

The Second War for Independence and the Upsurge of Nationalism, 1812–1824

The war [of 1812] has renewed and reinstated the national feelings and character which the Revolution had given, and which were daily lessened.

Albert Gallatin, 1816

Prologue: The western war hawks in Congress, bitter about maritime grievances against Britain and the British-backed Indian raids on the frontier, engineered a declaration of war on Britain in 1812. But the pro-British Federalists of New England vehemently opposed “Mr. Madison’s War” as a scheme of the Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans to ruin them economically and politically. With the nation thus dangerously divided, the war went badly for the Americans, and ended with the Treaty of Ghent (1814), which essentially restored the status quo. Yet partly as a result of Andrew Jackson’s stirring victory over the British at the Battle of New Orleans, an outburst of nationalism followed the otherwise frustrating War of 1812. As time went on, the chief setback to nationalism was the ominous sectional quarrel over slavery in Missouri. The volatile issue of slavery was eventually contained for a period of years by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, but it smoldered on until it finally exploded in the Civil War in 1861. In foreign affairs, meanwhile, nationalism manifested itself in the Monroe Doctrine (1823), which warned the European powers to keep their hands off the two American continents.

A. The Cauldron of War

1. Tecumseh Challenges William Henry Harrison (1810)

The American frontiersmen blamed the British for egging the Native Americans on to attack them, but actually American greed was goad enough. William Henry Harrison,

¹C. M. Depew, ed., *The Library of Oratory* (New York: The Globe Publishing Company, 1902), vol. 4, pp. 363–364.

the aggressive governor of Indiana Territory, had negotiated a series of land-grabbing agreements with the Indians, culminating in the Treaty of Fort Wayne (1809). Two Indian tribes, ignoring the rights of all others, sold 3 million acres of their ancestral lands for a pittance. The gifted Shawnee chief Tecumseh, together with his visionary brother the Prophet, was then organizing the Indians against white encroachments. Absent when the Treaty of Fort Wayne was negotiated, Tecumseh journeyed angrily to Vincennes (Indiana), where, in a stormy scene, he confronted Governor Harrison and threatened to resist white occupancy of the ceded lands. How valid was his main grievance?

I would not then come to Governor Harrison to ask him to tear the treaty and to obliterate the landmark. But I would say to him: Sir, you have liberty to return to your own country.

The Being within, communing with past ages, tells me that . . . until lately there was no white man on this continent; that it then all belonged to red men, children of the same parents, placed on it by the Great Spirit that made them, to keep it, to traverse it, to enjoy its productions, and to fill it with the same race—once a happy race, since made miserable by the white people, who are never contented, but always encroaching. The way—and the only way—to check and to stop this evil is for all the red men to unite in claiming a common equal right in the land, as it was at first, and should be yet. For it never was divided, but belongs to all for the use of each. That no part has a right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers; those who want all, and will not do with less.

The white people have no right to take the land from the Indians, because they had it first. It is theirs. They may sell, but all must join. Any sale not made by all is not valid. The late sale is bad. It was made by a part only. Part do not know how to sell. It requires all to make a bargain for all. All red men have equal rights to the unoccupied land. The right of occupancy is as good in one place as in another. There cannot be two occupations in the same place. The first excludes all others. It is not so in hunting or traveling; for there the same ground will serve many, as they may follow each other all day. But the camp is stationary, and that is occupancy. It belongs to the first who sits down on his blanket or skins which he has thrown upon the ground; and till he leaves it no other has a right.

2. Representative Felix Grundy Demands War (1811)

Following Tecumseh's speech and the subsequent Indian raids on the frontier, Governor Harrison led an army provocatively toward the headquarters of the Indians. On the night of November 7, 1811, at Tippecanoe near the Wabash River (Indiana), he succeeded in beating back an Indian attack. This hollow but costly victory further inflamed the West, from which came Henry Clay and other leaders of the war hawks to Congress in 1811. Among them was Felix Grundy of Tennessee, three of whose brothers had been killed by the Indians. As the most famous criminal lawyer

²*Annals of Congress*. 12th Congress, 1st Sess., 424–426 (December 9, 1811).

in the Southwest, he had often cheated the gallows by reducing the jury to tears. In this eloquent speech in Congress, which grievances were peculiarly western, and which ones were nationwide? What interest did westerners have in freedom of the seas?

I will now state the reasons which influenced the Committee [on Foreign Affairs] in recommending the [war] measures now before us.

It is not the [Atlantic] carrying trade properly so called about which this nation and Great Britain are at present contending. Were this the only question now under consideration, I should feel great unwillingness (however clear our claim might be) to involve the nation in war for the assertion of a right in the enjoyment of which the community at large are not more deeply concerned.

The true question in controversy is of a very different character; it involves the interest of the whole nation. It is the right of exporting the productions of our own soil and industry to foreign markets. Sir, our vessels are now captured when destined to the ports of France, and condemned by the British Courts of Admiralty, without even the pretext of having on board contraband of war, enemies' property, or having in any other respect violated the laws of nations.

