



Cyrus Veeseer, “Inventing Dollar Diplomacy: The Gilded-Age Origins of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine,” *Diplomatic History*, Volume 27, Issue 3 (June 2003): 301-326.

Commentator’s Response by **Anne Paulet**, Humboldt State University
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I am sorry I did not respond sooner to Mr. Veeseer’s reaction to my commentary on his article but the beginning of the semester in California and my duties as a new chair have had me running a bit ragged. However, I do feel it necessary to make several observations regarding Veeseer’s response.

Regarding definitions, I believe him to be wrong. Veeseer implies that those in the know, the “specialized readers of an academic journal will have their own working definitions” and that therefore he has no obligation to provide any. That is exactly the point. We, as historians, spend much of our time fighting over definitions and interpretations. If we all agreed what, for instance, dollar diplomacy or imperialism was, we would have a lot less to do. Frank Ninkovich, in a historiographical essay on imperialism, recently noted that the different answers given to several important questions regarding the relationship of the U.S. to imperialism, “are attributable, to a significant degree, to the way that imperialism is defined.” [Frank Ninkovich, “The United States and Imperialism,” in *A Companion to American Foreign Relations*, Robert D. Schulzinger, ed., (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 80]. I would argue that the importance of dollar diplomacy in Veeseer’s argument makes it necessary for him to provide his definition of it. Certainly the Progressive Era and the Gilded Age are broad terms and have many, many characteristics -- some disputed, some not. It therefore seems reasonable to expect Veeseer to at least provide some idea of what characteristics he considers important for his argument.

Veeseer chooses to dispute my contention that he does not prove the causal relation he posits. That is certainly his prerogative and I must say that in his disputation, I found Veeseer to be clearer about his argument than he was anywhere in the article. In fact, it was his very explanation that I was looking for in the article. As for his contention that I find it far-fetched to think that the SDIC had influence, he is mistaken. I believe him to be correct in that. I never said he was not. All I was trying to convey was that his argument about the relationship was unclear and hence, for me, unconvincing.

Finally, Veeseer is distressed to find that I do not remark upon the company’s use of John Bassett Moore. Here he is completely correct. I am afraid I simply did not see it as extraordinary. I had assumed from my own work, that such relations were to be expected; apparently the literature does not support my assumption and Veeseer has done a service to provide such documentation.

H-Diplo Article Commentary: Paulet responds

As a final note, I'd like to state that I find Veesser's argument, especially as more clearly laid out in his refutation of my commentary, to be very intriguing and I trust he will expand on it. I only ask that he remember that we are not all as steeped in the sources as he and that he take the time to provide definitions and explanations that will make clearer the interesting nature of his approach. Otherwise he may find himself speaking not to the body of historians but to a few specialists on a particular time period, location and policy, and that would be a shame.

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