II

The Intellectual Formulation

SOME intellectuals speak only for themselves. Theirs is often the later glory, but seldom the present power. Some, however, speak not only for themselves but for the guiding forces of their society. Discovering such men at crucial junctures in history, if such a discovery can be made, is of importance and value. These figures uncover the premises, reveal the approaches, provide the details, and often coherently arrange the ideas which are implicit in the dominant thought of their time and society.

The ordered, articulate writings of Frederick Jackson Turner, Josiah Strong, Brooks Adams, and Alfred Thayer Mahan typified the expansive tendencies of their generation. Little evidence exists that Turner and Strong directly influenced expansionists in the business community or the State Department during the 1890's, but their writings best exemplify certain beliefs which determined the nature of American foreign policy. Adams and Mahan participated more directly in the shaping of expansionist programs. It is, of course, impossible to estimate the number of Americans who accepted the arguments of these four men. What cannot be controverted is that the writings of these men typified

and in some specific instances directly influenced the thought of American policy makers who created the new empire.[1]

This chapter does not pretend to explore all the nooks and corners in the intellectual realm of each man, but only those areas which relate to the development of foreign policy, especially the policies of the 1890's. No attempt is made, for example, to enter into all the shadowy labyrinths of the frontier thesis; but it is legitimate and possible to extract certain parts of that thesis to find their relationship to American expansion. In the concluding part of the chapter an attempt is made to cut across the thoughts of these four men in order to ferret out a few commonly shared ideas.

Frederick Jackson Turner and the American Frontier

In 1898 an angry British professor at Cambridge University published a book which hotly disputed the right of an obstreperous United States to act as if it dominated the entire Western Hemisphere, especially since that area of the globe included large chunks of British-owned territory. W. F. Reddaway admitted, however, that the new, bumptious policy had evolved naturally out of the American past: "Hitherto, the internal development of the Union has been favoured by the existence of relatively inexhaustible supplies of land. With fertile territories crying out for settlement, a foreign policy has been superfluous." But in the 1890's, Reddaway's argument continued, Americans exhausted their supply of free land and a foreign policy became

[1] One of the weakest sections in the history of ideas is the relationship between the new intellectual currents and American overseas expansion during the last half of the nineteenth century. The background and some of the general factors may be found in Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature* (Garden City, N.Y., 1942, 1956); Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880's* (New Haven, 1950, 1959); Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny;* Julius W. Pratt, "The Ideology of American Expansion," *Essays in Honor of William E. Dodd . . .*, edited by Avery Craven (Chicago, 1935).

necessary. Reddaway bitterly disapproved of the policy, but he thought he understood the motivations.[2]

No such cause-and-effect relationship can, of course, be found which so neatly links the closing of the frontier with American expansionist activities in 1895 or 1898, especially since historians have demonstrated that a larger number of original and final homestead entries were registered after 1900 than during the previous three hundred years. But there can be no doubt that one important part of the rationale for an expansive foreign policy in the 1890's was a fervent (though erroneous) belief held by many American that their unique and beneficent internal frontier no longer existed.[3]

The importance of the frontier will be associated with the name of Frederick Jackson Turner as long as historians are able to indent footnotes. Yet as Theodore Roosevelt told Turner in a letter of admiration in 1894, "I think you . . . have put into definite shape a good deal of thought which has been floating around rather loosely." As has been amply shown by several scholars, a number of observers warned of the frontier's disappearance and the possible consequences of this disappearance long before Turner's epochal paper. The accelerating communication and transportation revolution, growing agrarian unrest, violent labor strikes, and the problems arising from increasing numbers of immigrants broke upon puzzled and frightened Americans in a relatively short span of time. Many of them clutched the belief of the closing or closed frontier in order to explain their dilemma.[4]

[2] W. F. Reddaway, *The Monroe Doctrine* (Cambridge, Eng., 1898), 141.

[3] I am especially indebted to Professor Paul Gates of Cornell University, who not only improved this work with his criticism of several chapters but also aided me with statistics and information which gave me a much clearer picture of the nature of the American frontier in the late-nineteenth century.

[4] See especially Fulmer Mood, "The Concept of the Frontier, 1871–1898," *Agricultural History*, XIX (January, 1945), 24–31; Lee Benson, "The Historical Background of Turner's Frontier Essay," *Agricultural*

From the perspective of more than half a century, one can envy the timing of Turner's paper, though as far as he was concerned the timing was probably unintentional. Read before a solemn assemblage of American historians at the World's Fair in Chicago in mid-July, 1893, it came just as the panic of the spring transformed into a devastating four-year depression. It is interesting to note that many of the frontier theses which had presaged Turner's had appeared during or immediately after previous depressions. The 1883–1886 slump had produced the first spate of warnings about the frontier, though few went as far as James Bryce, who wrote gravely in his *American Commonwealth* that when Americans occupied all their western lands "it will be a time of trial for democratic institutions." But the depression of the 1890's destroyed whatever was left of "the myth of the garden." A conservative journal such as the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* could imply a closed frontier in 1894 when it blamed the stagnation in the West on slackening railroad construction and fewer land sales. On the other end of the political spectrum, the most popular spokesman of the Populist forces, "Coin" Harvey, could use the same factor to explain why the "suffering race" battled the wealthy during the turbulent 1890's: "The unexplored portions of the world . . . were escape valves for the poorer people. . . . The damming up of the stream has now come. There is no unexplored part of the world left suitable for men to inhabit, and justice now stands at bay." [5]

History, XXV (April, 1951), 59–82; Herman Clarence Nixon, "The Precursors of Turner in the Interpretation of the American Frontier," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XXVIII (January, 1929), 83–89. For the Roosevelt letter, see *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, selected and edited by Elting E. Morison *et al.* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), I, 363.

[5] For warnings issued during the middle and late 1880's, see especially Nixon, "Precursors of Turner in the Interpretation of the American Frontier," 83–89; *Congressional Record*, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., 7830–7831; Thomas P. Gill, "Landlordism in America," *North American Review*, CXLII (January, 1886), 52–67, especially 60; A. J. Desmond, "America's Land Question," *North American Review*, CXLII (February, 1886), 153–158, especially 153. Smith, *Virgin Land*, 219, mentions the effect of the

Turner's own introduction to his frontier thesis can be found in a most important paper published in the fall of 1891, "The Significance of History." Anticipating the twentieth-century theme that, as Turner phrased it, "each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time," the young Wisconsin professor provided notice of his own viewpoint: "Today the questions that are uppermost, and that will become increasingly important, are not so much political as economic questions. The age of machinery, of the factory system, is also the age of socialistic inquiry." Writing at that time, it is not strange that he interpreted the last part of the century as the age of Economic Man.[6]

Turner rested the central part of his frontier thesis on the economic power represented by free land. American individualism, nationalism, political institutions, and democracy depended on this power: "So long as free land exists, the opportunity for a competency exists, and economic power secures political power." Stated in these terms, landed expansion became the central factor, the dynamic of American progress. Without the economic power generated by expansion across free lands, American political institutions could stagnate.[7]

Such an analysis could be extremely meaningful to those persons who sought an explanation for the political and social troubles of the period. Few disputed that the social upheavals in both the urban and agrarian areas of the nation stemmed from

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1893–1897 depression; also *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, Dec. 22, 1894, 1082–1084; William H. Harvey, *Coin's Financial School* (Chicago, 1894), 79. For the Bryce quotation see James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (London, 1889), II, 701.

[6] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner . . . with an Introduction by Fulmer Mood* (Madison, Wisc., 1938), 51–52.

[7] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1947), 32, 30; see also Per Sveaas Andersen, *Westward Is the Course of Empires: A Study in the Shaping of an American Idea: Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier* (Oslo, Norway, 1956), 20–21; Smith, *Virgin Land*, 240.

economic troubles in the international grain markets, from the frequent industrial depressions, or, as the Populists averred, from the failure of the currency to match the pace of ever increasing productivity. This economic interpretation also fitted in nicely with the contemporary measurement of success in terms of material achievement. Perhaps most important, the frontier thesis not only defined the dilemma, but did so in tangible, concrete terms. It offered the hope that Americans could do something about their problems. Given the assumption that expansion across the western frontier explained past American successes, the solution for the present crisis now became apparent: either radically readjust the political institutions to a nonexpanding society or find new areas for expansion. When Americans seized the second alternative, the meaning for foreign policy became apparent—and immense.

