

# THEODORE ROOSEVELT ASSOCIATION

# JOURNAL

## The Outlook

287 Fourth Avenue  
New York

Office of  
Theodore Roosevelt

May 31st 1911.

My dear Mr Secretary:

This will introduce to you Mr O. K. Davis of The New York Times. It is rather difficult for me to write just what I feel about Mr Davis without seeming to make it fulsome. You probably know something of his career, of his services as war correspondent and the like. He is one of the very best newspaper men in this country, with that combination of efficiency and of high sense of honor which when we find it in the newspaper world makes the profession of a newspaper man on the whole the highest that our country has. You can trust him implicitly not only as to good faith, but as to judgment. There is literally nothing that I have hesitated to tell him and to consult with him about.

Faithfully yours,

*Theodore Roosevelt*

The Hon. Henry L. Stimson,  
Secretary of War,  
Washington, D. C.

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# **THEODORE ROOSEVELT ASSOCIATION JOURNAL**

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# The New Nationalism: Theodore Roosevelt's Twentieth-Century Vision of a Third Founding and Its Contemporary Relevance

by James Strock

THERE IS NO LIMIT TO THE GREATNESS OF THE FUTURE BEFORE AMERICA, BEFORE OUR BELOVED LAND. BUT WE CAN REALIZE IT ONLY IF WE ARE AMERICANS, IF WE ARE NATIONALISTS, WITH ALL THE FERVOR OF OUR HEARTS AND ALL THE WISDOM OF OUR BRAINS. WE CAN SERVE THE WORLD AT ALL ONLY IF WE SERVE AMERICA FIRST AND BEST.<sup>1</sup>



American Press Association

Theodore Roosevelt campaigning in 1910.

## Introduction: An American Nationalist

The philosophy underlying Theodore Roosevelt's political project has long been debated. Was he essentially a progressive? Or was he fundamentally a conservative? The fact that a leader of such intellectual energy cannot be readily classified into such familiar categories should prompt us to ask: How did Roosevelt see himself?

TR did more than leave breadcrumbs to point the way. Throughout his prolific speaking and writing he declared his personal and political identity: an unabashed American nationalist.

Roosevelt was the first President who came of age after the Civil War. He declared himself an executor of Abraham Lincoln's political project. TR traced the lineage of nation-building from George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, through Lincoln, into the early twentieth century. In turn, the historical understandings and institutional arrangements

that were renovated at the turn of the twentieth century reach into our own time. In our moment of dizzying disruption and change, we can learn from what Roosevelt's generation did, and how they did it.

Roosevelt's nationalism was full-throated, offered without reservation or apology. He viewed the term "nationalist" as a point of pride and honor. Intending disrespect, he dismissed his rival Woodrow Wilson as "not a nationalist."<sup>2</sup>

TR proposed a positive, universal, forward-looking nationalism. It would extend and deepen our animating ideals of liberty, equality, and identity, finding expression in a revised political settlement.

Roosevelt was a practicing politician and a serious historian, not merely a prophet or an academic observer. He strove to ascertain and achieve "realizable ideals." The process was avowedly experimental and improvisational.

## The New Nationalism

Roosevelt distilled a lifetime of thought and action in his seminal "New Nationalism" address, delivered in Osawatomie, Kansas, on Wednesday, August 31, 1910. This speech provides an analytical structure to his many pronouncements relating to the topic. It also offers a template for our own task of national reconstruction.

TR was speaking as a former President. He had departed the White House the year before. The venue, Osawatomie, was central to Roosevelt's message. It was recognizable to Americans as the site, in the autumn of 1859, of abolitionist John Brown's raid against pro-slavery forces. "Bloody Kansas," riven by disagreement over the extent and future of slavery, prefigured the imminent Civil War.

Roosevelt suggested that the challenges of the new twentieth century should be comprehended as a comparable moment of reckoning: "There have been two great crises in our country's history: first, when it was formed, and then, again, when it was perpetuated."<sup>3</sup>

Addressing wizened, uniformed veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic in the audience, TR declared:

Not only did you justify your generation, . . . but you justified the wisdom of Washington and Washington's colleagues. If this Republic had been founded by them only to be split asunder into fragments when the strain came, then the judgment of the world would have been that Washington's work was not worth doing. It was you who crowned Washington's work, as you carried to achievement the high purpose of Abraham Lincoln.<sup>4</sup>

TR proposed a new nationalism, a third founding. This time, it would be forged without the clarifying chaos and destruction of war.

