Comparisons are frequently drawn between the American Revolution of 1776 and those other two great upheavals of the modern era—the French and Bolshevik Revolutions. Primarily, these comparisons center on the question of how revolutionary the American Revolution really was in terms of its causes and its consequences. Did it arise from, and produce, profound changes in American society? Or is it best viewed as a simple act of political severance by colonies of an undesired imperial bond?¹ Far less attention has been paid to another possible line of comparison—the exportability and universalizability of the revolution in the eyes of its sponsors.² Here the inquiry leads us to examine, not so much the revolutionary aspects of the American Revolution, as its American aspects. Was it viewed by the revolutionary generation principally as an insular event, self-contained and without a necessary sequel in other lands? Or did the revolutionaries see themselves as cosmopolitan apostles of liberty whose mission embraced the active encouragement of colonial liberation and the establishment of democratic regimes in other settings?

Our point of departure must, of course, be the founding document of the American Revolution—the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration relies heavily on the cosmopolitan philosophy of the Enlightenment and predicates the right of
revolution on the social compact which is said to form the basis of all government. But the purpose for which this universal philosophy is invoked is self-contained and limited: to justify the attempt of the thirteen colonies to secure their own independence. Moreover, side by side with the general philosophical arguments—and in some ways more prominent—are legal arguments relating to the rights of Englishmen. Any general advocacy of a cosmopolitan revolutionary ideology is scrupulously avoided. While the premise of the revolution was universal, the immediate consequences, as far as the American revolutionaries were concerned, were to be purely insular. The Declaration contains no clarion call to other colonies to break the bonds of imperial rule and institute regimes based on the “consent of the governed.” No hand is stretched out to other “oppressed” peoples to render them the benefits of the American Revolution. True, the same universal premises which justified the American Revolution could and did in subsequent generations inspire other revolutions—but this was not due to any active crusading abroad on the part of the generation of the Revolution. It was attributable rather to the power of the message contained in the Declaration, coupled with the fact that the American Revolution, by its very success, suggested itself to others as a model for emulation. Such an outcome was totally consistent with the thinking of the Founding Fathers. Colonial liberation and the establishment of democratic regimes had to be spawned by the people concerned. In more modern terminology, self-determination had to be brought about by the “self” and not by others. The American Revolution, as such, was not marked “for export.”

The resolve of the Founding Fathers to restrict the scope of their revolutionary effort to America was strengthened by pragmatic considerations. Indeed, if their ideology permitted the non-exportation of the revolution, expediency considerations required it. Consolidation of the gains of the revolution depended not on the active extension of the revolution to foreign lands, but rather on the contrary policy of non-involvement in foreign affairs. Expansion might occur by the process of American colonization westward, by pushing back the frontier, not by the deliverance of foreign peoples from the yoke of their subjugators.

The doctrine of non-involvement in foreign affairs—even where the spread of “liberty” might be at stake—came to the fore
very early in the life of the new republic. In 1793, some ten years after its own Revolutionary War had ended, the United States was called upon to take a stand in respect of the war which had erupted between Britain and France in the wake of the French Revolution. As is well known, President Washington and his cabinet unanimously decided to proclaim American neutrality, notwithstanding treaty obligations which may have flowed from the 1778 alliance with France. Even Jefferson, despite his known sympathy with the French Revolution, felt compelled to set aside ideological considerations so as to keep the United States "out of the calamities of a war." 

In his Farewell Address, Washington emphasized the priority the fledgling republic must assign in its foreign policy to its own "duty and interest" and the need to avoid both "passionate attachments" and "permanent, inveterate antipathies." Implicitly, this entailed the negation of ideological "crusades for freedom" by the United States. Non-entanglement and non-involvement confirmed and continued the insular character of the Revolution foreshadowed in the Declaration of Independence. External effects of the Revolution were to be felt only by what the United States was and would become—not by what it did on foreign shores.