With the appearance and definition of the fundamental problems in the 1880's and 1890's, these decades assumed vast importance. They became not a watershed of American history, but *the* watershed. Many writers emphasized the supremely critical nature of the 1890's, but no one did it better than Turner when he penned the dramatic final sentence of his 1893 paper: "And now, four centuries from the discovery of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history." The American West no longer offered a unique escape from the intractable problems of a closed society. As another writer stated it four years after Turner's announcement in Chicago, "we are no longer a country exceptional and apart." History had finally caught up with the United States.[8]

The first solution that came to some minds suggested the open-

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[8] Turner, *Frontier in American History*, 38; Eugene V. Smalley, "What Are Normal Times?" *The Forum*, XXIII (March, 1897), 98–99; see also Turner, *Frontier in American History*, 311–312. For a brilliant criticism of Turner's closed-space concepts, see James C. Malin, *The Contriving Brain and the Skillful Hand in the United States . . .* (Lawrence, Kan., 1955), the entire essay, but especially ch. xi.

ing of new landed frontiers in Latin America or Canada. Yet was further expansion in a landed sense the answer? Top policy makers, as Secretaries of State James G. Blaine, Thomas F. Bayard, and Walter Quintin Gresham, opposed the addition of noncontiguous territory to the Union. Some Americans interpreted the labor violence of 1877, 1886, and 1894 as indications that the federal government could no longer harmonize and control the far-flung reaches of the continental empire. Labor and agrarian groups discovered they could not command the necessary political power to solve their mushrooming problems. The sprouting of such factions as the Molly Maguires, Populists, Eugene Debs' Railroad Union, and several varieties of Socialist parties raised doubts in many minds about the ameliorating and controlling qualities which had formerly been a part of the American system.

Perhaps the political theories of *The Federalist*, No. 10, had worked too well. Madison had dreamed of a vast landed empire which would divide various factions so that no one faction could become dominant. But in a single century the Founding Father's plan of landed expansion had apparently been so successful that the resulting continental empire not only prevented some factions from obtaining control of the nation's political institutions, but threatened to prevent these institutions from adequately controlling the factions. If this condition persisted, Americans might soon arrive at the forked road where one path led to an all-powerful central government and the other to anarchy.[9]

This was a cruel dilemma. Nonexpansion threatened economic and political stagnation, but further expansion could worsen the abscesses already festering on a sick body politic. No one understood this dilemma better than Turner. In his 1893 paper he observed that free land provides the opportunity for competency, "and economic power secures political power."

[9] For an outstanding example of this thesis, see *Banker's Magazine*, XLVIII (February, 1894), 563–565.

But the democracy born of free land, strong in selfishness and individualism, intolerant of administrative experience and education, and pressing individual liberty beyond its proper bounds, has its dangers as well as its benefits. Individualism in America has allowed a laxity in regard to governmental affairs which has rendered possible the spoils system and all the evils that follow from the lack of a highly developed civic spirit. In this connection may be noted also the influence of frontier conditions in permitting lax business honor, inflated paper currency and wild-cat banking. . . . A primitive society can hardly be expected to show the intelligent appreciation of the complexity of business interests in a developed society.[10]

Expansion in the form of trade instead of landed settlement ultimately offered the answer to this dilemma. This solution, embodied in the open-door philosophy of American foreign policy, ameliorated the economic stagnation (which by Turner's reasoning led to the political discontent), but it did not pile new colonial areas on an already overburdened governmental structure. It provided the perfect answer to the problems of the 1890's.

Turner, however, wrote of past American expansion in colonial terms: "the advance of American *settlement* westward." With his fixation on this historical landed development, he might have missed the amazing new cure-all of the open-door doctrine. But Turner did not miss this crucial change in the nature of American expansion. Unlike most policy makers, in fact, he saw far beyond it. In his 1891 paper, "The Significance of History," he made a statement which offers to historians the Ariadne thread for unraveling American foreign policy after 1890. Turner began by noting that the United States believed itself isolated politically from Europe.

But it is one of the profoundest lessons that history has to teach, that political relations, in a highly developed civilization, are inextricably connected with economic relations. Already there are signs of a relaxation of our policy of commercial isolation. Reci-

[10] Turner, *Frontier in American History*, 32.

procity is a word that meets with increasing favor from all parties. But once fully afloat on the sea of worldwide economic interests, we shall soon develop political interests. Our fishery disputes furnish one example; our Samoan interests another; our Congo relations a third. But perhaps most important are our present and future relations with South America, coupled with our Monroe Doctrine. It is a settled maxim of international law that the government of a foreign state whose subjects have lent money to another state may interfere to protect the rights of the bondholders, if they are endangered by the borrowing state.[11]

It is difficult to overemphasize the significance of this statement and unnecessary to elaborate upon it.

At the request of the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Walter Hines Page, Turner published an article in September, 1896, during the heat of the Bryan-McKinley campaign, entitled "The Problem of the West." It is probably the best statement on the subject written during the decade. In one paragraph Turner assembled his thought on the relationship of the closing frontier to the new, vigorous American foreign policy:

> For nearly three hundred years the dominant fact in American life has been expansion. With the settlement of the Pacific Coast and the occupation of the free lands, this movement has come to a check. That these energies of expansion will no longer operate would be a rash prediction; and the demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon the seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries, are indications that the movement will continue. The stronghold of these demands lies west of the Alleghenies.[12]

When writing his presidential address for the meeting of the American Historical Association fourteen years later, Turner saw no need to change this interpretation. The American in-

[11] Turner, *Early Writings*, 61–62.

[12] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Problem of the West," *Atlantic Monthly*, LXXVIII (September, 1896), 289–297. This essay is reprinted in *Frontier in American History*, 205–221.

volvement in the Far East "to engage in the world-politics of the Pacific Ocean," the "extension of power" and "entry into the sisterhood of world-states," were not isolated events. They were, "indeed, in some respects the logical outcome of the nation's march to the Pacific." [13]

It is difficult to measure Turner's influence on expansionists in the 1890's, although he certainly affected Theodore Roosevelt's view of American history. He also played a major part in shaping the ideas of a future American statesman, Woodrow Wilson. In the 1890's, however, Wilson was more than a potential Chief Executive; as a well-known political scientist he enjoyed an influential reading public. In books and reviews he echoed Turner's theme that, since the closing of the continental frontier, Americans searched for "new frontiers in the Indies and in the Far Pacific." A close friend of Turner's, Wilson was not reticent in admitting, "All I ever wrote on the subject came from him." [14]

The ideas which Turner publicized exerted much force in the 1890's. The previous chapter mentioned the frontier theme, and the remainder of this work will note an increasing number of references after 1893 to a filled West. Such references were especially noticeable in debates waged over the necessity for an enlarged foreign trade and for a battleship navy to protect that trade. Americans were not slow in translating the fact of the closed landed frontier into the necessity for discovering a new commercial frontier.[15]

Turner is of prime importance to the student of American

[13] *Ibid.*, 315.

[14] For a pioneer interpretation, see Lawrence S. Kaplan, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Imperialism," *Social Science*, XXVII (January, 1952), 12–16; and for an excellent analysis see William A. Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXIV (November, 1955), 379–395. For Wilson's view see "Mr. Goldwin Smith's 'Views' on Our Political History," *Forum*, XVI (December, 1893), 489–499, especially 496–497.

[15] For examples of how the frontier thesis was included in debates on naval appropriations, see *Congressional Record*, 53d Cong., 3rd Sess., March 2, 1895, 3109; also Chapters IV, V, VI, below.

foreign policy. During a crisis period of his nation's history he provided an explanation of that crisis by uniting various ideas about the American frontier, ideas which, as Roosevelt remarked, were "floating around rather loosely." His formulations best exemplify the thinking that was concerned with the disappearing frontier, the relationship of this frontier to the turbulent society of the 1890's, and the implications for foreign policy. In his crucial observation that an open-door form of economic expansion made inevitable political responsibilities, Turner saw beyond the limited vision of most policy makers and businessmen. In doing so he provided the key to understanding American foreign policy in the first half of the twentieth century.