Roosevelt's vision of a new nationalism comprises ten elements:

**(1) Universality:** Roosevelt's nationalism is far from seeking a "splendid isolation." He robustly declared: "The history of America is now the central feature of the history of the world."<sup>5</sup> As he elaborated in 1916, "I believe in nationalism as the absolute prerequisite to internationalism."<sup>6</sup>

**(2) Serve America to Serve the World:** TR asserted that "the first essential here in the United States is that we shall be one nation, . . . the American nation."<sup>7</sup> He saw this

as a precondition of larger service to the world: "We can help humanity at large very much to the extent that we are national—in the proper sense, not in the chauvinistic sense—that we are devoted to our own country first."<sup>8</sup>

Roosevelt was stating something so blindingly obvious that it may be easy to overlook: American nationalism is built on the bedrock of the national community and its constitutional structure. Thus it was that Lincoln, in saving the Union, was able to sequester and eliminate the institution of slavery and begin the process of bringing former slaves into citizenship. Had the nation not remained intact, the abolitionist vision would have remained a pipedream.

Along with Wilson and others of the time, Roosevelt used the term "America first."<sup>9</sup> John Philip Sousa composed a patriotic march of the same name.<sup>10</sup> In later decades, this reference would become highly charged.

The controversy arises from the America First Committee. This was a nonpartisan organization, founded in 1940, seeking to keep the U.S. out of the European war that had begun with the Nazi-Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939. Its supporters included many prominent figures, as well as young people, such as future Presidents John Kennedy and Gerald Ford. It also emerged as a magnet for a motley group of disreputable influences, ranging from communists to fascists, and many who were sympathetic to such ideologies. Charles Lindbergh, theretofore beloved as the hero of the *Spirit of St. Louis*, tarnished the group with his insouciance toward the Third Reich and the contagion of antisemitism.

President Franklin Roosevelt recognized the threat the group posed. He methodically marginalized it as "isolationist" as he sought to prepare a reluctant nation for war amid massive and successful aggression by Germany and Japan. Upon the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the America First Committee disbanded.

Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson passed from the scene well before the subsequent evolution of the phraseology of putting America first. They were not arguing for selfishness, or vain attempts to avoid the challenges of the wider world. In their thinking, "America First" did not mean "America Only" or "America Alone." That outlook was as ill-advised in the early twentieth century as it is in our time. They were advocating an applied patriotism. Citizens should keep their obligations to the nation—and to other Americans—front of mind.

**(3) Citizens Are the Source of National Greatness:** America's revolutionary idea is that the individuals create the

... and the Wolf chewed up the children and spit out their bones ...  
But those were Foreign Children and it really didn't matter."



*A historical drawing intended to convey an enduring message.*

state. The government exists to serve citizens, not the other way around. Individuals are no longer subjects; as citizens they are sovereign. Freedom and equality are to be safeguarded by representative government, particularly where citizens may lack the power to do so on their own.

TR elaborated on this aspect of his vision in another landmark speech, "Citizenship in a Republic," delivered in Paris at the Sorbonne four months prior, in April 1910. Addressing a distinguished French audience, he declared: "A democratic republic such as each of ours . . . represents the most gigantic of all possible social experiments; . . . and for you and for us the question of the quality of the individual citizen is supreme.... The main source of national power and national greatness is found in the average citizenship of the nation."<sup>11</sup>

Citizenship, in Roosevelt's vision, is not akin to being a consumer. It is not a matter of passively shopping for pleasure or diversion or other self-gratification. As it provides protection, it obliges service. In TR's recitation, this begins with family, extending to community, state, region, and nation.

Ultimately, given America's role as a beacon of freedom, it reaches the wider world. As TR stated in his New Nationalism address: "Each one of you carries on your shoulders not only the burden of doing well for the sake of your country, but the burden of doing well and of seeing that this nation does well for the sake of mankind."<sup>12</sup> He approvingly quoted Lincoln: "I hold that while man exists it is his duty to improve not only his own condition, but to assist in ameliorating mankind."<sup>13</sup>

**(4) Solidarity:** Early-twentieth-century America was much more loosely agglomerated than it would later become. Sectional divisions lingered from the Civil War and the tumultuous Reconstruction of 1865-1877. Economic and cultural fissures were expanding amid the extraordinary rise of U.S. agriculture, science and technology, manufacturing, finance, education, and mass communication.

