister at Prague. By most accounts Einstein relished it: “In no other capital were diplomats lodged with a greater architectural splendour.”⁵³ But like the country he represented and the country where he was envoy, Einstein’s tranquil days were numbered. Almost nine years later, as Kennan has described,

President Hoover put an abrupt end to his governmental service by accepting, without explanation, a resignation he had never tendered, thus relegating him to that honorable and numerically impressive company of men who have faithfully served successive American presidents and secretaries of state in a diplomatic capacity, often at considerable personal sacrifice, only to find themselves one day suddenly and mysteriously discarded and often to receive the first intimation of their dismissal from the public prints.⁵⁴

Einstein was only fifty-three. During the rest of his life he wrote articles, books and poetry and offered the occasional service to his government, which was usually rejected. He spent most of World War II tending his pigs in Scotland. After his London house was destroyed in the Blitz, he moved to Paris, where he lived in fair obscurity with his beloved Helen for another three and a half decades. His career, like Roosevelt’s, was cut short. Had the latter returned to power in 1920, as Einstein expected he would have done (and “he wanted me with him”), the careers and legacies of the two men might have been greater.⁵⁵

He and Roosevelt differed in temperament and in cultural inclination. Roosevelt understood much about Europeans and Europe, but he did not appear to be any more drawn to them than to other parts of the world; in fact, the opposite was probably the case. Einstein, by contrast, was a Europhile or, more accurately, an Anglophile.⁵⁶ His grasp of politics was hard to disentangle from his literary mind and its predilections. His profession was diplomacy. His vocation was literature. Is it possible to separate the tastes and affinities from the capacity for judgment? Einstein’s short, remarkable career raises this basic question more than it supplies any clear and general answer to it.

One person who may have wondered was Einstein’s friend and correspondent of many decades, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who urged him to write a biography of Roosevelt.⁵⁷ Einstein took up the challenge, which he regarded as a “labour of love” about a leader for whom he

felt a personal loyalty ... as well as admiration for one who so closely resembled the great worthies of the sixteenth century. He too shared their ambition for a well-rounded life of thought and action. He too had their thirst for the varied experiences offered by learning and adventure, and he felt their wish for fame. It is easy to point out his mistakes. His real genius never was one of intellectual power but lay in the quality of a leadership that made him unforgettable and caused his admirers to be ready to follow him whether right or wrong.⁵⁸

In *Roosevelt: His Mind in Action*, Einstein drew a portrait of a conscientious nationalist whose principal contribution was “bringing America into the world” with skill and impressive “restraint.”⁵⁹ The latter quality did not come merely from habit or disposition (and is hard to imagine them in Roosevelt, given the usual stereotypes), but instead from an appreciation, even devotion, to the power of democratic public opinion in American life and the ever-present need to persuade the American people to support the actions of their leaders. The portrait that emerges is of a willful, proud, energetic but chastened man—one of Einstein’s chapters is entitled “struggle” followed by another, “adversity”—whose life and legacy were preconditioned by a well-developed, sensitive intellectual appreciation for the realities of the world they confront and by an equally formidable belief in the power of individuals and societies to shape them. In Lippmann’s familiar title, this was the moment that the United States and its president faced a choice between drift and mastery. If the former was not predetermined, the latter was not complete.

It may be trite to say that Roosevelt epitomized his age. It is less superficial to note a parallel between Einstein’s portrait of his character with a combination of patriotism, opportunism, ambition and self-awareness and the position of the United States vis-à-vis Europe. The syllogism that European distresses equaled American successes no longer held. It was not yet sufficient to recognize a shared fate between the two continents, however. Something more—a new political idea, perhaps—was needed. It was a rare thing for a rising world power to approach the existing international system with a mixture of delicacy, distance, empathy, humility and strength. To say that this stance was distinctly American would be going too far; but to say it coincided well with Roosevelt’s complex character would not.

This rounds out this essay’s interlocking portrait of profession, personality and history. Einstein’s and Roosevelt’s perceptions of and approach to European relations also had as much to do with culture—and cultural self-perception—as with the realities of world power. The United States embraced, albeit half-heartedly, a direct role in European affairs. Roosevelt in effect was his own man in Europe, but this was beside the point. In Einstein’s rendition, TR acted with the understanding that the bureaucratic apparatus (not to mention the Congress) could undercut him, if not directly, than by failing to appreciate and execute what he was trying to accomplish. In this respect Roosevelt’s achievements were procedural as well as political. This achievement extended to his cultivation of allies and champions, notably Einstein, in the new bureaucracy.