Josiah Strong and the Missionary Frontier

Josiah Strong shared Turner's views of the 1890's as a crisis decade and of the closing frontier as a matter for grave concern. Here the similarity between the two men becomes less evident. Strong did not approach Turner's intellectual powers, and Turner never blew a clarion call for American expansion as loudly as Strong did in his several books. Turner attempted to analyze the frontier in a cool, methodical manner, in order to gain insight into the past. But Strong attempted to find good reasons for something he desired passionately for the future: a thunderous Protestant missionary charge which would conquer the American West for Christ and then use this region as the home base for overpowering the world. Yet the ideas of the two men were in a sense complementary, for Strong stressed the necessity of finding a new world frontier to replace the internal frontier which Turner so eloquently described. In substituting a new frontier for the old, Strong offered his solution for the spiritual, economic, and political problems of his day.

Born in Naperville, Illinois, in 1847, Strong knew the West well; not only was he raised on its periphery, but after becoming a Congregational minister in 1871 he traveled extensively in the area for the Home Missionary Society. The turning point in his

life came with the publication of *Our Country* in 1885. The Home Missionary Society had requested Strong to update a small manual which had stolidly pleaded for more Christian missions. But as a scholar of sorts, social reformer, and a keen observer who noted and feared the growing labor and agrarian discontent, Strong infused new life into the book. Within a decade 175,000 copies were sold in the United States, and many other issues of the work sold in European and oriental languages. At a time when exhortations for missionary work were much in vogue, the *Nation* called *Our Country* "a Home Missionary address raised to the nth power." In terms of popularity few books of the time could equal it. Strong became a national figure, spreading his ideas from innumerable lecture platforms and through other books. He later became involved in the Social Gospel movement and dedicated himself to making this movement a world-wide affair. Symbolically, he had entitled his first book *Our Country;* in 1913, four years before his death, he began a four-volume work entitled *Our World*. But the change in titles is misleading. The latter title could legitimately have been the name of his first work.[16]

Strong pleaded fervently for the expansion of Christian missions, but he framed his argument in terms which had vital implications for foreign policy. His goal was a Christianized world, but what is of primary concern here is that he perceived and discussed certain aspects of American society which, he believed, made the attainment of this goal absolutely necessary. He especially stressed the disappearance of the public lands; increasing industrialization, with its effect on the speeding up of social processes and the resulting plethora of wealth; and, finally, the characteristics of Anglo-Saxons which made them peculiarly suited to distribute the spiritual and economic values of western civilization throughout the heathen world.

[16] John Haynes Holmes, "Josiah Strong," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XVIII, 150–151; Bald, "Expansionist Sentiment," 7; *Nation*, Sept. 30, 1886, 273.

Strong posed as one of the intellectuals of his day. His books reflect wide and intensive reading in historical documents and contemporary publications, especially the census reports (one of Turner's favorite sources also). From his collage of reading Strong had extracted the fascinating idea that the centers of world empire had moved west since the beginning of recorded history. He gave Bishop Berkeley and Tocqueville (a source whom he frequently cited) credit for this insight, but drew his own conclusions. The center of empire, Strong believed, would settle "to our mighty West, there to remain, for there is no further West; beyond is the Orient." This West would be the greatest of all empires. Other nations would bring their offerings to "the cradle of the young empire of the West," as they had once taken their gifts to the cradle of Jesus.[17]

But this message was too sanguine for the depression-haunted 1880's, especially if the author hoped to sketch a picture that would attract sympathetic cash contributions. So Strong quickly added that the West could not be assured of ascending and maintaining the seat of world empire; in fact, he continued, the West was at that moment approaching a crisis partly because of the rapid disappearance of the public lands. In a passage which resembles Turner's statement of eight years later not only in content but in stately cadence as well, Strong concluded with the warning: "When the supply is exhausted, we shall enter upon a new era, and shall more rapidly approximate European conditions of life."[18]

This occurrence only partially explained why the West faced new and dangerous times. To round out the picture, Strong explored the many implications of the exhaustion of the western lands. He discovered secondary effects which almost overwhelmed him with their gravity. The East, he observed, had begun as farms and then slowly evolved over several centuries

[17] Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York, 1885), 29.
[18] *Ibid.*, 153–158.

into urban, industrialized areas. But the West developed with the railroad, which immediately spawned industry. The farms, for the most part, followed or arrived concurrently with this industrialization. He concluded that the innumerable, complex problems inherent in an urban-industrialized society would strike the West much earlier in the process of its settlement and with a greater impact than when they had struck the East. The West had to be prepared or a social breakdown might result.[19]

This sense of urgency throbbed throughout Strong's writing, and it was intensified by the observation that modern history moved many times faster than ancient, "for the pulse and the pace of the world have been marvelously quickened during the nineteenth century." He outlined the communication and transportation revolutions, the astonishing changes in modern science, and the rapidity with which "great ideas" sprouted. The "western world in its progress is gathering momentum like a falling body." His view of history, like that of Henry Adams' "law," saw events moving ever faster. Out of this insight he evolved his own law: two "great principles" were at work in history—the development of the individual and the organization of society. The accelerated pace of history, caused by the discovery and uses of the steam engine and electricity, was creating a centripetal force that ever more rapidly transformed diversity into unity. This tendency toward centralization appeared not only in industry, but in politics and society as well. The effects of such a basic change in Man's history could be perilous since it was occurring so rapidly that Man could not adequately adjust to it. "Thoughtful men everywhere have become expectant of great social changes," Strong warned. "Many expect revolution," and "probably" the Christian church was all that stood in the path of such a revolution.[20]

[19] *Ibid.*; Smith, *Virgin Land*, 300, provides an analysis of a similar aspect of Turner's thought.
[20] Strong, *Our Country*, 1–7; Josiah Strong, *The New Era or the Coming Kingdom* (New York, 1893), 1–16, 26–27, 342–343, ch. vii.

He thought he saw this centralization occurring in another sphere also. Noting the opening of Japan, Korea, and parts of Africa to western civilization, he believed that these events "point unmistakably to one conclusion [:] The drawing of the peoples of the earth into ever closer relations, which will render isolation and, therefore, barbarism impossible, and will operate as a constant stimulus." He predicted that "the growth of freedom which removes the greatest barriers to progress, the social ferment and the evident tendency toward a new social organization" would lead to a "new era, for which the nineteenth century has been the John the Baptist." Thus he concluded that expansion and consolidation would result in further expansion and further consolidation. If he had correctly assessed the world situation, and no doubt many of his thousands of readers were confident that he had, then American foreign policy makers could only operate from the basic assumption of an ever increasing involvement in world politics. The policy makers had no choice, given the discoveries of steam and electricity and the resulting unity of the peoples of the world.[21]

The rapid industrialization, especially in the American West, laid another heavy burden on the American people—a tremendous amount of wealth which became the idol and also the oppressor of the nation. As a man whose main problem was to find financial backing for missionary activities, Strong had no illusions about the power of money: "Money is power in the concrete. It commands learning, skill, experience, wisdom, talent, influence, numbers." He hoped every cent of American money would "be employed in the way that will best honor God," but he expressed well-founded doubts. Too often unscrupulous politicians used money to purchase the "floating vote." Others spent their earnings on needless luxury. But overproduction which led to gluts of goods and to unemployment endangered America's great wealth most of all. The concentrated money power refused to improve the deplorable living and working conditions

[21] *Ibid.*, 3–16.

of laborers. Strong wondered if the growing discontent rising out of this surfeit of wealth did not herald an event as epochal as the Reformation or the French Revolution. While the first destroyed spiritual despotism and the second political despotism, "perhaps the third indicates the fall of economic despotism."[22]

He could discover a number of threats to American society, including immigrants, Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, intemperance, and immoral city life; but all these perils could be grouped, for purposes of his analysis, under one indescribably evil force—socialism. In the second longest chapter of *Our Country*, he warned against socialists who attempted "to solve the problem of suffering without eliminating the factor of sin." Nowhere did the acid of socialism threaten the fabric of society more than in the American West, for here capitalism was developing full blown under the impetus provided by eastern capital. Class distinctions were already the rule. Destroying his readers' last hope for an easy salvation in this world, Strong concluded with the grave observation that the United States could not stave off socialism by giving more political freedoms for there were no more to offer; beyond lies "but anarchism." The solution had to be found elsewhere, in a more difficult and complicated realm than politics.[23]

The future could be America's, but she could not trust in a beneficent, inexorable manifest destiny. Strong quoted Professor Austin Phelps (who wrote the "Introduction" to *Our Country*) that although "we are the chosen people," Americans "can no longer *drift* with safety to our destiny. We are shut up to a perilous alternative." Salvation lay in the fulfillment of the Anglo-Saxon mission to reshape the world in the mold of western civilization. After modestly reminding the reader that he made public these thoughts in a public lecture three years before the appearance of John Fiske's popular "Manifest Destiny," "which contains some of the same ideas," Strong outlined this mission