These depredations on our lawful commerce, under whatever ostensible pretense committed, are not to be traced to any maxims or rules of public law, but to the maritime supremacy and pride of the British nation. This hostile and unjust policy of that country towards us is not to be wondered at, when we recollect that the United States are already the second commercial nation in the world. The rapid growth of our commercial importance has not only awakened the jealousy of the commercial interests of Great Britain, but her statesmen, no doubt, anticipate with deep concern the maritime greatness of this republic. . . .

What, Mr. Speaker, are we now called on to decide? It is whether we will resist by force the attempt, made by the [British] government, to subject our maritime rights to the arbitrary and capricious rule of her will. For my part I am not prepared to say that this country shall submit to have her commerce interdicted, or regulated, by any foreign nation. Sir, I prefer war to submission.

Over and above these unjust pretensions of the British government, for many years past they have been in the practice of impressing our seamen from merchant vessels. This unjust and lawless invasion of personal liberty calls loudly for the interposition of this government. To those better acquainted with the facts in relation to it, I leave it to fill up the picture.

My mind is irresistibly drawn to the West. Although others may not strongly feel the bearing which the late transactions in that quarter [Tippecanoe] have on this subject, upon my mind they have great influence. It cannot be believed, by any man who will reflect, that the savage tribes, uninfluenced by other powers, would think of making war on the United States. They understand too well their own weakness and our strength. They have already felt the weight of our arms; they know they hold the very soil on which they live as tenants in sufferance. How, then, sir, are we to account for their late conduct? In one way only: some powerful nation must have intrigued with them, and turned their peaceful dispositions towards us into hostilities. Great Britain alone has intercourse with those Northern tribes. I therefore infer that if British gold has not been employed, their baubles and



trinkets, and the promise of support and a place of refuge, if necessary, have had their effect.

If I am right in this conjecture, war is not to commerce by sea or land. It is already begun; and some of the richest blood of our country has already been shed. . . . The whole Western country is ready to march; they only wait for our permission. And, sir, war once declared, I pledge myself for my people—they will avenge the death of their brethren. . . .

Ask the Northern man, and he will tell you that any state of things is better than the present. Inquire of the Western people why their crops are not equal to what they were in former years; they will answer that industry has no stimulus left, since their surplus products have no markets. . . .

This war, if carried on successfully, will have its advantages. We shall drive the British from our continent. They will no longer have an opportunity of intriguing with our Indian neighbors and setting on the ruthless savage to tomahawk our women and children. That nation will lose her Canadian trade, and, by having no resting place in this country, her means of annoying us will be diminished.

3. Causes of the War (1812, 1813)

The “Second War for American Independence” was prompted by events on the frontier as well as on the high seas. The first print below, entitled A Scene on the Frontiers as Practiced by the Humane British and Their Worthy Allies, may have been inspired by the August 1812 “Massacre of Chicago,” in which it was reported that British officers had purchased American scalps from Indians. The second scene, The Tory Editor and His Apes Giving Their Pitiful Advice to the American Sailors, pre-

³Library of Congress, #USZ62-5800; Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.



4. President James Madison's Fateful War Message (1812)

Scholars once believed that Madison—mild-mannered and highly intellectual—was prodded into war by the purposeful war hawks from the West. The truth is that the president, unable to wring concessions from the British, worked hand in glove with the war hawks. In his following War Message, does he seem more concerned with purely western grievances than with national grievances? Which of his numerous charges against England carries the least conviction?

British cruisers have been in the continued practice of violating the American flag on the great highway of nations, and of seizing and carrying off persons sailing under it, not in the exercise of a belligerent right founded on the law of nations against an enemy, but of a municipal [internal] prerogative over British subjects. British jurisdiction is thus extended to neutral vessels. . . .

¹J. D. Richardson, ed., *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (1896), vol. 1, pp. 500–504.

The practice . . . is so far from affecting British subjects alone that, under the pretext of searching for these, thousands of American citizens, under the safeguard of public law and of their national flag, have been torn from their country and from everything dear to them; have been dragged on board ships of war of a foreign nation and exposed, under the severities of their discipline, to be exiled to the most distant and deadly climes, to risk their lives in the battles of their oppressors, and to be the melancholy instruments of taking away those of their own brethren.

Against this crying enormity, which Great Britain would be so prompt to avenge if committed against herself, the United States have in vain exhausted remonstrances and expostulations. And that no proof might be wanting of their conciliatory dispositions, and no pretext left for a continuance of the practice, the British government was formally assured of the readiness of the United States to enter into arrangements such as could not be rejected if the recovery of British subjects were the real and the sole object. The communication passed without effect.

British cruisers have been in the practice also of violating the rights and the peace of our coasts. They hover over and harass our entering and departing commerce. To the most insulting pretensions they have added the most lawless proceedings in our very harbors, and have wantonly spilt American blood within the sanctuary of our territorial jurisdiction. . . .

Under pretended blockades, without the presence of an adequate force and sometimes without the practicability of applying one, our commerce has been plundered in every sea, the great staples of our country have been cut off from their legitimate markets, and a destructive blow aimed at our agricultural and maritime interests. . . .