IV

The abbreviated career of Lewis Einstein illustrates the United States’ conflicted attitude toward Europe during the Roosevelt years. Einstein of course was not the president’s only man in Europe, but he was possibly the one whose thinking was closest to Roosevelt’s own. Theirs was, in some ways, an administration ahead of its time—certainly it was ahead of most of the country—in its acceptance, even embrace, of what would later be called realism, that is, *Realpolitik*, with regard to Europe. This was overdue in some respects. For one, such a shift in approach coincided logically with the country’s size, wealth and place on the world map but still not yet with its political and institutional culture.⁶⁰ For another, TR’s rethinking of the U.S. role in Europe grasped the extent to which American security had long depended on other powers, particularly Britain, a situation that could not

last nor be taken for granted. The need for a rethinking seemed obvious to Einstein; to Roosevelt, probably, there was another need for a different language to speak about the country's place in the world. Washington's farewell address no longer held, or at least it needed to be redefined without "using a megaphone," as Einstein once wrote to Walter Lippmann, in a different context, "when a microphone is required."⁶¹ In his 1909 book, *American Foreign Policy*, Einstein put it this way: "Alliances can be entangling only when they are disadvantageous. To guard against their being so is the duty of a wise statesmanship."⁶² First, however, the country needed statesmen.

It bears recalling that neither statesmen nor professional diplomats have carried great weight in American history. Few have gained a place in popular accounts of the country. Those with household names are anomalies. Ben Franklin is remembered mainly for reasons other than his diplomacy; Henry Kissinger is known by many people as a displaced European, down to the exaggerated accent. Indeed, throughout much of American history, diplomacy carried an un-American, pro-European stigma as a residue of the aristocratic, corrupt, devious Old World in whose affairs Americans nonetheless had occasionally and half-heartedly to partake. Einstein regarded that distinction as false: "Age and youth in a nation are relative expressions and chronologically often topsy-turvy. The Pilgrims, and the Dutch settlers on Manhattan, were far from being either young or primitive in their somber view of life. Even at the end of the eighteenth century, America, conscious of the Old-World ties, was more sophisticated and aged than is the United States of to-day."⁶³ By the second half of the twentieth century, especially, Americans came to prefer to rely on another, perhaps more confident, profession to stand at the head of their country's foreign policy: the military.

The correlation in American political culture between statecraft, diplomacy and Europe was direct and durable. Woodrow Wilson's celebrated New Diplomacy notwithstanding, the correlation persisted. This underscored the point Einstein made over and over again. The country's self-conscious assumption of great power status was accompanied by a paradox: American leaders sought to make the country's power self-evident, yet at the same time it had begun to exhibit a character, like Roosevelt's, "on its surface ... rugged, forceful, and impulsive," but "underneath subtle, intricate, and elusive."⁶⁴ Its defenders insisted that it did not need the trappings of a European empire—proconsuls, diplomats, alliances and the rest. In Asia and Latin America and to some extent in the Middle East, it was fine to call them by different names: administrators, governors, trusteeships. The more they echoed the familiar language of altruism, the better. But to Einstein, there was little doubt that the country's material power had, or ought to, come into its own.

With Europe this did not appear obvious at the start of the twentieth century. Europe remained the center of world power, which included being the arbiter of diplomacy. The great powers of recent memory—with the partial exceptions of Japan, Russia and the Ottoman Empire—were all European, as were nearly all the world's leading diplomats. If they had not been born there, they were almost surely educated in Europe, or at least familiar with European life, customs and views. The later, sometimes pejorative term, "Eurocentric," described an orientation more or less taken for granted, except, to some degree, in the United States. Einstein's generation faced the dilemma of wanting, even needing, to adjust to a world in which their country's interests rated alongside those of the leading European powers. But its culture disallowed admitting, let alone embracing, the style of European power politics.