[22] Strong, *Our Country*, 113–128, 181–185; Strong, *New Era*, ch. vii.
[23] Strong, *Our Country*, 85–112.

in detail. Because of the westward movement of empire he assumed that England would provide some help but necessarily be the junior partner. The Anglo-Saxon, with his two virtues of civil liberty and "pure spiritual Christianity," would employ his "genius for colonizing" to "move down upon Mexico, down upon Central and South America, out upon the islands of the sea, over Africa and beyond. And can any one doubt that the result of this competition of races will be the 'survival of the fittest'?"[24]

This expansion of Anglo-Saxon Christianity would also solve the fundamental question of overproduction. Noting that "steam and electricity have mightily compressed the earth" so that "our markets are to be greatly extended," he told how these markets could be conquered: "The world is to be Christianized and civilized. . . . Commerce follows the missionary. . . . A Christian civilization performs the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and feeds its thousands in a desert." He could not resist invoking Africa and especially the fabled Asian market as his examples: "What will be the wants of Asia a century hence?"[25]

Our Country combined a view of the religious and industrial manifest destiny of the Anglo-Saxons, but *The New Era*, published in 1893, reflected an immersion in the growing Social Gospel movement. Seven years later Strong published *Expansion*, which reassembled and elaborated his earlier thoughts on American foreign policy, especially the dynamics of this policy. In the preface he thanks two of the leading expansionists of the day, Senator William P. Frye of Maine and Alfred Thayer Mahan, for providing information and also for reading some of the chapters. Little of the Social Gospel can be found in this book. He began by restating his belief that the disappearing internal frontier had forced capital and "energy" to find foreign outlets. This overseas expansion had been further motivated by the great industrial capacity of American factories. (He entitled

[24] *Ibid.*, 159–180; Strong, *New Era*, 78–79; also *Our Country*, 218, 159.
[25] *Ibid.*, 7–15; Strong, *New Era*, 355–356.

one of his chapters, "Foreign Markets, a New Necessity.") If adequate markets could not be found, an internal revolution would result. After examining in detail the markets of China and the Pacific and the commercial importance of an Isthmian canal, Strong very significantly noted the revision of Washington's Farewell Address by Richard Olney in the Venezuelan note of July, 1895. He then concluded by spelling out once again the Anglo-Saxon mission, its virtues, and its inevitability.[26]

Brooks Adams hoped to create a world-wide American empire by increasing the nation's efficiency and restoring its martial spirit. Strong hoped to accomplish the same objective by making the country both efficient and Christian. Yet in spite of his religious principles, he had perhaps as brutal a view of the future as did Adams. Strong prophesied that with the closing of the frontier two events would follow: the West, if properly Christianized, would become the pivot of world empire; it would then "enter on a new stage of its history—the final competition of races." The peoples of the western world, advancing across the American continent for four hundred years, would now be thrown back upon themselves and find outlets no longer in open frontiers, but in populated areas of the world such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Strong hoped that the resulting conflict would be a peaceful one, fought with Christian principles and technology, but he did not hesitate to advocate the use of force whenever necessary. After all, time was short and the Anglo-Saxon destiny could not wait: "The closing years of the nineteenth century [are] second in importance to that . . . which must always remain first; viz., the birth of Christ."[27]

Strong's influence reached the masses and the mighty of American society. The sophisticated *Nation* blasted *The New Era* in a review in 1893, but grudgingly admitted that it had to devote space to the book "because it is doubtless destined to considerable

[26] Josiah Strong, *Expansion under New World Conditions* (New York, 1900). For an analysis of Olney's message, see Chapter VI, below.
[27] Strong, *New Era*, ch. vi, 79–80, 1–16; Strong, *Our Country*, 1–7.

vogue," since "it is the very flower of a kind of . . . writing . . . which is accepted by the multitudes in lieu of sounder thought." [28] The amazing sales of Strong's books justified such fears. But his books also reached the elite. On the sheet opposite the title page of the Cornell University Library's copy of *Our Country* appears the scrawl: "An exceedingly valuable and interesting little book. ADW, April 3, 1887." Andrew Dickson White may have carried the message of Strong to James Bryce.

Such striking popularity makes Strong an important historical figure. More to the point, much of his contemporary popularity and his later value to historians rests on Strong's success in uniting the frontier thesis of Turner, the themes of the westward movement of empire and the increasing concentration of society stressed by Brooks Adams, and the Anglo-Saxon commercial and military mission outlined by Alfred Thayer Mahan. Finally, Strong exemplified the fervent expansionism emphasized by the other three.

Brooks Adams, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and the Far Western Frontier

Strong, Adams, and Mahan flashed with equal intensity in their writing of history and in their calls to action. Strong and Adams fervently believed in their own personal version of the apocalypse, partly because of their study of history, but mostly because of their own emotional experiences. In this way they differed from Mahan, who with Brooks exerted more direct influence on policy makers in the 1890's than did any of the other intellectuals. Mahan had rifled the history books more than his soul or his past in order to construct what he believed to be the necessary world of the coming twentieth century. His writings can be understood when separated from the personality of the author.

Such judgment cannot be passed on the books and articles of Adams. As the grandsons of John Quincy Adams and the

[28] *Nation*, July 20, 1893, 52.

sons of Charles Francis Adams, the noted Civil War diplomat, Brooks and his brother Henry suffered from the seemingly utter hopelessness which they feared was inherent in being the fourth generation, the fag end, of a great family. This hopelessness turned to fright in 1893, when the depression forced Brooks and Henry to the verge of bankruptcy and then generated social upheavals which threatened with extinction the brothers' fundamental beliefs of class and politics. Just the year before, Brooks had predicted some sort of social and economic breakdown. He had warned that unless a solution could be found quickly, the division between the haves and have-nots would deepen until the latter would be driven to revolution in order to readjust the imbalance. But the crushing force of the 1893 crisis shocked even the pessimistic, prepared Adamses. As Henry later commented, he felt "that something new and curious was about to happen to the world." [29]

Brooks responded by working out a "law" of history which he believed gave a reading of the present position of the United States. His manuscript was notable for its thesis, not for its historical evidence. Not that Brooks particularly cared, for he loathed the antiquarian and he railed against footnote sloggers who lost their thesis in a morass of details. In his mind only the thesis counted, and he believed that he had thrown up adequate historical supports for his "law." [30]

[29] Arthur F. Beringause, *Brooks Adams: A Biography* (New York, 1955), 98–102; see also Thornton Anderson, *Brooks Adams: Constructive Conservative* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1951); Worthington Chauncey Ford, "Memoir of Brooks Adams," *Proceedings, Massachusetts Historical Society*, LX (May, 1927), 345–358. For an excellent analysis of Adams' foreign policy, see Charles Vevier, "Brooks Adams and the Ambivalence of American Foreign Policy," *World Affairs Quarterly*, XXX (April, 1959), 3–18; also Brooks Adams to Henry Cabot Lodge, April 23, 1894, Henry Cabot Lodge Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.; Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* (Boston and New York, 1930), 338.

[30] Brooks Adams, *The New Empire* (New York and London, 1902), xvii; for an excellent analysis of Brooks as a historian, see Timothy Paul

Brooks offered a hypothesis which attempted to classify the phases through which society passed "in its oscillations between barbarism and civilization, or, what amounts to the same thing, in its movement from a condition of physical dispersion to one of concentration." Barbarian societies worked under the impetus of fear, which produced the military and religious classes. These classes generated and conquered energy to keep the society ongoing; ultimately they were able to store surplus energy. But since the social movement of a civilization is proportionate to its energy and mass and its centralization proportionate to its velocity, societies centralize as human movement accelerates. As this centralization occurs, greed replaces fear and the surplus energy comes under the control of the economic man (the banker) who expends more energy than can be produced. Once in control, the banker forces the use of a single standard which appreciates currency, pushes debtors to the wall, and eliminates the "elasticity of the age of expansion." The imaginative and martial man disappears and the store of surplus energy declines. Art and architecture decay. The society continues to disintegrate until invigoration occurs with the infusion of new barbarian blood. As one of Brooks's close friends noted, his writings "tended in one direction—to warn of the end of the economic world." [31]

Infuriated at a hostile review of the book, Brooks protested that his work was not "a sort of political pamphlet," but "scientific," and "from this standpoint political nostrums would be as misplaced as agitation for legislation to correct Mr. Darwin's theory of the 'Descent of man.'" This argument was disingenuous. Viewing history as a series of cycles, Brooks believed that one cycle would end about 1900; the 1893 panic bolstered this belief.