Not content with these occasional expedients for laying waste our neutral trade, the Cabinet of Britain resorted at length to the sweeping system of blockages, under the name of Orders in Council, which has been molded and managed as might best suit its political views, its commercial jealousies, or the avidity of British cruisers. . . .

It has become, indeed, sufficiently certain that the commerce of the United States is to be sacrificed, not as interfering with the belligerent rights of Great Britain; not as supplying the wants of her enemies, which she herself supplies; but as interfering with the monopoly which she covets for her own commerce and navigation. . . .

In reviewing the conduct of Great Britain toward the United States, our attention is necessarily drawn to the warfare just renewed by the savages on one of our extensive frontiers—a warfare which is known to spare neither age nor sex and to be distinguished by features peculiarly shocking to humanity. It is difficult to account for the activity and combinations which have for some time been developing themselves among tribes in constant intercourse with British traders and garrisons, without connecting their hostility with that influence, and without recollecting the authenticated examples of such interpositions heretofore furnished by the officers and agents of that government.

5. Federalist Congressmen Protest (1812)

A group of thirty-four antiwar Federalists, outvoted in the House, prepared the following remonstrance, which was widely circulated. One of its leading authors was the unbridled Josiah Quincy, who, the year before, had declared that if the territory of Louisiana was admitted as a state, the Union was “virtually dissolved,” and that like-minded men must “prepare definitely for a separation—amicably, if they can; violently, if they must.” The protest of the thirty-four congressmen was in effect a reply to Madison’s War Message. After minimizing or partially justifying Britain’s provocative maritime practices and Indian policy, the statement continued as follows. How plausibly does it make its points regarding the futility of the war and the folly of becoming a virtual ally of France? To what extent does it describe the war as immoral?

If our ills were of a nature that war would remedy, if war would compensate any of our losses or remove any of our complaints, there might be some alleviation of the suffering in the charm of the prospect. But how will war upon the land protect commerce upon the ocean? What balm has Canada for wounded honor? How are our mariners benefited by a war which exposes those who are free, without promising release to those who are impressed?

But it is said that war is demanded by honor. Is national honor a principle which thirsts after vengeance, and is appeased only by blood? . . . If honor demands a war with England, what opiate lulls that honor to sleep over the wrongs done us by France? On land, robberies, seizures, imprisonments, by French authority; at sea, pillage, sinkings, burnings, under French orders. These are notorious. Are they unfelt because they are French? . . . With full knowledge of the wrongs inflicted by the French, ought the government of this country to aid the French cause by engaging in war against the enemy of France? . . .

It would be some relief to our anxiety if amends were likely to be made for the weakness and wildness of the project by the prudence of the preparation. But in no aspect of this anomalous affair can we trace the great and distinctive properties of wisdom. There is seen a headlong rushing into difficulties, with little calculation about the means, and little concern about the consequences. With a navy comparatively nominal, we are about to enter into the lists against the greatest marine [sea power] on the globe. With a commerce unprotected and spread over every ocean, we propose to make a profit by privateering, and for this endanger the wealth of which we are honest proprietors. An invasion is threatened of the colonies of a power which, without putting a new ship into commission, or taking another soldier into pay, can spread alarm or desolation along the extensive range of our seaboard. . . .

The undersigned cannot refrain from asking, what are the United States to gain by this war? Will the gratification of some privateersmen compensate the nation for that sweep of our legitimate commerce by the extended marine of our enemy which this desperate act invites? Will Canada compensate the Middle states for New York; or the Western states for New Orleans?

Let us not be deceived. A war of invasion may invite a retort of invasion. When

⁵*Annals of Congress*, 12th Congress, 1st Sess., 2219–2221.

we visit the peaceable, and as to us innocent, colonies of Great Britain with the horrors of war, can we be assured that our own coast will not be visited with like horrors? At a crisis of the world such as the present, and under impressions such as these, the undersigned could not consider the war, in which the United States have in secret been precipitated, as necessary, or required by any moral duty, or any political expediency.

6. *The London Times Cries Vengeance (1814)*

Congress had declared war on Britain in the confident expectation that Napoleon would pin down British forces in Europe. After his power crumbled in 1814, three veteran armies of redcoats were readied for invasions of the United States. The powerful London Times, eager for a thrashing of the Yankees, thundered against any reasonable peace terms. Why did this journal believe that the Madison administration was untrustworthy and treacherous? Why was it willing to trust the Federalists?

... Let us direct our attention to the situation of America. By a gradual but entire subversion of the Constitution, the faction who are impregnated with the most deep and rancorous hatred of Britain had possessed themselves of the supreme power in the United States. They abused that sacred trust, to put, as they fondly hoped, the last hand to our ruin.

Let the memorable era of June, 1812, be ever had in remembrance, when these wretches joined with the Corsican tyrant [Napoleon] to overwhelm Russia and Britain at once. Scepticism itself cannot doubt of the infamous pre-concert. Charity, that hopeth all things, and believeth all things, cannot persuade itself that the motive was not most black and malignant.