The insular attitude of the American Revolution stands in stark contrast to the universalism of the French and Bolshevik Revolutions. As Daniel Boorstin has observed, the American Revolution produced a Declaration of Independence—a document "concerned with a specific event" and dealing with the rights of Englishmen—while the French Revolution brought forth a "Declaration of the Rights of Man." And Boorstin proceeds to cite the following passage from De Tocqueville's Ancien Régime:

It [the French Revolution] inquired, not what were the particular rights of the French citizens, but what were the general rights and duties of mankind in reference to political concerns.... By seeming to tend rather to the regeneration of the human race than to the reform of France alone, it roused passions such as the most violent political revolutions had been incapable of awakening. It inspired proselytism, and gave birth to propagandism; and...became a sort of new religion...able, like Islamism, to cover the earth with its soldiers, its apostles, and its martyrs.
The universal rhetoric was translated in short order into an armed crusade on behalf of oppressed peoples. By means of "propagandist decrees" issued by the National Convention in 1792, "fraternity and aid" was pledged "to all peoples who wish to recover their liberty," and the French generals were to be given "the orders necessary for bringing aid to such peoples." Within the freed territories, decrees were to be issued proclaiming: "Brothers and friends, we have gained liberty and we shall maintain it. We offer to help you enjoy this inestimable good . . . . We have expelled your tyrants . . . . Henceforth the French nation proclaims the sovereignty of the people." Expansion of the revolution abroad was, at least implicitly, based not only on ideology, but also on the practical belief that, unless the revolution extended itself, its own existence would soon be drowned by the surrounding sea of absolutist monarchism.

As for the Bolshevik Revolution, it was, of course, the product of a universalist doctrine which viewed the state as an artificial and temporary barrier to the world-wide revolution of the proletariat. When launched, the Russian Revolution was expected by its sponsors to spark a series of cataclysms across Europe and the world, and only in this manner, it was thought, would the Russian Revolution itself be secured. Once it became clear that the anticipated conflagration would not materialize immediately, the Bolsheviks felt compelled to beat a tactical retreat from their goal of world-wide revolution, and to concentrate—albeit temporarily—on the "building of socialism in one country." The strategic aim remained the same, but circumstances had necessitated a revision of the timetable of the revolution.

Thus it may be said that, in the case of the American Revolution, ideology and pragmatism combined to restrict the scope of the revolution; in the case of the French Revolution, ideology and pragmatism apparently joined to expand the revolution to other states; and as for the Bolshevik Revolution, ideology and pragmatism temporarily parted ways, so that the active quest for the millennium had to be deferred to a more propitious time.
The principle of abstention from interventions on behalf of the freedom of other peoples was maintained by the United States throughout almost all of the 19th century.

The administrations of both Jefferson and Madison carefully desisted from actively encouraging revolts on the part of the Spanish colonies of South America. "If you remain under the dominion of...Spain," Jefferson's cabinet notified Cuba and Mexico in 1808, "we are contented." On the other hand, the message continued somewhat equivocally, "should you chuse [sic] to declare independence, we cannot now commit ourselves by saying we would make common cause with you but must reserve ourselves to act accdg [sic] to the then existing circumstances, but in our proceedings we shall be influenced by friendship to you, by a firm belief that our interests are intimately connected, and by the strongest repugnance to see you under subordination to either France or England, either politically or commercially."10 In somewhat similar terms the policy was reaffirmed during Madison's administration. Thus, State Department instructions to two American consuls in South America in 1811 stated: "The destiny of those provinces must depend on themselves. Should such a revolution however take place, it cannot be doubted that our relation with them will be more intimate, our friendship stronger than it can be while they are colonies of any European power."11

At first glance, it would appear that the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 represented a sharp break with the former policies, and that it entailed at least the "Latin-Americanization"—although not the universalization—of the American Revolution. According to the 1823 Doctrine, it will be recalled, any intervention by the European powers to suppress the revolutions which had erupted in the Spanish colonies of South America would not be countenanced by the United States. Here, it might be suggested, the United States assumed the mantle of active supporter of the struggle for national liberation in Latin America. However, closer scrutiny of the terms of the Doctrine and the circumstances in which it was enunciated does not bear out this conclusion. The United States, it appears, was concerned primarily with protecting its own security and commercial interests and very little, if at all, with safeguarding the freedom of the Spanish colonies.
On the issue of colonial emancipation from Spain, the mother country, American policy proceeded cautiously and pragmatically and it abjured active intervention throughout. The United States did not provide the rebels with material assistance. It steered clear of even the mild form of intervention which might be implied from premature recognition of the new republics' independence. Despite prodding from Congress, the U.S. Administration deferred recognition until 1822, by which time Spain's chances of reconquering its colonies remained "utterly desperate."\textsuperscript{12} Even after this recognition, the United States reaffirmed, in the Monroe Doctrine, continued American neutrality in the conflict between Spain and her colonies. Realistically, of course, Spain could no longer restore its former empire unassisted; and the Doctrine aimed at ensuring that no assistance would be forthcoming from the Holy Alliance. But the warning to these European powers was given after it was clear that the British fleet would in any case prevent intervention by those powers in South America. It was then that Monroe and his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, felt secure enough to warn off, in the manner of Don Quixote, the European windmills that might have contemplated interference. Indeed, the Monroe Doctrine might well have emerged as a joint British-American declaration were it not primarily for America's reluctance to tie its hands with regard to the future of Cuba and Texas.\textsuperscript{13}