Donovan, *Henry Adams and Brooks Adams: The Education of Two American Historians* (Norman, Okla., 1961), 73–75.

[31] Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay: An Essay on History* (London and New York, 1895), 290–294, vi–viii; Ford, "Memoir," 350; see also Brooks's summary and defense of the book in *Journal of Commerce*, Sept. 28, 1897, 4:4.

He hated with bitter intensity the bankers on whom he placed the responsibility for the decay of the western part of the world in the 1890's, and he believed their selfish ambitions were driving a doomed United States down the path marked out by the "law." His protestations that the "law" was scientific and that the western world was well along the path to destruction to the contrary notwithstanding, Brooks set out to repeal the "law." [32]

His study of history had taught him that a particular society could rule its world for a time, but would sink into oblivion when it failed to retain adequate flexibility to cope with its rapidly changing environment. Translated into contemporary terms, Brooks interpreted this to mean that the gold standard, controlled and manipulated by the bankers, prevented the rapidly expanding United States from being able to deal with problems arising out of the nation's development, especially the problem of the distribution of wealth. Brooks consequently advocated bimetallism. In 1896 Adams supported the Democratic silver bloc to the extent that William Jennings Bryan sallied into the campaign with several hundred dollars from Brooks's and Henry's bank accounts.[33]

The results of that fevered campaign forced the Adamses to accept the ascendancy of McKinleyism and the bankers. Brooks changed his attention from domestic politics to foreign policy as he desperately continued his attempt to exempt the United States from the fate of the "law." If he could not wrench the surplus energy from the bankers, he had to discover stores of new energy. Expansion provided the answer. Genuflecting before the frontier thesis, Adams noted that "the continent which, when Washington lived, gave a boundless field for the expansion of Americans, has been filled; and the risk of isolation promises to

[32] *Ibid.*, 4:3; Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 122; Henry Adams, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, edited by Worthington Chauncey Ford (Boston and New York, 1930–1938), II, 100.

[33] Brooks Adams to Lodge, April 3, 1896, Lodge MSS; Donovan, *Henry Adams and Brooks Adams*, 90–93; Ford, "Memoir," 348; Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 152.

be more serious than the risk of an alliance." A replacement would have to be found for the frontier. Tracing the movement of world empires, Brooks claimed he had found their key in the changing locations of the center of commercial exchanges. As he developed this idea, these centers had moved ever westward until now they had settled in London and Paris. But they would not remain there long. These centers would next move either east toward Germany and Russia, or westward toward the United States.[34]

To ensure America's rise to economic supremacy and thus repeal the "law" which he feared was slowly crushing the United States of the 1890's, Adams developed three lines of policy: encourage American efficiency through centralization so that the nation could compete successfully with other powers for stores of energy; help the United States gain control of Asia, that Far West which contained the potential energy for which the powers would compete; and, finally, discover a man brimming with martial spirit who would be willing to lead the American people on this crusade. Brooks Adams did not concern himself with small problems.

He believed that he had found his man on horseback in Theodore Roosevelt. Throughout 1897 and early 1898 Adams and Roosevelt believed that the approaching war with Spain would give them the opportunities they needed to repeal the "law." Moving into Henry's empty house on Washington's H Street, Brooks found as frequent dinner guests Cushman Davis, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Henry Cabot

[34] Brooks Adams, "The Spanish War and the Equilibrium of the World," *Forum*, XXV (August, 1898), 641–651. Brooks filled out the skeleton of this theme in his post-1898 writings. The history of this idea of the westward movement of world empire is one of the most fascinating and least explored facets of intellectual history. For an 1878 evaluation based on the thesis that industrial supremacy is the key to empire, see Leonard Courtney, "The Migration of Centres of Industrial Energy," *Fortnightly Review*, XXX (December, 1878), 801–820. See also the section on Josiah Strong in this chapter.

Lodge, and Mahan. The *Law of Civilization and Decay* had made a resounding impact, nowhere more than in Washington. The first printing had sold out in three months, and Henry had made certain that all the Supreme Court Justices and the Cleveland cabinet received copies. Now, as the United States gathered its immense economic strength and approached armed conflict with Spain, leading figures of the McKinley administration proclaimed Brooks a prophet.[35]

During this period Brooks Adams, Roosevelt, and Lodge were, in the words of Arthur F. Beringause, "three musketeers in a world of perpetual war." Alfred Thayer Mahan became a fourth in 1897. Agreeing with much of Brooks's grand strategy, Mahan suggested the tactical details with which Brooks did not concern himself. Because of his technical knowledge as a naval officer, Mahan became not only the best known of the so-called intellectual expansionists of his time, but the most influential. Unlike Turner, Strong, and Adams, his significance for American foreign policy can be measured in such tangible terms as the 15,000-ton battleships built in the post-1889 period, which initiated the modern United States battleship fleet.

Mahan's approach to American expansion in the 1890's was less personal and more scholarly yet scarcely less dynamic than was Adams'. The austere, scholarly, arm-chair sailor-turned-prophet constructed a tightly knit historical justification of why and how his country could expand beyond its continental limits. Recent American historians have defined his philosophy as "mercantilistic imperialism."[36] No doubt an intense study of

[35] Roosevelt to Cecil Spring-Rice, May 29, 1897, Letterbooks, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 131–132, 129, 143, 156–161, 164–165; Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," 387.

[36] William Livezey, *Mahan on Sea Power* (Norman, Okla., 1947), 48–49, 294–295; Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776–1918* (Princeton, 1946), 203; Foster Rhea Dulles, *The Imperial Years* (New York, 1956), 42. The following section, which compares the writings of the early mercantilists with Mahan's views appeared

seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mercantile empires heavily influenced Mahan's thinking. But characterizing him as a mercantilist tends to taint American expansion in the 1890's with strong mercantilist colors too, for his writings both reflected the reasons for, and directly stimulated the movement into, Latin America and the Pacific. Yet clearly, the industrial, financial, Darwinian, and humanitarian impulses of this decade only slightly resembled the forces of seventeenth-century mercantile expansion. Likewise, Mahan's thinking had few similarities with the conclusions of Thomas Mun, George Berkeley, and Daniel Defoe two centuries before.

A comparison of Mahan's thought with that of the early mercantilists reveals several insights into the nature of American expansion in the 1890's. Some of his tenets meshed perfectly with mercantilist principles. Both philosophies agreed upon the necessity of expansion. Both desired a favorable balance of trade. But on most points Mahan differed, and in doing so he demonstrated his recognition of the peculiar crisis that the United States faced at the end of the century. The mercantilists believed tariffs were necessary in order to enjoy favorable balances of trade; but Mahan praised Blaine's and McKinley's policy of reciprocity and their efforts to lower tariff walls. Viewing high tariffs as "essentially a defensive measure," Mahan, always on the offensive, stressed that "reciprocity, increased freedom of movement, is the logical corollary of expansion." Nor did Mahan agree with the mercantilist view that the state was an economic unit rather than a moral or religious one, or that the welfare of the state rated a higher priority than the welfare of the individual. Mahan drank deeply of the "White Man's Burden" elixir of his day, and this did not mix with the view of an amoral state which relegated the individual to an inferior status. Few seventeenth-century mercantilists would have agreed with his dictum, "Personal

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in slightly expanded form in the author's "A Note on the 'Mercantilistic Imperialism' of Alfred Thayer Mahan," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVIII (March, 1962), 674–685.

liberty is a greater need than political independence, the chief value of which is to insure the freedom of the individual." [37]

The two philosophies differed most notably, however, on the three fundamental issues of production, the merchant marine, and the nature of colonial empires. The mercantilist solicitude for production did not arise originally from a fear of overproduction, underemployment, or overpopulation. The desire for a favorable balance of trade which would result in an inflow of bullion caused seventeenth-century thinkers to want increased production. Mahan, however, said little about production as a means of bringing bullion into the country, and though he viewed production as both a means and an end, he emphasized it as an end in itself. Industrial efficiency led to the creation of a strong naval arm, but stating the problem this way reverses Mahan's