Let us follow up their attack on Canada, the real object of their hostilities. Let us recall to mind their insidious proclamations to the British subjects to revolt, and their invitation to the Indians to join them. Foiled and defeated in these views, let us not forget that with the most unblushing effrontery they turned round and accused us of inhumanity in accepting the proffered cooperation of the very Indians whom they first courted to their standard. . . .

Is it possible that men who have carried on hostilities with so diabolical a spirit can have relaxed their whole system, and that so suddenly, from any other motive than fear? They are struck to the heart with terror for their impending punishment—and oh! may no false liberality, no mistaken lenity, no weak and cowardly policy interpose to save them from the blow! Strike. Chastise the savages; for such they are, in a much truer sense than the followers of Tecumseh or The Prophet.

Let us not be so foolishly confiding as to trust again to the honour or veracity of the Madisons, the Jeffersons, or any of the tribe, to whom we are well aware that those principles are altogether unknown. A real peace with them is impossible. But, as we predicted of Bonaparte, so, and with much more confidence, do we predict of them—their fall is at hand, if we do but persevere in a vigorous prosecution of hostilities. . . .

⁶*London Times*, May 24, 1814.

With Madison and his perjured set, no treaty can be made; for no oath can bind them. But his political antagonists are men not insensible of the many claims we have on their friendship, not unmindful of the common origin and common principles which they share with us.

7. *The London Times Bemoans Peace (1814)*

The British had expected to topple the United States by invading northern New York in 1814, but the redcoats were turned back at Plattsburgh by Thomas Macdonough's spectacular victory on Lake Champlain. The hard-pressed Americans, meanwhile, had completely abandoned their demands on impressment and other issues, and gladly accepted the stalemate Treaty of Ghent. The grim reality was that the British had begun the war with over eight hundred ships in their navy, the Americans with sixteen. When the war ended, the British still dominated the seas, whereas the Americans, although they had won a dozen or so single-ship duels, were down to two or three warships. But one would hardly have thought so from the following anguished outburst in the London Times, which irresponsibly urged nonratification of the treaty. Why was this influential journal so unhappy? Did it present a false picture of British operations?

... [The European powers] will reflect that we have attempted to force our principles on America, and have failed. Nay, that we have retired from the combat with the stripes yet bleeding on our backs—with the recent defeats at Plattsburg and on Lake Champlain unavenged. To make peace at such a moment, they will think, betrays a deadness to the feelings of honour, and shows a timidity of disposition, inviting further insult.

... "Two or three of our ships have struck to a force vastly superior!"—No, not two or three, but many on the ocean, and whole squadrons [to Perry and Macdonough] on the Lakes. And their numbers are to be viewed with relation to the comparative magnitude of the two navies. Scarcely is there one American ship of war which has not to boast a victory over the British flag; scarcely one British ship in thirty or forty that has beaten an American.

Our seamen, it is urged, have on all occasions fought bravely. Who denies it? Our complaint is that with the bravest seamen and the most powerful navy in the world, we retire from the contest when the balance of defeat is so heavily against us. Be it accident or be it misconduct, we enquire not now into the cause. The certain, the inevitable consequences are what we look to, and these may be summed up in a few words—the speedy growth of an American navy—and the recurrence of a new and much more formidable American war. . . .

The [American] people—naturally vain, boastful, and insolent—have been filled with an absolute contempt of our maritime power, and a furious eagerness to beat down our maritime pretensions. Those passions, which have been inflamed by success, could only have been cooled by what in vulgar and emphatic language has been termed "a sound flogging." But, unfortunately, our Christian meekness has in-

⁷*London Times*, December 30, 1814.

duced us rather to kiss the rod than to retaliate its exercise. Such false and feeble humanity is not calculated for the guidance of nations.

War is, indeed, a tremendous engine of justice. But when justice wields the sword, she must be inflexible. Looking neither to the right nor to the left, she must pursue her blow until the evil is clean rooted out. This is not blind rage, or blinder revenge; but it is a discriminating, a calm, and even a tender calculation of consequences. Better is it that we should grapple with the young lion when he is first fleshed with the taste of our flocks than wait until, in the maturity of his strength, he bears away at once both sheep and shepherd.

B. Disloyalty in New England

I. A Boston Paper Obstructs the War (1813)

The antiwar bitterness of the New England Federalists found vigorous voice in Major Benjamin Russell's Columbian Centinel (Boston). The editor, earlier fined twenty shillings for spitting in the face of a journalistic adversary, believed that a French-loving cabal of Virginia planter lordlings had provoked unnecessary hostilities. He charged that this Jeffersonian Democratic-Republican group, headed by President Madison, was determined to ruin the Federalists by destroying their commerce and by carving new states out of Canada—states that would outvote the New England bloc. Considering that the United States had already been at war for six months, was this editorial treasonable? What was the validity of its charges? How far did it go toward secession?

The sentiment is hourly extending, and in these Northern states will soon be universal, that we are in a condition no better in relation to the South than that of a conquered people. We have been compelled, without the least necessity or occasion, to renounce our habits, occupations, means of happiness, and subsistence. We are plunged into a war without a sense of enmity, or a perception of sufficient provocation; and obliged to fight the battles of a cabal which, under the sickening affectation of republican equality, aims at trampling into the dust the weight, influence, and power of commerce and her dependencies.