Unprecedented rates of immigration fueled innovation and output, while enriching and straining communities and customs. The nation's ancestry before 1900 was largely from northern and western Europe, and Africa. In the early years of the new century, that would be supplemented with an invigorating infusion of newcomers, particularly from eastern and southern Europe.

Just as the founding of the nation was an experiment, the United States of the early twentieth century was continuing to create a nation unlike any other. For the nation to cohere at a time of such unprecedented change, TR saw it as mission-

critical to uphold the values expressed in our founding:

We must insist on a unified nationality, with one flag, one language, one set of national ideals. We must shun as we would shun the plague all efforts to make us separate into groups of separate nationalities. We must all of us be Americans, and nothing but Americans; and all good Americans must stand on an equality of consideration and respect, without regard to their creed or to the land from which their forebears came.<sup>14</sup>

When such ideals are given life, expressed in citizenship, they yield the solidarity indispensable to the progress of the American system:

Fellow-feeling, sympathy in the broadest sense, is the most important factor in producing a healthy political and social life. Neither our national nor our local civic life can be what it should be unless it is marked by the fellow-feeling, the mutual kindness, the mutual respect, the sense of common duties and common interests, which arise when men take the trouble to understand one another, and to associate together for a common object.<sup>15</sup>

Roosevelt and others at the time sought to instill in citizens a love of country as intense as that experienced and expressed by soldiers in combat. TR was not unaware of the horror of war. Nonetheless, along with others of his generation, he recognized it as an opportunity for individuals to render the highest service to the nation. In so doing, they would summon virtues of a higher level than are ordinarily required in peacetime. Addressing the Civil War veterans at Osawatimie, he said, "All I ask in civil life is what you fought for in the Civil War. I ask that civil life be carried on according to the spirit in which the army was carried on."<sup>16</sup>

Solidarity constitutes the connective tissue between the freedom of the individual and the obligations owed to the commonwealth. It is the shared space where citizens express American values—and, therefore, American identity—through daily decisions in our lives and work.

**(5) Redress Oligarchy:** From their study of history and political theory, the American founders were keenly aware of the fragility of republican institutions. An ever-present risk, expressed by Aristotle and noted with force by John Adams, is the tendency toward oligarchy, or rule by the few.<sup>17</sup> An oligarchy might arise from the claims of predatory wealth or hereditary aristocracy or formal education or through the organization and advancement of innumerable "special interests" seeking privilege to the detriment of the general interest.

Roosevelt turned attention to the rise of those he branded “malefactors of great wealth.”<sup>18</sup> They were exemplified by the business magnates who had seized the advantage as economic and financial change outpaced government power, legal constraints, and shared cultural norms.

At Osawatomie TR quoted from Lincoln: “Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.”<sup>19</sup> Lest his audience conclude that his sympathy lay entirely with labor, Roosevelt added a second Lincoln injunction: “Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. . . . Nor should this lead to a war upon the owners of property. Property is the fruit of labor; . . . property is desirable; it is a positive good in the world.”<sup>20</sup>

In TR’s view, the national government would reconcile such competing interests.

One of the chief factors in progress is the destruction of special privilege. The essence of any struggle for healthy liberty has always been, and must always be, to take from some one man or class of men the right to enjoy power, or wealth, or position, or immunity, which has not been earned by service to his or their fellows.<sup>21</sup>

Roosevelt compared the challenge of oligarchy in 1910 with that of Lincoln’s generation: “Exactly as the special interests of cotton and slavery threatened our political integrity before the Civil War, so now the great special business interests too often control and corrupt the men and methods of government for their own profit.”<sup>22</sup> He elaborated on this theme in 1912:

If on this continent we merely build another country of great but unjustly divided material prosperity, we shall have done nothing; and we shall do as little if we merely set the greed of envy against the greed of arrogance, and thereby destroy the material well-being of all of us. To turn this government either into government by a plutocracy or government by a mob would be to repeat on a larger scale the lamentable failures of the world that is dead. We stand against all tyranny, by the few or by the many. We stand for the rule of the many in the interest of all of us, for the rule of the many in a spirit of courage, of common sense, of high purpose, above all in a spirit of kindly justice towards every man and every woman.<sup>23</sup>

The question naturally follows: On what basis would the competing claims of various interests be sorted out? Roosevelt

saw the national government—and the President specifically—as having the duty to represent the national interest, or general will, rather than any special interest or class or partisan point of view.