Kennan, who has written admirably but not admiringly of the early twentieth-century American diplomatic mind, achieved greater fame in addressing this problem than did Einstein, whom he has depicted as a lodestar or precursor to the persona Kennan created for himself: the wise, judicious, old-worldly, far-sighted and under-appreciated analyst, the un-American American. If a diplomat was ever to fulfill the American model of the self-made man, this had to be the way to do it. Kennan made a convincing case for the peak of Einstein's career to having been the moment when he was his president's chosen servant in Europe. He savored European connections and environments. The writer Ray Stannard Baker has described him in 1916 during a visit to Vallombrosa, near Florence:

He has a charming villa, one mentioned by Boccaccio in his stories, with a fine garden & orchard. He makes his own wine & oil. We walked about the place & were much interested in hearing about & seeing Italian farming methods.... Mr. Einstein has had a long & interesting diplomatic career & is a handsome man with a somewhat Hebraic cast of countenance, a fine big head and very bright dark eyes. His wife is ... very beautiful—still beautiful at 55 years.... A woman of power & fascination; all black, all white—no smudgy grays, a woman who can hate desperately & love passionately, believing in the beauty of excess, the utter being of life. Her husband's career, everything, went for her! And probably without regret. They have a beautiful, though small villa & the dinner I had was matchless. No better dinner could be served, or, I think ever was served. The fame of their table resounds throughout the valley of the Arno.⁶⁵

He was certainly drawn to Europe yet, like Roosevelt, regarded himself as being immune to the narrow-minded tribalism, pessimism and cynicism he encountered there, traits which so disappointed him since Algeciras. Again, like the archetypical American, he was of two minds about Europe, eager to master its ways and appreciate its virtues and pleasures, but also careful to retain at least some capacity for detachment—to be in Europe, in other words, but never to be of it. So, too, with Roosevelt; but whereas Roosevelt was essentially a man of the present who spoke often of the future, Einstein lived in the past and probably idolized it—especially his beloved Renaissance. Yet Roosevelt, Einstein wrote, “too felt the ambition to attain an all-round accomplishment and proved by his career that the Renaissance ideal was large enough, and still vital enough, to find fulfillment in the broad sphere of American industrial democracy even better than in the narrow atmosphere of a petty Italian court.”⁶⁶

For all that Einstein was drawn to Europe, however, he had no special complex about it; and neither, evidently, did Roosevelt. Unlike others of their class, they did not make a fetish of Europe or seek to become European through expatriation or marriage. (Einstein's daughter did, however, marry a marquess.) Their view of the Old World, in their terms, was a practical one, demanded by circumstances. They realized that the present situation gave opportunities to the United States but also confronted it with dangers. The demise of the European order was a prospect both men had perceived and feared. To them—especially Einstein—only the United States, through skillful diplomacy with the big three—Britain, France and Germany—could prevent a major clash among them, one almost certain to entangle the United States sooner or later. To many people this appeared all too clear in retrospect, but, as noted, Einstein was one of the few Americans to grasp and articulate it on the eve of crisis. His was a “political insight of a very rare and superior order,” Kennan concluded, “insight which, if

heeded and respected, could well have altered our relationship to the coming European war in a manner greatly beneficial to ourselves and to the future peace of Europe.... And this insight, it should be noted, was forthcoming from a man already in government service, whose experience and intellectual distinction were wholly at Washington's disposal, had Washington wished to avail itself of them.... Washington, only too obviously, had no such wish."⁶⁷

Einstein's legacy may have resulted more from who he was than from what he nominally did. The elite members of his generation of diplomats were more self-conscious of their status as pioneer statesmen and professional public servants, particularly with reference to their counterparts in Europe, but they only had so much influence. Even Einstein once said their profession "lies on the borderland between history and gossip."⁶⁸ Einstein's chosen (and dictated) path shows that mastering the two was rare. Yet, Benjamin Franklin's familiar advice—"If you would not be forgotten, as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worth reading, or do things worth the writing"—was well heeded in this case. Like Roosevelt, Lewis Einstein found success in both, despite the obscure fate commonly suffered by diplomats—American diplomats, especially.