We, whose soil was the hotbed and whose ships were the nursery of sailors, are insulted with the hypocrisy of a devotedness to sailors' rights, and the arrogance of pretended skill in maritime jurisprudence, by those whose country furnishes no navigation beyond the size of a ferry boat or an Indian canoe. We have no more interest in waging this sort of war, at this period and under these circumstances, at the command of Virginia, than Holland in accelerating her ruin by uniting her destiny to France. . . .

We resemble Holland in another particular. The officer [offices] and power of government are engrossed [monopolized] by executive minions, who are selected

¹*Columbian Centinel* (Boston), January 13, 1813.

on account of their known infidelity to the interest of their fellow citizens, to foment divisions and to deceive and distract the people whom they cannot intimidate. . . .

The consequence of this state of things must then be either that the Southern states must drag the Northern states farther into the war, or we must drag them out of it; or the chain will break. This will be the “imposing attitude” of the next year. We must no longer be deafened by senseless clamors about a separation of the states. It is an event we do not desire, not because we have derived advantages from the compact, but because we cannot foresee or limit the dangers or effects of revolution. But the states are separated in fact, when one section assumes an imposing attitude, and with a high hand perseveres in measures fatal to the interests and repugnant to the opinions of another section, by dint of a geographical majority.

2. The Hartford Convention Fulminates (1814)

As the war dragged on, the British extended their suffocating blockade to the coasts of New England. The New Englanders, forced to resort to costly defensive measures, complained bitterly that their federal tax payments were being used to fight the war elsewhere. Late in 1814, with Massachusetts and Connecticut as ringleaders, twenty-six delegates assembled secretly in a protest convention at Hartford, Connecticut. Although some of the Federalist extremists spoke brazenly of immediate secession, conservatives like the venerable George Cabot sat on the lid, saying, “We are going to keep you young hotheads from getting into mischief.” The final resolutions, less treasonable than commonly supposed, were a manifesto of states’ rights and sectionalism designed to revive New England’s slipping national power, avert Jeffersonian embargoes, and keep new western states from outvoting the charter members. Which of these proposed amendments were most clearly sectional, and which one probably had the best chance of adoption at the time?

Resolved, That the following amendments of the Constitution of the United States be recommended to the states. . . .

First. Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers of free persons, including those bound to serve for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, and all other persons. [Aimed at reducing southern representation based on slaves.]

Second. No new state shall be admitted into the Union by Congress, in virtue of the power granted by the Constitution, without the concurrence of two-thirds of both Houses.

Third. Congress shall not have power to lay any embargo on the ships or vessels of the citizens of the United States, in the ports or harbors thereof, for more than sixty days.

Fourth. Congress shall not have power, without the concurrence of two-thirds of both Houses, to interdict the commercial intercourse between the United States and any foreign nation, or the dependencies thereof.

²Timothy Dwight, *History of the Hartford Convention* (1833), pp. 377–378.

Fifth. Congress shall not make or declare war, or authorize acts of hostility against any foreign nation, without the concurrence of two-thirds of both Houses, except such acts of hostility be in defense of the territories of the United States when actually invaded.

Sixth. No person who shall hereafter be naturalized shall be eligible as a member of the Senate or House of Representatives of the United States, nor capable of holding any civil office under the authority of the United States. [Aimed at men like Jefferson's Swiss-born secretary of the treasury, Albert Gallatin.]

Seventh. The same person shall not be elected President of the United States a second time; nor shall the President be elected from the same state two terms in succession. [Prompted by the successive two-term tenures of Jefferson and Madison, both from Virginia.]

Resolved, That if the application of these states to the government of the United States, recommended in a foregoing resolution, should be unsuccessful, and peace should not be concluded, and the defense of these states should be neglected, as it has been since the commencement of the war, it will, in the opinion of this convention, be expedient for the legislatures of the several states to appoint delegates to another convention, to meet at Boston . . . with such powers and instruction as the exigency of a crisis so momentous may require.

[The legislatures of Massachusetts and Connecticut enthusiastically approved the Hartford Resolutions. Three emissaries from Massachusetts departed for Washington with their demands, confidently expecting to hear at any moment of a smashing British victory at New Orleans, the collapse of the peace negotiations at Ghent, and the dissolution of the Union. Instead came news of the smashing British defeat at New Orleans and the signing of the peace treaty at Ghent. The Hartfordites were hooted off the stage of history, amid charges of treason that cling to this day.]

3. John Quincy Adams Reproaches the Hartfordites (1815)

Independent-minded John Quincy Adams, son of the second president and destined to be the sixth president, rose above the sectional prejudices of his native New England. Elected to the Senate by Massachusetts, he reluctantly voted for the Louisiana Purchase appropriation and subsequently supported Jefferson's unpopular embargo as preferable to war. The Federalists of New England now regarded him as a traitor. After serving as one of the five American negotiators of the Treaty of Ghent, he wrote the following spirited attack on the Hartford Convention. What, in his view, was the ultimate aim of the Hartfordites?