[37] I am deeply indebted to Curtis P. Nettels of Cornell University and William Appleman Williams of the University of Wisconsin, who gave me much of their time and many insights into the relationship of mercantilistic concepts and American history. The following are helpful in understanding mercantilist thought, especially as it related to the diplomatic world of the 1890's: E. F. Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, translated by Mendel Shapiro and edited by E. F. Soderlund (2nd ed.; London, 1955); Gustav F. von Schmoller, *The Mercantile System and Its Historical Significance* . . . , translated and edited by William J. Ashley (New York, 1896); Philip W. Buck, *The Politics of Mercantilism* (New York, 1942); Curtis P. Nettels, "British Mercantilism and the Economic Development of the Thirteen Colonies," *Journal of Economic History*, XII (Spring, 1952), 105–114. Some of these interpretations have been challenged in a series of articles by William D. Grampp. See especially his "The Liberal Elements in English Mercantilism," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, LXVI (November, 1952), 465–501. For Mahan's views on the topics discussed in this paragraph, see A. T. Mahan, "Retrospect and Prospect," *Retrospect and Prospect* . . . (Boston, 1902), 19–22; Captain A. T. Mahan, "The United States Looking Outward," *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (Boston, 1897), 5; Livezey, *Mahan on Sea Power*, 82–83; A. T. Mahan, *From Sail to Steam: Recollections of a Naval Life* (New York and London, 1907), 324–325. For the differing mercantilist view, see Buck, *Politics of Mercantilism*, 14, 184; and Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, II, 286–292. For a good discussion of Mahan's emphasis on morality and his concern for the welfare of the individual, see Livezey, *Mahan on Sea Power*, 258–262.

priorities. He did not define a battleship navy as his ultimate objective, nor did he want to create a navy merely for its own sake. In the 1890's he did not seek military power for the sake of military power.[38]

Mahan grounded his thesis on the central characteristic of the United States of his time: it was an industrial complex which produced, or would soon be capable of producing, vast surpluses. In the first paragraph of his classic, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, Mahan explained how this industrial expansion led to a rivalry for markets and sources of raw materials and would ultimately result in the need for sea power. He summarized his theory in a postulate: "In these three things—production, with the necessity of exchanging products, shipping, whereby the exchange is carried on, and colonies . . . —is to be found the key to much of the history, as well as of the policy, of nations bordering upon the sea." The order is all-important. Production leads to a need for shipping, which in turn creates the need for colonies.[39]

Mahan's neat postulate was peculiarly applicable to his own time, for he clearly understood the United States of the 1890's. His concern, stated in 1890, that ever increasing production would soon make necessary wider trade and markets, anticipated the somber, depression-ridden years of post-1893. Writing three years before Frederick Jackson Turner analyzed the disappearance of the American frontier, Mahan hinted its disappearance and pointed out the implications for America's future economic and political structure. He observed that the policies of the American government since 1865 had been "directed solely to

[38] See Mahan to Gen. Francis V. Greene, Sept. 17, 1900, Alfred Thayer Mahan Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. James C. Malin has caught the importance of Mahan's writings for the technology of the late nineteenth century in *The Contriving Brain and the Skillful Hand in the United States*, 344.

[39] A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston, 1890), 53, 28. This postulate is mentioned two more times in the famous first chapter, pages 70 and 83–84.

what has been called the first link in the chain which makes sea power." But "the increase of home consumption . . . did not keep up with the increase of forth-putting and facility of distribution offered by steam." The United States would thus have to embark upon a new frontier, for "whether they will or no, Americans must now begin to look outward. The growing production of the country demands it. An increasing volume of public sentiment demands it." The theoretical and actual had met; the productive capacity of the United States, having finally grown too great for its continental container and having lost its landed frontier, had to turn to the sea, its omnipresent frontier. The mercantilists had viewed production as a faculty to be stimulated and consolidated in order to develop its full capabilities of pulling wealth into the country. But Mahan dealt with a productive complex which had been stimulated by the government for years and had been centralized and coordinated by corporate managers. He was now concerned with the problem of keeping this society ongoing without the problems of underemployment and resulting social upheavals.[40]

Reversing the traditional American idea of the oceans as a barrier against European intrigue, Mahan compared the sea to "a great highway; or better, perhaps . . . a wide common, over which men pass in all directions." To traverse this "highway" a nation needed a merchant marine; Mahan made this the second part of his postulate. In his 1890 volume he expressed doubts whether a navy could be erected without the solid foundation of a carrying fleet.[41] This, however, was one of the few times in the decade that Mahan emphasized the necessity of a merchant marine. As the 1890's progressed, he could look about him and

[40] *Ibid.*, 83–84; Mahan, "A Twentieth-Century Outlook," *Interest of America in Sea Power*, 220–222; Mahan, "The United States Looking Outward," *ibid.*, 21–22. In their work which traces this centralization movement, Thomas C. Cochran and William Miller call the result the "corporate society" (*The Age of Enterprise: A Social History of Industrial America* [New York, 1942], 331).

[41] Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, 25, 87–88.

conclude that in this respect his theory did not correspond to reality. Congress constructed a new battleship fleet, American businessmen focused their attention on foreign markets, the impetus for building an Isthmian canal accelerated, and Mahan himself became a prophet with honor in his own country. And all this occurred in spite of the minuteness of the American merchant marine.

Mahan's early theory had been misleading, for a nation no longer had to ship its goods in its own bottoms to become commercially prosperous. The exporting country only needed warships capable of protecting the carrying fleet, whether it be domestic or foreign. This was a crucial result of the industrial revolution; modern machinery and technological inventions had replaced the merchant marine as the process which determined the victors in the markets of the world. It is tempting to speculate that Mahan realized this, because after his initial outburst in 1890 he de-emphasized the merchant marine theme. But it is more probable that he neglected the middle link in his theory simply because he could see the third part (military sea power) becoming a reality without the second factor. In any case, this de-emphasis sharply differentiated Mahan's ideas from those of the early mercantilists. The latter not only were concerned about carrying their own goods, but encouraged their own nations to develop an entrepôt trade between foreign powers. When Mahan implicitly subordinated his merchant marine theme, he eliminated the central part of early mercantilist theory.[42]

Most important, Mahan differed from the British and French

[42] For contemporary statements of the early mercantilist view, see Buck, *The Politics of Mercantilism*, 107–108; for the early view of the entrepôt trade, see William Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce in Modern Times: The Mercantile System* (Cambridge, Eng., 1912), 471–479. Livezey believes that Mahan paid less attention to merchant shipping because of America's comparative isolation (which afforded natural geographic protection) and because seasoned sailors from a merchant marine were of little value in the new technological navy (241–242).

mercantilists in the final part of his theory—the definition and purpose of colonies. The early writers wanted colonies as sources of raw materials, markets for surplus goods, and as areas for the settlement of a surplus or discontented population. They simply assumed the establishment of naval bases in these colonies. Mahan, however, separated these functions of colonies. They could serve "as outlets for the home products and as a nursery for commerce and shipping." He then stressed the second aspect (colonies as strategic naval bases) and set aside the first part (colonies as markets).[43]

It is especially in this crucial area—the purpose of colonial possessions—that Mahan becomes so dissimilar to the mercantilists, but so representative of the special characteristics of American expansion in the 1890's. To Mahan, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Henry Cabot Lodge, colonial possessions, as these men defined such possessions, served as stepping stones to the two great prizes: the Latin-American and Asian markets. This policy much less resembled traditional colonialism than it did the new financial and industrial expansion of the 1850–1914 period. These men did not envision "colonizing" either Latin America or Asia. They did want both to exploit these areas economically and give them (especially Asia) the benefits of western, Christian civilization. To do this, these expansionists needed strategic bases from which shipping lanes and interior interests in Asia and Latin America could be protected.