How far the Monroe Doctrine was from any general manifesto of colonial emancipation in Latin America can be seen from two further facts. First, by the terms of the Doctrine, the United States pledged not to interfere with the existing colonies in the Western Hemisphere. Secondly, when certain of the new Latin American republics requested that the United States translate Monroe's ideas into positive terms by establishing an inter-American alliance and by granting aid to the new states, the United States simply cold-shouldered the proposals.\textsuperscript{14}

It is interesting to note that, at the time when the United States was enunciating its policy toward the South American republics, it also felt called upon to determine what its attitude should be to the cause of Greek independence. An earlier draft of Monroe's 1823 message to Congress contained a vigorous expression of support for the Greek struggle and would have strongly suggested imminent American recognition of the insurgents.\textsuperscript{15} In
this manner, the United States would, in effect, have moved closer toward active universalization of the principles of the American Revolution. It was precisely to avoid such a démarche that Secretary of State John Quincy Adams dissuaded the President from including the statement in his message. Greek independence, Adams successfully urged, was—unlike the issue of independence in Latin America—in no way bound up with American security interests. American involvement would not only represent a departure from Washington’s policies of non-entanglement; it would, in practical terms, weaken the American case for European non-involvement in the Western Hemisphere. “The ground that I wish to take,” he declared, “is that of earnest remonstrance against the interference of the European powers by force with South America, but to disclaim all interference on our part in Europe; to make an American cause, and adhere inflexibly to that.”

Monroe accepted the counsel of his Secretary of State and contented himself with a rather pallid expression of sympathy for the Greek cause. However, the matter did not end there, and Congress subsequently considered a resolution to appoint a diplomatic agent to Greece “whenever the President shall deem it expedient to make such appointment.” During the course of the debate, Representative Silas Wood of New York eloquently inveighed against active American championship of the cause of universal liberty and pleaded for reaffirmation of the original ideology of American independence. The proposed resolution, he said, “implies that the United States are the guardians of liberty, and are bound to propagate it among all nations.” But such a doctrine “leads to universal war—to universal power.” And he continued:

It will be asked, is our Government to be of no use to mankind? I answer yes; but not by its fleets and armies—not by embarking in a military crusade to establish the empire of our principles—not by establishing a corps of diplomatic apostles of liberty, but by the moral influence of its example.

Similar thoughts were earlier expressed by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams in 1821. In a July 4th oration—appropriately
enough—he sought to emphasize the difference between America serving as a model for mankind and actively exporting that model abroad:

If the wise and learned philosophers of the elder world... enquire what has America done for the benefit of mankind? Let our answer be this: America, with the same voice which spoke herself into existence as a nation, proclaimed to mankind the inextinguishable rights of human nature, and the only lawful foundations of government....She has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when conflict has been for principles to which she clings, as to the last vital drop that visits the heart....Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the powers of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force....She might become the dictatrix of the world. She would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit. 19

The rhetoric of Americans concerning the influence of their Revolution in other lands tended to sound more universalistic as the 19th century progressed. The American Revolution continued to be viewed as a model for those who wished to emulate it—but increasingly Americans expected that sooner or later all would indeed desire to do so. Yet the universalistic rhetoric remained precisely that: rhetoric, not deeds. Implementation of the American revolutionary ideals was not the task of the Americans, but of all the would-be emulators. Their road to national liberation would be easier, it was thought, now that it could be illuminated by the
bright American saga. These themes were sounded by Abraham Lincoln several times during his pre-presidential career. The American Revolution, he said in 1842, "has given us a degree of political freedom, far exceeding that of any other of the nations of the earth. In it the world has found a solution of that long mooted problem, as to the capability of man to govern himself. In it was the germ which has vegetated, and still is to grow and expand into the universal liberty of mankind." 20 The right of revolution, he stated several years later, "is a most valuable—a most sacred right—a right, which we hope and believe, is to liberate the world." But revolution was, for Lincoln too, a matter of self-help: "Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power [authors' emphasis], have the right to rise up, and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better." 21 National liberation was not to be commissioned in America.