The [Hartford] Convention represented the extreme portion of the Federalism of New England—the party spirit of the school of Alexander Hamilton combined with the sectional Yankee spirit. . . .

⁵Henry Adams, ed., *Documents Relating to New England Federalism, 1800–1815* (Boston: 1877), pp. 283–284, 321–322.

This coalition of Hamiltonian Federalism with the Yankee spirit had produced as incongruous and absurd a system of politics as ever was exhibited in the vagaries of the human mind. It was compounded of the following prejudices:—

1. An utter detestation of the French Revolution and of France, and a corresponding excess of attachment to Great Britain, as the only barrier against the universal, dreaded empire of France.

2. A strong aversion to republics and republican government, with a profound impression that our experiment of a confederated republic had failed for want of virtue in the people.

3. A deep jealousy of the Southern and Western states, and a strong disgust at the effect of the slave representation in the Constitution of the United States.

4. A belief that Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison were servilely devoted to France, and under French influence.

Every one of these sentiments weakened the attachments of those who held them to the Union, and consequently their patriotism. . . .

It will be no longer necessary to search for the objects of the Hartford Convention. They are apparent from the whole tenor of their report and resolutions, compared with the journal of their proceedings. They are admitted in the first and last paragraphs of the report, and they were:

To wait for the issue of the negotiation at Ghent.

In the event of the continuance of the war, to take one more chance of getting into their own hands the administration of the general government.

On the failure of that, a secession from the Union and a New England confederacy.

To these ends, and not to the defense of this part of the country against the foreign enemy, all the measures of the Hartford Convention were adapted. . . .

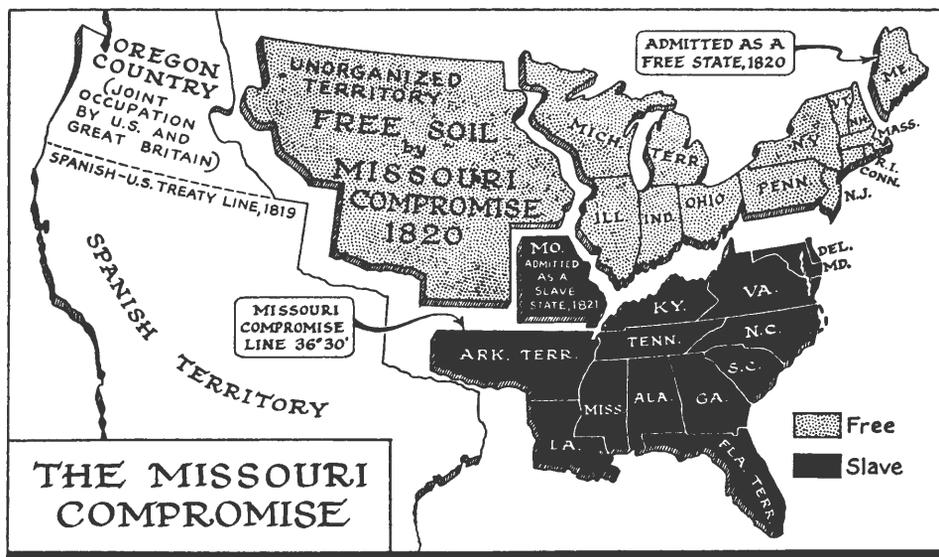
C. *The Missouri Statehood Controversy*

1. *Representative John Taylor Reviles Slavery (1819)*

The slaveholding territory of Missouri applied to Congress for admission as a state in 1819. Representative James Tallmadge of New York touched off the fireworks when he proposed an amendment to the Missouri statehood bill (a) prohibiting any further introduction of slaves and (b) freeing at age twenty-five all children born to slave parents after the admission of the state. During the ensuing debates, a leading role was played by Representative John W. Taylor, a prominent antislavery leader from New York who was to serve for twenty consecutive years in the House. The South never forgave him, and later engineered his defeat for election as Speaker. In his speech for the Tallmadge amendment, what were the apparent contradictions in the attitude of the South toward blacks?

Having proved . . . our right to legislate in the manner proposed, I proceed to illustrate the propriety of exercising it. And here I might rest satisfied with reminding

¹*Annals of Congress*, 15th Congress, 2d Sess., 1174–1176.



my [southern] opponents of their own declarations on the subject of slavery. How often, and how eloquently, have they deplored its existence among them! What will-
ingness, nay, what solicitude have they not manifested to be relieved from this bur-
den! How have they wept over the unfortunate policy that first introduced slaves
into this country! How have they disclaimed the guilt and shame of that original sin,
and thrown it back upon their ancestors!

I have with pleasure heard these avowals of regret and confided in their sincer-
ity. I have hoped to see its effects in the advancement of the cause of humanity.
Gentlemen now have an opportunity of putting their principles into practice. If they
have tried slavery and found it a curse, if they desire to dissipate the gloom with
which it covers their land, I call upon them to exclude it from the Territory in ques-
tion. Plant not its seeds in this uncorrupt soil. Let not our children, looking back to
the proceedings of this day, say of them, as they have been constrained to speak of
their fathers, "We wish their decision had been different. We regret the existence of
this unfortunate population among us. But we found them here; we know not what
to do with them. It is our misfortune; we must bear it with patience."