As a political project, TR’s notion of putting America first decreed advancing the welfare and prospects of everyday Americans. In turn, citizens would put America first, serving their fellow citizens and the commonwealth. And in pursuing this course, Roosevelt was determined to support and strengthen the durable majority of citizens constituting the middle class.

**(6) The Middle Class Is the Foundation of the American Nation:** In Roosevelt’s vision, the middle class is the foundation and binding element of the nation. He strove to keep them top of mind in every aspect of his life, public and private, avoiding conduct or actions which would betray their trust. In his *Autobiography*, published in 1913, TR wrote of a cartoon he relished, titled “His Favorite Author”:

It pictured an old fellow with chin whiskers, a farmer, in his shirt-sleeves, with his boots off, sitting before the fire, reading the President’s Message [Roosevelt’s annual presentation of administration goals and priorities]. On his feet were stockings of the kind I have seen hung up by the dozen in Joe Ferris’s store at Medora, in the days when I used to come in to town and sleep in one of the rooms over the store. . . . This was the old fellow whom I always used to keep in my mind. He had probably been in the Civil War in his youth; he had worked hard ever since he left the army; he had been a good husband and father; he had brought up his boys and girls to work; he did not wish to do injustice to anyone else, but he wanted justice done to himself and to others like him; and I was bound to secure that justice for him if it lay in my power to do so.<sup>24</sup>

Roosevelt revered those he might call “typical” Americans. They were the ancestors of the postwar mass middle class created by the GI Bill of 1944. Despite his privileged background—or, perhaps more precisely, spurred by it—he strove to earn their respect. This is a golden thread through his life and work. It is a forthrightly acknowledged motivation underlying his time as a Tiffany-clad cowboy in the West; his excursion into the rough-and-tumble of partisan politics; his public-spirited work as a police commissioner in New York City; his four months of service in the Spanish-American War of 1898; and his approach to leadership.

Following his decisive presidential election victory in 1904, TR wrote these words in a letter to his friend Owen Wister:



from Rick Marschall, *Bully!: The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2011), p. 393

*"There was one cartoon made while I was President, in which I appeared incidentally," declared Theodore Roosevelt, "that was always a great favorite of mine."*

*This cartoon was created by Everett E. Lowry for the Chicago Chronicle.*

It is a peculiar gratification to me to have owed my election . . . above all to Abraham Lincoln's "plain people"; to the folk who work hard on farm, in shop, or on the railroads, or who own little stores, little businesses which they manage themselves. I would literally, not figuratively, rather cut off my right hand than forfeit by any improper act of mine the trust and regard of these people. . . . I shall endeavor not to merit their disapproval by any act inconsistent with the ideal they have formed of me.<sup>25</sup>

Roosevelt recognized the unheralded heroism of those who go to work every day, often in circumstances they hate, to serve those they love. So, too, he extolled the courage of those who put their bodies on the line in service of their fellow citizens. TR aspired to earn his place among them.

Roosevelt's nationalist principles would face a moment of truth, one of his "crowded hours," on Monday, October 14, 1912.

At dusk, while campaigning in Milwaukee, TR was shot in the chest, at point-blank range. In a spectacular and characteristic feat of grit, Roosevelt soldiered on, presenting a long speech to a large audience before acceding to medical care.<sup>26</sup> As was his practice, he subsequently explained his conduct and motivation in letters to contemporaries—and future generations. One example:

A good soldier or sailor, or for the matter of that even a civilian accustomed to hard and hazardous pursuits, a deep-sea fisherman, or railwayman, or cowboy, or lumberjack, or miner, would normally act as I acted without thinking anything about it. I believe half the men in my regiment at the least would have acted just as I acted. . . . In the very unlikely event of the wound being mortal I wished to die with my boots on, so to speak.<sup>27</sup>

After he left the White House, the former commander-in-chief

and head of state asked to be addressed simply as “Colonel Roosevelt.”

Our electorate is far expanded from a century ago. Nonetheless, one recognizes the continuing theme of honoring and upholding middle-class virtues as a bedrock of the nation’s strength. TR might have concurred with the twentieth-century political sociologist Barrington Moore’s aphorism: “no bourgeois, no democracy.”<sup>28</sup>

Roosevelt’s middle-class nationalism never aligned comfortably within dominant partisan or ideological classifications. He rationalized the pursuit of power as a way to cultivate the national character. TR was entirely uninhibited, dipping into the toolboxes of the left and right as needed to help hard-working, ordinary people pursue virtuous lives.