NOTES

¹Standard texts on Roosevelt's foreign policy include Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956); and Frederick W. Marks III, *Velvet on Iron: The Diplomacy of Theodore Roosevelt* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979). For more recent scholarship that integrates cultural history with diplomatic history and reveals the significance of Roosevelt's understanding of a global balance of power that included the United States, see Henry J. Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century*. (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2009); Gregory Russell, *The Statecraft of Theodore Roosevelt: The Duties of Nations and World Order* (Leiden: Republic of Letters, 2009); and chapters by Lloyd Ambrosius, Carl Cavanaugh Hodge, J. Simon Rofe, and William Tilchin in Serge Ricard, ed., *A Companion to Theodore Roosevelt* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

²See Hans Krabbendam and John M. Thompson, eds., *America's Transatlantic Turn: Theodore Roosevelt and the "Discovery" of Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

³Huntington Wilson to Root, Dec. 10, 1909, f.10, box 58, Elihu Root Papers, Library of Congress.

⁴George W. Liebmann, *Diplomacy between the Wars: Five Diplomats and the Shaping of the Modern World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 4.

⁵Roosevelt quoted by George Kennan, foreword to Lewis Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, ed. Lawrence E. Gelfand (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), vii.

⁶A full list of his writings is found in Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 251–56.

⁷Liebmann, *Diplomacy between the Wars*, 1.

⁸A typical denunciation is found in George Young, *Diplomacy Old and New* (London: Swarthmore Press, 1921).

⁹Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 13.

¹⁰Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 3–7, 23.

¹¹Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 24.

¹²Einstein, *Roosevelt: His Mind in Action* (Boston, 1930), 146.

¹³Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 9.

¹⁴Gelfand, introduction to *ibid.*, xviii.

¹⁵A.J.P. Taylor, *From Napoleon to Lenin: Historical Essays* (New York, Harper and Row, 1966), 135.

¹⁶Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 3.

¹⁷Quoted in Luella J. Hall, "A Partnership in Peacemaking: Theodore Roosevelt and Wilhelm II," *Pacific Historical Review* 13 (Dec. 1944): 395n.

¹⁸Quoted in Hall, "A Partnership in Peacemaking," 391. Cf. Douglas Eden, "America's First Intervention in European Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the European Crisis of 1905–1906" in *A Companion to Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Ricard, esp. 358, 361.

¹⁹Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 7, 15–17, 22.

²⁰Taylor, *From Napoleon to Lenin*, 135. For Taylor's assessment of Einstein, "Watching the World Go By," *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 10, 1968, 18.

²¹Hall, "A Partner in Peacemaking," 392.

²²Einstein, *Roosevelt, His Mind in Action*, 92. Cf. 129–30 for Roosevelt's own, more successful, reading of the kaiser during the Venezuelan crisis of 1902.

²³The classic account of this logic is William Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890–1902*, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1935).

²⁴Quoted in Hall, "A Partner in Peacemaking," 410.

²⁵See Ernest R. May, "King Ted, the Human Dynamo," *Times Literary Supplement*, Feb. 1, 2002, 9.

²⁶Einstein, *Roosevelt*, 97.

²⁷This case is commonly made for Woodrow Wilson but also may apply to Roosevelt. Cf. John Milton Cooper Jr. ed., *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War and Peace* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chs. 1–2; Trygve Throntveit, "Related States: Pragmatism, Progressivism, and Internationalism in American Thought and Politics, 1880–1920" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2008); and William Tilchin and Charles Neu, eds., *Artists of Power: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Their Enduring Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006).

²⁸Einstein, *Roosevelt*, 127.

²⁹J. Simon Rofe, "Preparedness and Defense: The Origins of Theodore Roosevelt's Strategy for the United States on the International Stage" in *A Companion to Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Ricard, 78–93.

³⁰See, for example, Lewis Einstein, *American Foreign Policy, by a Diplomatist* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909).

³¹Russell F. Weigley, review of Lester H. Brune, *The Origins of American National Security Policy: Sea Power, Air Power, and Foreign Policy, 1900–1941* in *American Historical Review* 88 (Oct. 1983): 1093.

³²Liebmann, *Diplomacy between the Wars*, 8, 13; Lewis Einstein, *A Prophecy of the War (1913–1914)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918), 87.

³³Einstein, *A Prophecy of the War*, 16–17.

³⁴Einstein, *A Prophecy of the War*, 17.

³⁵Einstein, *Roosevelt*, 135, 144 (regarding Roosevelt's equation of non-entanglement with ostensible neutrality in the Moroccan case).

