



Cyrus Veeser, “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.

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Since I will be in the White Mountains next week, I take the liberty of offering a preliminary reply to Anne Paulet’s review of my article “Inventing Dollar Diplomacy: The Gilded-Age Origins of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine,” which appeared in *Diplomatic History* 27 (3).

I am grateful to Ms. Paulet for reading my article thoroughly, paraphrasing its substance accurately, and spelling my first and last names correctly throughout her review. Even so, I admit to being disappointed that Paulet did not see fit to address some of the larger issues the article addresses, outright or tacitly. Those who read my article and then Paulet’s review struggled through mountains of detail without ever getting much of a view of the overall landscape. I will, then, briefly answer her main criticisms and then suggest one larger issue that Ms. Paulet did not take up.

Paulet takes me to task for giving short shrift to the definition of key terms such as Dollar Diplomacy, the Gilded Age, and the Progressive Era. On this point I must agree with her. The article attempts to put new evidence in the historical record. In doing so it assumes that the specialized readers of an academic journal will have their own working definitions of these well-known terms. The goal of the article was not to redefine Dollar Diplomacy or the Progressive Era but rather to show the previously unrecognized influence of a particular company on the development of Theodore Roosevelt’s foreign policy.

Paulet has major reservations about the article’s success in achieving that end as well, and here I am not so ready to concur. She argues that I do not prove the causal relationship I posit—that is, that the disastrous results of a private company’s control of Dominican finances convinced TR that US policy needed to be directed by the executive branch in collaboration with the major Wall Street banks whose resources would pull the Dominican Republic back from bankruptcy.

One reason that Paulet doubts the importance of the San Domingo Improvement Company’s influence on Roosevelt is that the Roosevelt Corollary, a manifesto justifying US intervention wherever there was “a general loosening of the ties of civilized society,” was foreshadowed as early as May 20, 1904, months before the SDIC “was much of a factor on anyone’s radar,” as she puts it. Yet there is no contradiction here, since the earlier adumbration of the new policy took place in a speech by Elihu Root that stated only in the most general terms that the US might intervene. At that point intervention might still have meant the use of force to support the SDIC’s claims in the Dominican Republic, the policy that the State Department continued to follow until the end of 1904. The fact that the intervention would work against the SDIC was

not spelled out in May 1904 or even in January 1905, which explains why the company, through John Bassett Moore, continued to cooperate with Washington well into 1905.

Paulet finds it especially confusing that Moore continues to work with Roosevelt even as TR is moving away from the SDIC's position. As she says, "Here's the problem; the actions of the SDIC are supposed to be influencing the change in policy that emerges . . . yet, Moore, the SDIC representative is still close enough to Roosevelt to add paragraphs" to the president's speech announcing the US takeover of Dominican customs. This "problem" is explained by the fact that TR's new policy evolved rather than bursting forth full blown. It took time for Roosevelt to figure out that the SDIC was part of the problem, not the solution. After all, the esteemed international lawyer John Bassett Moore was vigorously lobbying for the company--that must have puzzled Roosevelt. Slowly, and especially as Jacob Hollander's report on Dominican finances took shape, Roosevelt realized that Moore was in the thrall of the unsavory directors of the SDIC. One goal of the article is to show that Roosevelt started out reproducing State Department support for the SDIC and then moved to a higher plane. As the article says, "American policy evolved from unthinking support of narrow private interests to a critical, global vision" that would eventually override the influence of the SDIC.

Is it far-fetched to argue that an American company that had had major investments in the Dominican Republic since 1893, whose attorney lobbied the State Department and conferred with Theodore Roosevelt about the nature of the US intervention in Santo Domingo, and which was seen by the Dominicans themselves as a parasite--is it far-fetched to argue that this company had a direct if perverse influence on the Roosevelt corollary? Paulet thinks it is. I don't.

Unfortunately Paulet has little to say about what I hoped was one of my most important discoveries--the company's use of John Bassett Moore, a State Department advisor and pioneer of international law, as a conduit to Secretary of State John Hay and to Roosevelt himself. Many competent diplomatic historians have denied the influence of specific companies on particular US foreign policies in this era. Richard Collin has written that "Roosevelt, Secretary of State John Hay, and most of the working under-secretaries . . . were upper-class American aristocrats who found any business demeaning and the marginal enterprise of Latin American adventurers especially sleazy." (Roosevelt's Caribbean, 11) The case of the SDIC not only shows that a Gilded Age firm had regular and direct access to policymakers, it also shows that this influence led to a dramatic shift in policy. Were there other factors? Of course--but those others have been well documented. The influence of the SDIC had not been.

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