The role of the United States in the liberation of Cuba from Spanish rule at the turn of the century constituted a glaring exception to the prevailing policy of not meddling in the colonial struggles of others peoples. While many American diplomatic historians have viewed the Spanish-American War as a temporary "aberration" 22 in American foreign policy, their reasons have related primarily to the aftermath of the war. They have noted the uncharacteristic imperialistic binge in which the United States indulged and which led to the annexation of the Philippines. But, in fact, the very entry of the United States into the war represented no less an aberration. It constituted the kind of active exportation of the American Revolution which the Monroe Doctrine had forewarned.

Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to extrapolate from the Cuban episode a new rule of American foreign policy with regard to colonial situations, or even with regard to colonial situations in Central America. American action in this case might more appropriately be viewed—and indeed was viewed at the time—as a sui generis case of humanitarian intervention in an area in close geographical proximity to the United States. Spain's efforts to suppress the rebellion in Cuba had gone on for over three years and had been accompanied by considerable brutality; within the
concentration camps which had been set up many of the men, women and children had perished from malnutrition and disease; and American public opinion, egged on by the yellow press, was unprecedentedly aroused by the tales of atrocity occurring literally at America's doorstep.

Nor should the subsequent annexation of the Philippines be viewed as a form of universalization of the American Revolution—notwithstanding McKinley's assertion that divine inspiration had instructed him to annex the islands in order to "uplift and civilize and Christianize" their inhabitants. It would seem, rather, that the idea of joining in the assumption of the "white man's burden" had great appeal for many Americans at that time, and that they "simply liked the smell of empire." As the anti-imperialists convincingly argued, American acquisition of the Philippines contradicted the ideals of the American Revolution. In the words of William Jennings Bryan: "If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, it is impossible to secure title to people, either by force or by purchase." Nor was this the traditional American way to export and universalize its Revolution. An American republic which rested "securely upon the foundation stones quarried by revolutionary patriots from the mountain of eternal truth" would be "a republic which shakes thrones and dissolves aristocracies by its silent example and gives light and inspiration to those who sit in darkness."

(The subsequent necessity of suppressing an extended Filipino insurrection against American rule—at the cost of some four thousand American lives—demonstrated that, like many of the liberated peoples of the French Revolutionary Wars, the Filipinos did not appreciate their new "freedom" any more than their former bondage.)

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The presidency of Woodrow Wilson marks an important turning point in the matter of exporting the principles of the American Revolution abroad. Indeed, Wilson may quite justifiably be viewed as one of the "great universalizers" of the Revolutionary ideals. Yet it is necessary to analyze which principles he sought to universalize and how, and to distinguish universalization in rhetoric from universalization in deed.
In Wilsonian ideology, the "American mission" was significantly broadened and thereby transformed. It was axiomatic for Wilson, as it had been for most Americans up to and during his time, that America would serve the world by the power of her example, that she would be a model by what she was. But for Wilson there was another aspect of the American mission too, and this aspect involved doing as well as being. America’s mission embraced the role of securing and guaranteeing the peace of the world. To fulfill this mission, America needed to join a collective security system representing "the organized major force of mankind." 26 But this was not sufficient. In order to ensure a lasting peace based on justice, several American ideals had to be universalized.

First of all, it was necessary to strive for universal democracy, because only thus could peace be permanently secured. This conclusion was based on Wilson’s oft-expressed belief in the pacific nature of democracies and the aggressive tendencies of autocratic regimes. "A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations," he declared. 27 And again: "Only a nation whose government was its servant and not its master could be trusted to preserve the peace of the world." 28 Making the world "safe for democracy" had of course been one of the slogans of the war. In terms of deeds, a change of regimes was actively sought and achieved in Germany. Moreover, by means of the minority regimes instituted in certain of the new and newly expanded states, greater internal democratization was striven for.