To that end, he favored a “living wage,” to ensure that an honest day’s work would enable any citizens to care for themselves and their families. The same reasoning prompted TR to advocate national health care. At the same time, he opposed the socialist politics emerging in Europe and the United States in the early twentieth century. His motivating public concern was not materialist. In contrast to Marxists

and free-market fundamentalists, TR inveighed against “the sordid materialism which treats pecuniary profit and gross bodily comfort as the only evidences of success.”<sup>29</sup>

With Lincoln, Roosevelt believed the indispensable, ongoing task of statesmanship is to weld the disparate elements of the evolving United States into a more perfect union. The moral foundation of the nation would be made durable when grounded in a vibrant, virtuous middle class. Only then could the free and equal pursuit of happiness yield extraordinary results for the American nation and American ideals—and thereby for the world. Roosevelt’s vision of “America first” came to life as a political project of putting *Americans* first.

**(7) Social Mobility:** From the start, Americans have been stirred by the prospect of ascending the socio-economic ladder. Benjamin Franklin exemplified and evangelized the notion of relentless self-improvement as central to the American character. This viewpoint found ready acceptance among colonists who chafed at British rule. Their lives and work and prospects were limited by demands and presumptions of hereditary hierarchies that seemed distant if not altogether disconnected from the realities of the New World.



A depiction of John Schrank's attempted assassination of Theodore Roosevelt on October 14, 1912, painted by Saturday Evening Post cover artist John Falter.

from Rick Marschall and Gregory A. Wynn, TR in '12 Exhibition Catalog (Oyster Bay, NY, 2012)

The rough business of exploring and subduing a continent yielded a down-to-earth accountability. Following Franklin, Americans would judge others' worth not by who we are or where we come from, but by what we do.

At Osawatomie, Roosevelt recognized social mobility as the real-time connector of the ideals of equality and freedom:

Practical equality of opportunity for all citizens, when we achieve it, will have two great results. First, every man will have a fair chance to make of himself all that in him lies; to reach the highest point to which his capacities, unassisted by special privilege of his own and unhampered by the special privileges of others, can carry him, and to get for himself and his family substantially what he has earned. Second, equality of opportunity means that the commonwealth will get from every citizen the highest service of which he is capable.<sup>30</sup>

TR argued that the realizable ideal of "practical equality" required vigilant attention to changing conditions:

When I say that I am for the square deal, I mean not merely that I stand for fair play under the present rules of the game, but that I stand for having those rules changed so as to work for a more substantial equality of opportunity and of reward for equally good service.<sup>31</sup>

Diminished social mobility might be understood to be a canary in the coal mine, an early warning that political arrangements are declining toward oligarchy. As such, it works against cultivating and sustaining the American national character.

Conversely, highly functioning social mobility is a practical precondition for the ongoing extension of the full benefits of American life and citizenship to an ever-wider range of individuals. Otherwise, the system could be destabilized, even turned against itself, as newly acquired rights and expectations are placed into zero-sum conflict with existing arrangements.

**(8) Patriotism:** In his celebrated dictionary, the eighteenth-century English moralist Samuel Johnson defined patriot as "one whose ruling passion is the love of his country." Like other virtues, patriotism can be draped as a cloak around self-interested actions. In another context, Johnson mordantly observed, "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."<sup>32</sup> In the early twentieth century, such rhetorical malpractice was dismissed as "patrioteering."

Roosevelt was keenly attuned to both aspects of patriotism. In 1918, mere months before his death, TR asserted: "Patriotism stands in national matters as love of family does in private life. Nationalism corresponds to the love a man bears for his wife and children."<sup>33</sup> On many occasions he stressed that patriotism, if it is to have meaning, "is an affair of deeds. . . . Patriotism means service to the nation; and only those who render such service are fit to enjoy the privilege of citizenship."<sup>34</sup>

Patriotism, in TR's view, supersedes party politics and personal preferment:

Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the President or any other public official save exactly to the degree in which he himself stands by the country. It is patriotic to support him insofar as he efficiently serves the country. It is unpatriotic not to oppose him to the exact extent that by inefficiency or otherwise he fails in his duty to stand by the country.<sup>35</sup>

As with other facets of nationalism, patriotism is enmeshed in reciprocal obligations. In the run-up to the United States' entry into the First World War, Roosevelt explained:

There can be no genuine feeling of patriotism of the kind that makes all men willing and eager to die for the land, unless there has been some measure of success in making the land worth living in for all alike, whatever their station, so long as they do their duty; and on the other hand, no man has a right to enjoy any benefits whatever from living in the land in time of peace, unless he is trained physically and spiritually so that if duty calls he can and will do his part to keep the land against all alien aggression.<sup>36</sup>

**(9) Americanism:** Roosevelt viewed "Americanism" as patriotism in action. In the early twentieth century, the overarching concern was to advance toward "a more perfect union." This entailed extending and deepening shared national values amid unsettling turbulence in many aspects of life and work.