³⁶Quoted in Hall, "A Partner in Peacemaking," 392. See also Einstein, *American Foreign Policy*, 16–17.

³⁷Taylor, *From Napoleon to Lenin*, 153.

³⁸William C. Askew and J. Fred Rippy, "The United States and Europe's Strife, 1908–1913," *Journal of Politics* 4 (Feb. 1942): 68–69.

³⁹Max Edling, review of Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America*, *H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews* 14:10 (Dec. 3, 2012): 11, <http://h-diplo.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIV-10.pdf> (accessed Aug. 5, 2014).

⁴⁰Ronald Steel, "Walter Lippmann and the Invention of the Atlantic Community" in *European Community, Atlantic Community?*, eds. Valérie Aubourg, Gérard Bossuat, and Giles Scott-Smith (Paris: Soleb, 2008), 28–35.

⁴¹Taylor, *From Napoleon to Lenin*, 18.

⁴²Askew and Rippy, "The United States and Europe's Strife," 77. For precedents in late nineteenth-century internationalism, see Frank Ninkovich, *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism, 1865–1890* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁴³Lewis Einstein, "The United States and Anglo-German Rivalry," *National Review* (Jan. 1913): 736–50. This article appeared under the pseudonym "Washington" in the American magazine, *Living Age* (Feb. 8, 1913): 323–32. Two more articles in the *National Review* followed in November 1914 and January 1915. Liebmann, *Diplomacy between the Wars*, 8–14; Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 252.

⁴⁴Askew and Rippy, "The United States and Europe's Strife," 77.

⁴⁵Theodore Roosevelt, foreword to Einstein, *A Prophecy of the War*, 7.

⁴⁶Kennan in Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, viii.

⁴⁷Einstein, *A Prophecy of the War*, 25.

⁴⁸Einstein, *A Prophecy of the War*, 32–33.

⁴⁹Einstein, *Roosevelt*, 222–23.

⁵⁰Einstein, *Roosevelt*, 225.

⁵¹William R. Castle Diaries, vol. 4, Nov. 7, 13, 1923, Castle Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁵²Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 171.

⁵³Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 173.

⁵⁴Kennan, foreword to Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, xi. Einstein's own account of the episode is succinct: "Mr. Hoover liked to be known as the great Engineer, but his zeal in advocating the preservation of natural resources did not extend to the human ones that were at his disposal. The case with which he dropped many career men was not calculated to flatter their self-esteem, though doubtless it provided some lessons in humility. The presidential purpose was only one of utilising diplomatic posts as a hidden subsidy for administration politics. My successor at Prague obtained his training for world affairs by running a taxi company." Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 207.

⁵⁵Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 213.

⁵⁶Liebmann, *Diplomacy between the Wars*, 27.

⁵⁷For his part, Holmes reminded Einstein that "you are wrong in thinking that I am even an unbelieving Rooseveltian ... even presidents can do harm. And I think the most harmful thing that can be done is done by such of the Rooseveltian manifestos as I have seen." Holmes to Einstein, Oct. 28, 1912, repr. in *The Essential Holmes*, ed. Richard A. Posner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 141. Their full correspondence appears in James Bishop Peabody, ed., *The Holmes-Einstein Letters: Correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Lewis Einstein, 1903–1935* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

⁵⁸Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, 212–13.

⁵⁹Quoted in Liebmann, *Diplomacy between the Wars*, 28.

⁶⁰Cf. Anders Stephanson's review of Sexton, *Monroe Doctrine*, *H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews* 14:10 (Dec. 3, 2012): 25.

⁶¹Einstein to Lippmann, Mar. 1, 1930, f.359, box 8, MS 326, Walter Lippmann Papers, Yale University.

⁶²Quoted in Alfred Vagts, "The United States and the Balance of Power," *Journal of Politics* 3:4 (Nov. 1941): 426.

⁶³Vagts, "The United States and the Balance of Power," 99.

⁶⁴Vagts, "The United States and the Balance of Power," 6.

⁶⁵Quoted in Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, xv.

⁶⁶Einstein, *Roosevelt*, vi.

⁶⁷Kennan in Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, x–xi.

⁶⁸Kennan in Einstein, *A Diplomat Looks Back*, xxxiii.