Before World War I there had been another arena of Wilsonian "deeds" in this respect—that of Mexico and Central America. Regardless of what motives may be attributed to Wilson, the interventions were explained by Wilson as aimed at ensuring constitutionalism and self-government. (If, because of this, "all . . . business . . . will be safer," this, it would seem, was seen by Wilson more as a felicitous by-product than as the principal purpose of the interventions.) 29 Wilson thus moved considerably beyond the policies of Monroe and succeeding presidents in "Latin-Americanizing" the principles of the American Revolution. The Monroe Doctrine, as has been seen, did not really represent a manifesto on colonial emancipation in Latin America; it was primarily concerned with American security interests. The same
could be said of the "Roosevelt Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine, by which the United States undertook to intervene in the financial affairs of the Caribbean states in order to keep the European powers out. But Wilson premised his interventions on ideological grounds. The issue at stake was no longer colonial emancipation, which had already been achieved in the preceding century, but self-government and democracy. It was this aspect of the American Revolution that Wilson sought to export to Central America—and not by words alone.

For much of the rest of the world, however, self-determination—in the "external" sense of freedom from alien sovereignty—was still an issue, and it constituted for Wilson a further aspect of the American ideal of the "consent of the governed" which needed to be exported to secure world peace. In Wilson's words: "No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property."

The principle was never truly universalized by Wilson in action nor even in thought. (Moreover, for theoretical and practical reasons, it could never really be so universalized.) The primary geographic sphere of its application for Wilson was Europe and, at Versailles, he did attempt, with varying degrees of effort and success, to implement it in those parts of Europe where boundaries could be readily redrawn. On the other hand, the globalization of the principle of self-determination to embrace world-wide colonial emancipation was probably not part of the ideology of Wilson (as opposed to that of Lenin); and, in any event, at Versailles, Wilson settled for very much less than full self-determination as a goal for all colonial peoples. Nor did Wilson succeed in getting the principle of self-determination incorporated into the final draft of Article 10 of the League Covenant. The article, as adopted, provided for guaranteeing against external aggression "the territorial integrity and existing political independence" of League members, and no reference was made to the possibility of future boundary changes based on self-determination.

Beyond the exportation of these two facets of the "consent of the governed"—universal democracy and "external" self-determination—Wilson strove to export American ideals in at
least one other sense. World peace required, in his view, the institution of the democratic principle not only within states but between them as well. It is in this vein that he repeatedly emphasized the need to found world order on the equality of states. "The equality of nations upon which peace must be founded if it is to last," he said, "must be an equality of rights; the guarantees exchanged must neither recognize nor imply a difference between big nations and small, between those that are powerful and those that are weak."35

In Wilson’s time, and for the succeeding two decades, the American people in effect rejected the expanded and metamorphosed version of the American mission which had been proffered to them. Thereby they denied any necessity to engage in the concomitant universalization of the ideals of the American Revolution in any active sense. Pragmatic considerations did not appear to require adopting the new version: America could be secure without it, and involvement abroad might even jeopardize America’s own security and independence. It might also sully the ideological purity of the Revolution and lead America to fail in its primary mission of providing a shining example to the world by what it was. As Senator William E. Borah declared: “America must, not alone for the happiness of her own people, but for the moral guidance and greater contentment of the world, be permitted to live her own life.”36 Only in a later era was the Wilsonian rhetoric to be revived, to receive the consensus of the American people—and to be translated into deeds.

The period of World War II and its immediate aftermath provided the momentum and incentive for public acceptance of the expanded version of the American mission abroad which Wilson had striven for vainly in his own time. Altruism was no longer the major premise, as it had been for Wilson. In the face of a massive totalitarian fascist threat, pragmatic considerations related to national security seemed to require America’s assumption of a definite role in the maintenance of world peace and order. But did acceptance of the new version of the American mission inevitably entail, as Wilson had assumed, the active universalization of the American Revolutionary ideology abroad?
The answers given by Roosevelt were not entirely free of ambiguity in this regard. While there were many similarities and parallelisms in the thinking of the two presidents—indeed, Roosevelt considered himself a Wilsonian by ideology—there were also some essential differences, arising from personality and circumstance. Roosevelt shared many of his predecessor’s beliefs and even expanded on some—most notably, self-determination for colonial peoples in Asia and probably also in Africa—but he did not apparently partake of the same crusading fervor for active exportation of those ideas.\textsuperscript{37}

Like Wilson, Roosevelt was convinced that democracies were inherently pacific, and autocracies—militaristic. “Autocracy in world affairs endangers peace,” he said as early as 1936, and “threats do not spring from those Nations devoted to the democratic ideal.”\textsuperscript{38} Or, as he stated in 1938, “world peace through international agreements is most safe in the hands of democratic representative governments . . . Peace is most greatly jeopardized in and by those nations where democracy has been discarded or has never developed.”\textsuperscript{39}