TR spoke and wrote on this topic in various settings over many years. Perhaps his most comprehensive expression was in January 1917:

Americanism means many things. It means equality of rights and, therefore, equality of duty and of obligation. It means service to our common country. It means loyalty to one flag, to our flag, the flag of all of us. It means on the part of each of us respect for the rights

of the rest of us.

After reciting a range of policies intended to make equal opportunity a practical reality, Roosevelt elaborated:

Everything is un-American that tends either to government by a plutocracy or government by a mob. To divide along the lines of section or caste or creed is un-American. All privileges based on wealth, and all enmity to honest men merely because they are wealthy, are un-American—both of them equally so. Americanism means the virtues of courage, honor, justice, truth, sincerity, and hardihood—the virtues that made America.

Conversely, neglect of such vital, ancestral virtues could have far-reaching consequences: “The things that will destroy America are prosperity-at-any-price, peace-at-any-price, safety-first instead of duty-first, the love of soft living and the get-rich-quick theory of life.”<sup>37</sup>

**(10) Stewardship:** Roosevelt’s notion of American nationalism aims to secure precious rights to liberty and equality and pass them along, enhanced and extended, to better serve future generations. This is seen clearly in TR’s advocacy of conservation at Osawatomie.

Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us. . . . Conservation is a great moral issue, for it involves the patriotic duty of ensuring the safety and continuance of the nation. Let me add that the health and vitality of our people are at least as well worth conserving as their forests, waters, lands, and minerals, and in this great work the national government must bear a most important part.<sup>38</sup>

### A New Nationality

Roosevelt’s New Nationalism address remains resonant in our time. President Barack Obama, for example, returned to Osawatomie to offer his own commemorative take in December 2011.<sup>39</sup>

Elements of Roosevelt’s nationalist vision were highly contested, then and now. His most articulate antagonist, Woodrow Wilson, vehemently objected to what his supporters

saw as Roosevelt’s overly centralized approach. He offered a Jeffersonian counterpoint to Roosevelt’s Hamiltonian position. This is reflected in the title of Wilson’s 1913 book, *The New Freedom: A Call for the Emancipation of the Generous Energies of a People*.<sup>40</sup>

Nonetheless, Wilson shared TR’s commitment to a uniting, national narrative, updated to meet the challenges of the new century. Each saw it arising from the founding documents and the subsequent sweep of U.S. history. Each sought to recast the national vision toward what Wilson called a “new frontier,”<sup>41</sup> as the United States reached its “manifest destiny” on the shores of the Pacific coast at the close of the nineteenth century. Each saw an urgent need to reinforce a shared sense of Americanism at a time of unprecedented, breakneck-speed change. Each discerned looming danger from rising oligarchy. Each contended that the success or failure of the American experiment would depend on the character of ordinary people, together responsible for a unique national character. Each believed that his historical moment required an updated nationalism as a matter of security, even survival.

In his 1916 book *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*, Roosevelt robustly declared, “We of America form a new nationality.”<sup>42</sup> His vision suggested that the American nationality is organic, a living thing, connecting our past with our future. With effective leadership, it is our greatest asset, far more than amassed wealth or weapons. Without effective leadership, it can be hijacked by corrupt individuals and institutions or neglected by a populace more attuned to rights than duties.

Theodore Roosevelt and his generation bequeathed an invigorated nationalism. The institutional arrangements and understandings that emerged from the politics of the early twentieth century would culminate in the domestic and international order that largely prevailed for seven decades following the end of the Second World War. Now, as before, those arrangements require renovation, based on fidelity to truth and to democracy and on a new understanding and application of the enduring, evolving ideals of liberty, equality, and identity.

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*James Strock, a longtime member of the Board of Trustees of the Theodore Roosevelt Association, is an independent entrepreneur and reformer in business, government, and politics. He is the author of Theodore Roosevelt on Leadership (2001) and many other writings. This article is a version of a chapter in his forthcoming book, The Next Nationalism.*