History will record the decision of this day as exerting its influence for centuries
to come over the population of half our continent. If we reject the amendment and
suffer this evil, now easily eradicated, to strike its roots so deep in the soil that it can
never be removed, shall we not furnish some apology for doubting our sincerity
when we deplore its existence? . . .

Mr. Chairman, one of the gentlemen from Kentucky (Mr. Clay) has pressed into
his service the cause of humanity. He has pathetically urged us to withdraw our
amendment and suffer this unfortunate population to be dispersed over the country.
He says they will be better fed, clothed, and sheltered, and their whole condition
will be greatly improved. . . .

Sir, my heart responds to the call of humanity. I will zealously unite in any practicable means of bettering the condition of this oppressed people. I am ready to appropriate a territory to their use, and to aid them in settling it—but I am not willing, I never will consent, to declare the whole country west of the Mississippi a market overt for human flesh. . . .

To the objection that this amendment will, if adopted, diminish the value of a species of property in one portion of the Union, and thereby operate unequally, I reply that if, by depriving slaveholders of the Missouri market, the business of raising slaves should become less profitable, it would be an effect incidentally produced, but is not the object of the measure. The law prohibiting the importation of foreign slaves was not passed for the purpose of enhancing the value of those then in the country, but that effect has been incidentally produced in a very great degree. . . .

It is further objected that the amendment is calculated to disfranchise our brethren of the South by discouraging their emigration to the country west of the Mississippi. . . . The description of emigrants may be affected, in some measure, by the amendment in question. If slavery shall be tolerated, the country will be settled by rich planters, with their slaves. If it shall be rejected, the emigrants will chiefly consist of the poorer and more laborious classes of society. If it be true that the prosperity and happiness of a country ought to constitute the grand object of its legislators, I cannot hesitate for a moment which species of population deserves most to be encouraged by the laws we may pass.

2. Representative Charles Pinckney Upholds Slavery (1820)

Angered southerners spoke so freely of secession and “seas of blood” during the Missouri debate that the aging Thomas Jefferson likened the issue to “a fire bell in the night.” The argument inevitably involved the general problem of slavery, and the view of the South was eloquently presented, in a justly famous speech, by Representative Charles Pinckney of South Carolina. Vain, demagogic, and of questionable morals, he was nevertheless touched with genius. As one of the few surviving members of the Philadelphia convention that had framed the Constitution in 1787, and as South Carolina’s former governor and U.S. senator, Pinckney was in a position to command attention. What is the most alarming aspect of the speech?

A great deal has been said on the subject of slavery: that it is an infamous stain and blot on the states that hold them, not only degrading the slave, but the master, and making him unfit for republican government; that it is contrary to religion and the law of God; and that Congress ought to do everything in their power to prevent its extension among the new states.

Now, sir, . . . is there a single line in the Old or New Testament either censuring or forbidding it [slavery]? I answer without hesitation, no. But there are hundreds speaking of and recognizing it. . . . Hagar, from whom millions sprang, was an African slave, brought out of Egypt by Abraham, the father of the faithful and the

²*Annals of Congress*, 16th Congress, 1st Sess., 1323–1328, passim.

beloved servant of the Most High; and he had, besides, three hundred and eighteen male slaves. The Jews, in the time of the theocracy, and the Greeks and Romans, had all slaves; at that time there was no nation without them.

If we are to believe that this world was formed by a great and omnipotent Being, that nothing is permitted to exist here but by his will, and then throw our eyes throughout the whole of it, we should form an opinion very different indeed from that asserted, that slavery was against the law of God. . . .

It will not be a matter of surprise to anyone that so much anxiety should be shown by the slaveholding states, when it is known that the alarm, given by this attempt to legislate on slavery, has led to the opinion that the very foundations of that kind of property are shaken; that the establishment of the precedent is a measure of the most alarming nature. . . . For, should succeeding Congresses continue to push it, there is no knowing to what length it may be carried.

Have the Northern states any idea of the value of our slaves? At least, sir, six hundred millions of dollars. If we lose them, the value of the lands they cultivate will be diminished in all cases one half, and in many they will become wholly useless. And an annual income of at least forty millions of dollars will be lost to your citizens, the loss of which will not alone be felt by the non-slaveholding states, but by the whole Union. For to whom, at present, do the Eastern states, most particularly, and the Eastern and Northern, generally, look for the employment of their shipping, in transporting our bulky and valuable products [cotton], and bringing us the manufactures and merchandises of Europe?

Another thing, in case of these losses being brought on us, and our being forced into a division of the Union, what becomes of your public debt? Who are to pay this, and how will it be paid? In a pecuniary view of this subject, therefore, it must ever be the policy of the Eastern and Northern states to continue connected with us.