More than Wilson, perhaps, Roosevelt emphasized the need to universalize basic freedoms, particularly freedom of expression and religion. (This emphasis was understandable, given the context of totalitarian fascist suppression of these fundamental liberties.) The four freedoms, Roosevelt had said, were essential “everywhere in the world.”\textsuperscript{40} Freedom was a matter of interdependence: “We ourselves shall never be safe at home unless other governments recognize such freedoms,” he said. “Freedom of person and security of property anywhere in the world depend upon the security of the rights and obligations of liberty and justice everywhere in the world.”\textsuperscript{41}

Yet what the United States should actively do to promote the spread of democracy and fundamental liberties was not clear. Presumably, it would attempt to democratize the defeated states—although there are indications that only Italy was deemed a fit subject for immediate democratization. Japan and Germany would first have to be shorn of militaristic proclivities by dismemberment or other means. As for the rest of the world, Roosevelt apparently believed that, with the elimination of the fascist menace, the spread of democracy would be an ineluctable process, for which the United States would not need actively to proselytize.\textsuperscript{42}
This did not mean that what the United States did at home was irrelevant: Roosevelt invigorated and up-dated the older version of the American mission. America did indeed need to serve as a model by what it was, but in order to do so, that model would have to be “dynamic.” Faith in American democracy could be renewed only by proving that it could successfully cope with the social and economic problems of the 20th century.43

The one aspect of the Wilsonian package of American ideals which was more universalized by Roosevelt was the concept of self-determination. Roosevelt exhibited a far greater “Asian-consciousness” in this regard. Whereas Wilson had not thought of tampering with the existing empires of his allies, Roosevelt felt strongly about the need to liquidate the British and French Empires. It is possible to debate his motives in thus pushing for decolonization (wartime exigencies, ensuring America’s Open Door empire, and the like), but the manifestations of a desire for such decolonization were legion. Roosevelt repeatedly referred to America’s projected grant of independence to the Philippines as a model for emulation by others. He badgered Churchill several times on the Indian question and sought, to Churchill’s great irritation, to analogize from the experience of the United States during its formative years to the situation in India.44 (“The President’s mind was back in the American War of Independence,” Churchill complained, “and he thought of the Indian problem in terms of the thirteen colonies fighting George III at the end of the eighteenth century.”)45

As for the French Empire, Roosevelt’s hope and expectation of its early demise were even greater than in the case of the British Empire.46 (A most unfavorable view of French government and of the French record of imperialism—particularly in Indo-China—contributed to this trend of thought.) Recognizing that colonialism could not be immediately liquidated everywhere, Roosevelt suggested wide use of the concept of “trusteeship,” a concept which he came to view as a kind of panacea for all sorts of colonial ills.47

Roosevelt’s earlier “Good Neighbor” policy in Latin America, and his withdrawal of American marines from Haiti, also had direct relevance for the issue of self-determination. By his policy, Roosevelt demonstrated far greater appreciation for the substance of self-determination in Latin America than had Wilson.
With respect to self-determination in Europe, Roosevelt apparently placed greater faith than Wilson in the ability of plebiscites to solve territorial problems as well as the problems of minorities. He had hoped for plebiscites, genuinely conducted, in the Baltic states; and he may have expected that the Yalta "free elections" formula in Eastern Europe would actually result in true "external" and "internal" self-determination for the states concerned. (Of course, the extent of his realism or naiveté at Yalta remains a most debatable point.) True self-determination, he assumed—along with Wilson and many other Americans before and since—could only result in the selection of a democratic form of government. But if, perchance, it did not, the world might, for the sake of peace and justice, move to negate the people's decision. The choice freely exercised by a nation "must not threaten the world with the disaster of war." The right of self-determination "does not carry with it the right of any Government anywhere in the world to commit wholesale murder, or the right to make slaves of its own people, or of any other peoples in the world."

And as for the problem of minorities—the other side of the self-determination coin—Roosevelt was more willing than Wilson to sanction the more radical solution of transfer of populations. Perhaps the interwar experience with minorities' protection—and particularly the abuse of that protection by the large German minorities—induced skepticism as to the value of this aspect of universal democratization abroad.