In outlining his tactics, Mahan first demanded that the United States build an Isthmian canal. This would be the channel through which the Atlantic coast could "compete with Europe, on equal terms as to distance, for the markets of eastern Asia" and the markets on the western coast of Latin America. He viewed Hawaii through the same lens. The islands, once in American hands, would not only offset British naval dominance in the Pa-

[43] Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, 55–58, 82–87; Mahan to B. Clark, Nov. 5, 1892, Mahan MSS.

cific, but, viewed in a postive way, be a major step in the "natural, necessary, irrepressible" American expansion into this western theater. But nothing better demonstrates Mahan's nonmercantilistic colonialism, strategic-bases philosophy than his view of the Philippines in 1898. As late as July, 1898, he still entertained doubts about annexing all the islands. He proposed to Lodge that the United States take only the Ladrones and Luzon (including, of course, the port of Manila), and allow Spain to keep the Carolines and the remainder of the Philippines. With the achievement of his double objectives of a battleship fleet and the occupation of strategic bases leading to the Asian and Latin-American markets, plus the writing of the Open-Door Notes to protect American commerce in China (Mahan actively advised John Hay while the State Department formulated the notes), the United States could repudiate once and for all a colonial empire in the mercantilist sense.[44]

Mahan had actually supplied the rationale for the open-door philosophy several years before the State Department issued the notes. He foresaw the advantages which commercial expansion possessed over further landed expansion. Most important, perhaps, he believed that commercial expansion would not cause political upheaval. Using French policy in the eighteenth century as an abject example, Mahan condemned France for pursuing a policy of expansion through land warfare when it had outlets to the sea. He quickly pointed to the lesson:

> A fair conclusion is, that States having a good seaboard . . . will find it to their advantage to seek prosperity and extension by the way of sea and of commerce, rather than in attempts to unsettle and modify existing political arrangements in countries where a more

[44] Livezey, *Mahan on Sea Power*, 90–94, 181–183, 190–191; for Mahan's hope for an active United States in Latin America, see *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, 33–35, 324–326; also Alfred T. Mahan, "The Isthmus and Sea Power," *The Interest of America in Sea Power*, 99–100. See also W. D. Puleston, *Mahan: The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, U.S.N.* (New Haven, 1939), 186–187, 194.

> or less long possession of power has . . . created national allegiance or political ties.[45]

Following these ideas to their conclusion, Mahan declared that, while financial and commercial control, rather than political, would lessen possible points of dispute, international conflict would not end. Here military sea power entered the theory, for "when a question arises of control over distant regions . . . it must ultimately be decided by naval power." Mahan emphasized that giant battleships, not commerce destroyers as American planners had earlier believed, would decide such conflicts, for only battleships could gain and maintain control of the sea. Mahan thus closed his circle: the foundation of an expansive policy is a nation's productive capacities that produce vast surpluses; these surpluses should preferably be sold in noncolonial areas in order to lessen political irritations; and sea power in the form of battleships enters the scheme to provide and protect lines of communication and to settle the conflicts which inevitably erupt from commercial rivalry, thus ensuring access to foreign markets for the surplus goods.[46]

The policy makers and other influential Americans who embraced Mahan's teachings made them a central part of the expansionist ideology of the 1890's. Albert Shaw, a close friend of Lodge, Roosevelt, and Mahan, advanced the Captain's ideas through the widely read pages of his newly established *Review of Reviews*. Book reviewers in the most popular periodicals of the day warmly received Mahan's voluminous writings. Theodore Roosevelt, perhaps the most important of these reviewers, emphasized the Captain's basic ideas in the *Atlantic Monthly* and then put these ideas into practice as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1897–1898 and later as President. Mahan and Roosevelt were the closest of friends and could often be found in the company of Brooks Adams, John Hay, and Lodge. Congressmen

[45] Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, 324; also "A Twentieth-Century Outlook," *Interest of America in Sea Power*, 220–222.
[46] Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, 416.

paid homage by plagiarizing not only ideas but phrases and paragraphs from Mahan's works in order to substantiate their own arguments for expansion.[47]

One of the more notable of Mahan's converts was Hilary Herbert, congressman from Alabama and then Secretary of the Navy in Cleveland's second administration. Herbert had been a devotee of small commerce-destroying cruisers, and deprecated both giant battleships and the training of men to operate these battleships in the newly established War College. After reading Mahan's work in 1893, Herbert reversed his opinion and saved the War College just as it was about to close its doors. More important, Mahan's books demonstrated to Herbert the superiority which a battleship fleet enjoyed over commerce-destroyers. By pushing through the naval appropriation acts of 1895 and 1896, Herbert can share with Benjamin Tracy the honor of being the founding father of the modern American navy. Mahan, in turn, can justly receive much of the credit for both Herbert's and Tracy's activities.[48]

Mahan, both the man and his writings, continued to receive tribute at home and abroad until his death in 1914. The course of Brooks Adams was not as triumphant. Roosevelt and Adams continued to try to repeal the "law" by meddling in Asia until 1906, when a rising Japan and a revolutionary Russia brought second thoughts to the President's mind about his Asian policies.

[47] Livezey, *Mahan on Sea Power*, 116, 171; *Congressional Record*, 53rd Cong., 3rd Sess., Feb. 15, 1895, 2249–2250; for Roosevelt's reviews see *Atlantic Monthly*, LXVI (October, 1890), especially 567, and *ibid.*, LXXI (April, 1893), 559; see also Theodore Roosevelt, "The Naval Policy of America as Outlined in Messages of the Presidents of the United States, from the Beginning to the Present Day," *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, XXIII (1897), 509–522; Bald, "Expansionist Sentiment," ch. v.

[48] F. G. Chadwick to Mahan, Aug. 10, 1893, and Hilary Herbert to Mahan, Oct. 4, 1893, Mahan MSS; Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 296–297; see especially Herbert's *Annual Report* as Secretary of Navy in 1893 and 1896.

Brooks returned to the Adams home in Quincy, there to bury himself in a study of John Quincy Adams in an attempt to discover the point where the United States had made its first turn onto the road which had led to San Juan Hill and the Portsmouth Peace Conference. In 1919, eight years before his death, he admitted, "Each day I live I am less able to withstand the suspicion that the universe, far from being an expression of law originating in a single primary cause, is a chaos which admits of reaching no equilibrium, and with which man is doomed eternally and hopelessly to contend." The recantation, of course, came too late to mitigate his part in setting the United States on the course of her new empire during the 1890's.[49]

The Ideological Consensus

These four men typified and/or stimulated the thought of American expansionists in the 1890's. Their views provide a start (and this chapter pretends to be no more than that) in understanding the avowed reasons for accelerating the development of the new empire at the end of the century. In some respects these men disagreed with each other. But on some of the most vital issues they reached a substantial consensus.

All agreed with Turner that the 1890's marked the closing of "the first period of American history" and the beginning of a new epoch. They defined this as a crucial period partly because they discerned the disappearance of the landed frontier. Turner, of course, made this central to his thesis, but the other three men also recognized to a lesser degree the importance of the frontier in their writings. This frontier, as Turner declared, provided the economic support for political and social democracy. The others, using as evidence either the economic importance of the frontier and/or the glut of material wealth produced by American factories and farms, also interpreted the cause of the crisis in economic terms. This was the age of Economic Man, and these

[49] Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 376; Ford, "Memoir," 355–356.

writers, as they traced the crisis to economic causes, reflected the emphasis of their time.[50]

Many Americans displayed their anxiety in one particularly fascinating way; they constantly compared their era with the late stages of the Roman Empire. Turner's most influential teacher at Wisconsin, William F. Allen, published in 1890 a seminal book on the Roman Empire, which opened to Turner new insights into American history. Brooks Adams made an extensive study of Rome in order to trace the working of the "law," and both he and Henry, although they preferred medieval history, were not above buttressing their pessimism with references from the three centuries after Augustus. Mahan's study of the Punic Wars had amazingly transformed him from an anti-imperialist in the early 1880's to the foremost exponent of an offensive policy in the following decade. He compared the "barbarians" of Asia in his own time with the barbarians on the Roman frontiers who remained peaceful while Caesar held a strong hand over them, but who overran Rome once the Empire's desire for peace made it soft. Cecil Spring-Rice, Secretary of the British Embassy in Washington and a close friend of Roosevelt and both Adamses, justifiably complained to a close friend after reading *Law of Civilization and Decay:* "Everyone has a new prescription for humanity and a new diagnosis. They all begin with the Roman Empire and point out resemblances."[51]

Americans balanced the pessimism and fear implicit in this

[50] For Mahan's views especially, see "Twentieth-Century Outlook," *Interest of America in Sea Power*, 220–222, and "Isthmus and Sea Power," *ibid.*, 71–72; for an interesting review which interpreted Mahan's doctrine as a quest for a new frontier, see "Nauticus," "Sea Power: Its Past and Its Future," *Fortnightly Review*, reprinted in *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, XIX (1893), 460–484, especially 483.

[51] Turner, *Early Writings*, 27; Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 274–277; Mahan, "The Possibility of an Anglo-American Reunion," *Interest of America in Sea Power*, 118–122; *The Letters and Friendships of Cecil Spring-Rice: A Record*, edited by Stephen Gwynn (Boston and New York, 1929), I, 214.

analogy with the optimism and hope contained in the American version of Social Darwinism. Perhaps Social Darwinism was not the primary source of the expansionist ideology, but as Mahan wrote, "'the struggle of life,' 'the race of life,' are phrases so familiar that we do not feel their significance till we stop to think of them." Perhaps Turner's essay of 1891 provided the neatest summary of this influence: "Historians have accepted the doctrine of Herder. Society grows. They have accepted the doctrine of Comte. Society is an organism." But it must be noted that other leading Social Darwinists, including John W. Burgess, E. L. Godkin, and William Graham Sumner, could discuss an evolving American society, yet draw back from a belligerent foreign policy or a Mahanian interpretation of "the struggle of life."[52]

American businessmen were trapped between the concepts of these two groups of intellectuals. Few disagreed with Andrew Carnegie's application of Spencer's ideas to the business community. After all, the increasing flow of American industrial goods into foreign markets after 1893 seemed to indicate that the fittest would indeed survive. This cycle of competition and American victories could not continue unbroken, however. The more perceptive Social Darwinists warned that the victors were often decided by violent as well as by peaceful competition. Mahan and Brooks Adams especially emphasized this bloody but necessary fact. When such a climactic occasion arose in 1898, however, the business community became hesitant. Wanting no war to disrupt the accelerating American industrial processes which were setting the pace in the race for survival,

[52] Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston, 1955), 172. There is an especially good discussion in Bald, "Expansionist Sentiment," 56–69. See also Mahan, "United States Looking Outward," *Interest of America in Sea Power*, 18, and Turner, *Early Writings*, 52, 58. For the influence of Social Darwinism on the thought of Brooks and Henry Adams, see Donovan, *Henry Adams and Brooks Adams*, 87–93, 99. Julius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898* . . . (Baltimore, 1936), 6–12, has a good discussion of Burgess.

businessmen discovered that only war would prevent such disruption. Mahan, Adams, and Strong illuminate this paradox; they had thought out the process and divined the conclusion while businessmen, such as Carnegie, were still enjoying the fruits but unsuccessfully trying to evade the violent climaxes of Social Darwinism.

Realizing that Spencer's ideas had such sordid aspects, several of the intellectuals who are discussed in this chapter did not hesitate to use Social Darwinism as a justification for two related ideas: the use of military force in the struggle for survival; and cooperation with Great Britain to pave the way for the future assumption of power by the most fit of all the species, the Anglo-Saxon. No doubt Mahan contributed most to the glorification of military power and war, but when Brooks Adams concluded that only through the valor of the soldier could the American people escape the fiat of the "law," he differed only in slight degree from Mahan's extreme view. Even Strong realized that force might be necessary if the Anglo-Saxon hoped to carry out the will of the Almighty. This apotheosis of military power had several sources: the Social Darwinist emphasis on struggle determining the fittest in primitive times, the discovery of Nietzsche, the success of Bismarckian methods in western Europe, and the fear of some Americans that with the disappearance of the rough-and-tumble frontier their fellow countrymen were becoming flabby. Whatever the source, this admiration of force and war offered something new in American history, for with the possible exceptions of some of the inhabitants of the Old South and the pioneer's notions of how to deal with Indians, Americans had generally viewed war as an evil to be avoided, not cultivated.[53]

[53] Curti, *Growth of American Thought*, 673; Mahan, "The Future in Relation to American Naval Power," *Interest of America in Sea Power*, 140–141; Puleston, *Mahan*, 262–263. For a pioneering essay on the rise of the military spirit in the United States during the 1890's, see James C. Malin, *Confounded Rot about Napoleon: Reflections upon Science and Technology, Nationalism, World Depression of the Eighteen-*

A virulent strain of Anglo-Saxonism emerged from American nationalism and romanticism, but men such as James K. Hosmer, John W. Burgess, Mahan, and Strong made it particularly active and meaningful within the context of Social Darwinism. Paradoxically the belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon gained popularity as the nation's economy slid into an almost continual twenty-year depression marked by violent social outbreaks. Americans could justify disposing their glut of goods and capital with the argument that the United States, blessed with so many of God's gifts, had the right to spread them around the world. In doing so, some writers candidly admitted that this was necessary also to save their own system from either anarchy or socialism. This theme particularly runs through Mahan's and Strong's writings.[54]

This expansive Anglo-Saxonism found its champion in John Fiske, perhaps the most popular public lecturer in American history. Fiske mixed Anglo-Saxonism, Social Darwinism, and expansionism in his widely known lecture and article of 1885, "Manifest Destiny." He gloried in the magnificent future of American industrial productivity and anticipated Mahan with a statement on "that sovereignty of the sea and . . . commercial supremacy." But Fiske was primarily concerned with the bloodless world-wide triumph of American federal institutions. This jovial, three-hundred-pound popularizer of the Good Life deprecated naked force, praying that "the victory of the industrial over the military type of civilization" would be shortly forthcoming. Unlike Mahan, Fiske saw American industrial power creating a world of peace, not friction that would flame into wars. It is a little-noted but significant fact that, when Fiske had to follow his expansive ideas to their conclusions and

Nineties, and Afterwards (Lawrence, Kan., 1961), especially 1–16, 159–161.

[54] Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*, 172, 174; Curti, *Growth of American Thought*, 670–671; Puleston, *Mahan*, 171.

decide for or against the extension of the beneficent American political institutions to the Philippines in 1898, he had an extremely difficult time making up his mind.[55]

The popularization of the Anglo-Saxon mystique through such writings as Fiske's was a harbinger of the increasing cooperation between the State Department and the British Foreign Office. Many expansionists in Congress could not resist twisting the Lion's tail to delight their constituents; but others, like Mahan and Adams, who were not bothered by biennial elections, recognized the value of the developing Anglo-American alliance. They found it easier to go along with British policy in other parts of the world, moreover, once the Foreign Office had granted recognition of United States dominance in Latin America during the Venezuelan affair in 1895–1896. Mahan would not agree to an Anglo-American arbitration treaty, since he feared this would weaken the military preparedness of both nations, but he eloquently described the importance of the two great "islands," England and North America, putting their sea power in tandem in order to civilize the rest of the world. Brooks Adams, though an avowed Anglophobe when discussing British bankers, agreed with Mahan's ideas of Anglo-American cooperation in world politics, especially affairs in Asia.[56]

As the United States became more certain of its dominance in Latin America, American policy makers could afford to concentrate more of their attention on Asia. Each of the four men discussed in this chapter believed that the Orient was destined to be the next great theater of American overseas expansion, though Adams and Mahan stressed this belief more than Turner

[55] John Fiske, *American Political Ideas Viewed from the Standpoint of Universal History* (New York, 1885), 125, 138–139, 143–146, 148–151, 152; John Fiske, *The Letters of John Fiske*, edited by his daughter Ethel F. Fiske (New York, 1940), 673; Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*, 176–178; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 32–33.

[56] For Adams, see Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 170; for Mahan's views, see Mahan to Colonel John Sterling, Feb. 13, 1896, April 27, 1897, and Mahan to B. Clark, Jan. 17, 1896, Mahan MSS.

or Strong. But they could not debate just the matter of Asia. They knew that the Orient could be controlled only after the United States had completed several very difficult intermediate steps. Turner, who wrote of this process less than the other three, believed the development of the frontier had already fulfilled the prerequisites, but the others were much less sanguine. They pleaded for spiritual regeneration at home, increased efficiency of farms and factories, the building of a strong military power, and the taking of outlying islands in order to build a solid base for America's Asian empire.

Like Seward, they demanded a stable and prosperous American continent to serve as a springboard for conquests beyond the seas. But they also trapped themselves in the same dilemma which had ruined Seward's plans in the 1850's. On the one hand, they wanted a new empire to solve domestic problems of crisis proportions. On the other hand, they realized that only a nation which was spiritually, economically, and politically sound could create and maintain such an empire. American history has many paradoxes, but perhaps none is more important —or strange—than this paradox of the 1890's.

Turner, Strong, Adams, and Mahan, faced with the necessity of providing an immediate solution, could offer only expansion. Although they disagreed with each other on some points, all agreed on this conclusion. Their answer might seem trite, since expansion of one type or another characterizes all periods of American history. As used by these four men, however, this solution masked internal dynamics in American society which indicated a turning point in the nation's history. At the same time, their answer led the United States into the international power politics of the early twentieth century. They defined the paradox, then offered a solution which, though inadequate, nevertheless made the 1890's the watershed period of American history.