Roosevelt was clearly less enthusiastic than Wilson regarding the application of the American ideal of equality to the relations between states. The notion of the "Four Policemen" seems to have held greater attraction for him; and, on the basis of his reading of history, he tended to view small states as potential troublemakers on the international scene, to be policed for the good of the world.

In sum, it may be said that Roosevelt's attitude to the active universalization of the American ideals abroad was somewhat more tentative and ambiguous than that of Wilson. Acceptance of the broader version of the American mission did not necessarily entail proselytism and action on behalf of the universalization of American democracy; but a more active role was foreshadowed in the matter of decolonization. Reversal of these priorities was to come about during the succeeding era, when the threat of
totalitarian fascism was replaced by the perceived threat of totalitarian communism.

With the advent of the Cold War, active universalization of the ideals of the American Revolution became a tenet of American foreign policy. The confrontation with a revived Bolshevik revolutionary élan and its expansionist by-products had imparted to the originally insular American Revolution a globalistic proselytizing momentum. If the Declaration of Independence highlighted the insularity of the American Revolution, the Truman Doctrine signalled the new universalistic tendencies.

"Totalitarian regimes imposed upon free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States," the Doctrine asserted. This did not sound very different from the earlier assertions of Roosevelt; but the sweeping language of the rationale and the terms of the operative conclusions were more far-reaching:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.
One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guaranties of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.
The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.
I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.
I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.

Implicit in the Doctrine was the belief that truly self-determined people would not opt for totalitarian communism, but that
“misery and want” might deprive people of free choice; that the cases of Greece and Turkey were simply test cases in a contest which was global and had both military and ideological dimensions; that it would not suffice to sit back passively and rely on the power of the American example to combat the growth of communist totalitarianism but that it was necessary actively to nip the totalitarian weeds in the bud; and that this could be done by the extension of massive economic, and occasionally military, aid to critical areas in the free world. The program, so broadly formulated, was in effect an open-ended one to support freedom-loving peoples everywhere. Only in this manner was the American Revolution itself to be secure.

Ironically, the anti-communist crusade led the United States to inescapable dilemmas with respect to the anti-colonial issue which had been so close to Roosevelt’s heart. On the one hand, competition with the Soviet Union for the sympathies of the emerging anti-colonial forces in the world required a more aggressive anti-colonial stance on the part of the United States. (It is perhaps worth recalling that Wilson’s own espousal of self-determination in World War I was in no small measure reactive to Bolshevik initiatives.) Yet, on the other hand, the need to consolidate the Western European alliance dictated a less critical posture in respect to the colonial policies of America’s allies. Devotion to the cause of preserving the independence of existing states frequently restrained the United States from too avidly promoting the independence of potential states.

The globalism of the Truman Doctrine was confirmed in Korea. Subsequently, Secretary of State Dulles espoused what would appear to be a logical corollary of the premises of the containment policy. If there was to be universalization of the ideals which underlay the American Revolution, then surely it was not sufficient to prevent future expansionism by Soviet totalitarianism; it was as necessary to erase the products of their past expansionism by “rolling back” the iron curtain and actively liberating Eastern Europe. That this was not the operative policy of the United States was quickly proved by the events in Hungary in 1956, but it was not until after America had passed through the trauma of Vietnam that the fiction of liberation was finally abandoned. With this abandonment came also a recognition of the inherent limitations of the original globalist containment policy.
The attempt by the United States in the 1960s—the Kennedy-Johnson eras—to block communist advance in South East Asia was to be a prime test of the containment policy of the Truman Doctrine. In fact, however, it was here that the Doctrine’s universality reached both its apogee and nemesis. In trying to promote political independence of South Vietnam against a communist onslaught, the US role shifted from “support” of a “freedom-loving people” to “creation” of one. The United States was, in effect, not only offering to export its revolution to the South Vietnamese; it was actually foisting it upon them. America was crusading on behalf of people who did not wish to be redeemed; the “self” was apparently to be “determined” even unwillingly.

Given the nature of the conflict, the end result was disaster. The prophecy of John Quincy Adams, in 1821, came close to being fulfilled: “By once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the powers of extrication...The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force...She might become the dictatress of the world. She would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.”

The United States did not in fact become the “dictatress of the world,” but the Vietnam debacle did lead many Americans to urge that the United States reclaim “her own spirit” by reverting to the original version of the American mission. As Fulbright argued: “The world has no need, in this age of nationalism and nuclear weapons, for a new imperial power, but there is a great need of the leadership of decent example.”

In the post-Vietnam period the United States did not go as far in its retrenchment as Fulbright and others may have wished. It did not revert to the original American mission to the exclusion of the newer version introduced by Wilson. Neo-isolationism did not appear to most Americans to be the cure-all to over-extension in foreign lands. There was no complete foregoing of any attempt at universalizing the ideals of the American Revolution. But Vietnam did induce a significant retrenchment in the policy of containment and a revision of its ideological premises. The new attitude was indicated by the Nixon Doctrine, on the one hand, and the Helsinki conference, on the other.

In accordance with the Nixon Doctrine (which has remained American policy even after Nixon’s departure from the political
scene), the United States was henceforth to help only those freedom-loving peoples who help themselves—and even this was to be done without the despatch of American troops. The United States would no longer seek to cast regimes in its own image, but would extend limited help to bolster those regimes that were already so cast. For its part, Congress, in its newly assertive post-Vietnam posture, has moved to reinforce the retrenchment policy by “containing” the executive and preventing any possible American foreign military adventurism. And, as Angola served to prove, the attitude of Congress was not pure bluff.

With the Helsinki Conference, the United States continued its policy of retrenchment and moved to revise the ideology of globalism on which the Truman Doctrine had been based. The notion of “liberating” Eastern Europe was formally laid to rest. The United States now waived any right to export its Revolution to Eastern Europe by actively promoting self-determination and democracy in that area. In effect, the United States now recognized the Soviet Union’s hegemony over Eastern Europe. The insertion of human rights provisions in the Helsinki Declaration suggested that the United States would continue to be concerned with championing the cause of human rights in Eastern Europe no less than in other parts of the world. But this was in no way to entail a policy of interventionism.

Thus, as it celebrated its bicentennial year, the United States had struck a middle ground between the original insular ideology of the Declaration of Independence and the universalist ideology of the Truman Doctrine. What pragmatic considerations required, a revised ideology now permitted; and, at least in Europe, an accommodation had been reached between the spheres of the American and Bolshevik Revolutions.
Notes


2. Care must be taken to distinguish between the official pronouncements and policies that accompanied the Revolution and the occasional expressions of hope by individual leaders, such as Jefferson, that the Revolution would spread abroad. Not even Jefferson, however (as will be seen below), advocated American intervention in other lands.


8. Ibid., p. 382. For their liberation, the peoples were to pay their fair share of "the common defense." These costs of liberation were not to be viewed as reparations to a victor, since, by definition, the French came as liberators, not conquerors.

9. "Feudal Europe would be forced either to reform its institutions in imitation of the French, or to attack France, with the aim of restoring the old regime. This was the true basis of the conflict." Gaetano Salvemini, The French Revolution 1788–1792, trans. I. M. Rawson (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), p. 261.


11. Ibid., p. 198.


15. De Conde, A History of American Foreign Policy, p. 139.

16. Ibid., p. 140. Adams warned Monroe that his proposed statement on Greece would be "a summons to arms—to arms against all Europe, and for objects of policy exclusively European." Ibid., pp. 139-40.

17. Goebel, American Foreign Policy Documentary Survey, p. 68.

18. Ibid., p. 72.


22. See chap. 26 in Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States, entitled "The Great Aberration of 1898."


24. Goebel, American Foreign Policy Documentary Survey, p. 156.


30. On the distinction between "external" and "internal" self-determination and the diverse strands of thought upon which the Wilsonian concept of self-determination was premised, see ibid., and especially, pp. 16-21.

37. See Willard Range, Franklin D. Roosevelt's World Order (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1959), p. 127. On the Rooseveltian attitude to the spread of democracy abroad, see generally chapter 9, to which the ensuing discussion is greatly indebted.
42. Range, Franklin D. Roosevelt's World Order, pp. 127, 135.
45. Ibid., p. 219.
47. For a discussion of the trusteeship idea, see Range, Franklin D. Roosevelt's World Order, pp. 109-14.
48. Ibid., p. 114; and Welles, Seven Decisions, pp. 136-37.
49. The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1938 volume, p. 565.


55. In this regard, it is interesting to juxtapose two passages from President Jimmy Carter’s Inaugural Address of January 20, 1977: "Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clear-cut preference for those societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights." "Our nation can be strong abroad only if it is strong at home, and we know that the best way to enhance freedom in other lands is to demonstrate here that our democratic system is worthy of emulation."