But, sir, there is an infinitely greater call upon them, and this is the call of justice, of affection, and humanity. Reposing at a great distance, in safety, in the full enjoyment of all their federal and state rights, unattacked in either, or in their individual rights, can they, with indifference, or ought they, to risk, in the remotest degree, the consequences which this measure may produce? These may be the division of this Union and a civil war. Knowing that whatever is said here must get into the public prints, I am unwilling, for obvious reasons, to go into the description of the horrors which such a war must produce, and ardently pray that none of us may ever live to witness such an event.

[Other southerners, so reported Representative William Plumer, Jr., of New Hampshire, "throw out many threats, and talk loudly of separation." Even "Mr. [Henry] Clay declares that he will go home and raise troops, if necessary, to defend the people of Missouri." But the Tallmadge amendment was rejected, and the famed Missouri Compromise was finally hammered out in 1820. The delicate sectional balance subsisting between the eleven free states and eleven slave states was cleverly preserved: Maine (then a part of Massachusetts) was to come in as a free state and Missouri as a slave state. But henceforth slavery was forbidden elsewhere in the Louisiana Purchase territory north of the line of 36° 30'—the southern border of Missouri. John Quincy Adams wrote prophetically: "I take it for granted that the present question is a mere preamble—a title page to a great tragic volume."]

3. A Connecticut Antislavery Outcry (1820)

It would be erroneous to assume that the clash over Missouri was prompted solely by sectional and economic differences. The forebears of the extreme Garrisonian abolitionists in New England were deeply disturbed by the moral offensiveness of human bondage. The Boston Gazette printed a “Black List” of the members of Congress from the free states who had supported the Missouri Compromise. A writer signing himself “Brutus,” and attributing undue weight to three Connecticut members of Congress, published the following indictment in a New Haven newspaper. What does it reveal about abolitionism in New England eleven years before William Garrison launched his Liberator?

Slavery is extended to Missouri, by a majority of three.

The deed is done. The galling chains of slavery are forged for myriads yet unborn. Humble yourselves in the dust, ye high-minded citizens of Connecticut. Let your cheeks be red as crimson. On *your* representatives rests the stigma of this foul disgrace. It is a stain of blood, which oceans of tears and centuries of repentance can never obliterate. The names of Lanman, Stevens, and Foot will go down to posterity with the name of Judas.* Their memory will be preserved in the execrations of the good, in the groans and sighs of the oppressed, and they will be remembered by the proud oppressor himself in *the day of retribution*. That day will surely come, for God is just. But for *their* vote future millions now destined to the whips and scourges of the inhuman slavedealer might have breathed the air of freedom and of happiness.

D. Launching the Monroe Doctrine

1. Henry Clay Champions the Latin American Revolutions (1818)

The matter of whether or not to recognize the newly independent republics of Latin America presented the administration of President James Monroe with a classic confrontation between American ideals and political reality. Although the question of recognition was a matter of complex international diplomacy, many Americans viewed the situation in simple terms. They believed that the Latin American revolutions were conducted in the same spirit as their own war of independence and that the United States—as the world’s exemplar of republicanism—had a moral obligation to recognize its sister republics to the south. The Kentucky congressman Henry Clay emerged as one of the most enthusiastic proponents of recognition. How convincing was his claim that conditions in South America were especially conducive to the successful establishment of “free governments”? Following is a synopsis of a speech Clay delivered in the House of Representatives.

⁴*New Haven Journal*, March 14, 1820; facsimile reproduction in Glover Moore, *The Missouri Controversy, 1819–1821* (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1953), p. 196.

*The writer does not mean to intimate that, like Judas, these men were *bribed*. The public will judge of their motives for themselves.

¹*Annals of Congress*, 15th Congress, 1st Sess., 1481–1484, 1487, 1489, 1492.

In the establishment of the independence of Spanish America, the United States have the deepest interest. He [Clay] had no hesitation in asserting his firm belief, that there was no question, in the foreign policy of this country, which had ever arisen, or which he could conceive as ever occurring, in the decision of which we had so much at stake. This interest concerned our politics, our commerce, our navigation. There could not be a doubt that Spanish America, once independent, whatever might be the form of the governments established in its several parts, those governments would be animated by an American feeling, and guided by an American policy. They would obey the laws of the system of the New World, of which they would compose a part, in contradistinction to that of Europe. Without the influence of that vortex in Europe, the balance of power between its several parts, the preservation of which had so often drenched Europe in blood, America is sufficiently remote to contemplate the new wars which are to afflict that quarter of the globe, as a calm, if not a cold and indifferent, spectator. In relation to those wars, the several parts of America will generally stand neutral. And as, during the period when they rage, it would be important that a liberal system of neutrality should be adopted and observed, all America will be interested in maintaining and enforcing such a system. The independence, then, of Spanish America is an interest of primary consideration. Next to that, and highly important in itself, was the consideration of the nature of their governments. That was a question, however, for themselves. They would, no doubt, adopt those kinds of governments which were best suited to their condition, best calculated for their happiness. Anxious as he was that they should be free governments, we had no right to prescribe for them. They were, and ought to be, the sole judges for themselves. He was strongly inclined to believe that they would in most, if not all, parts of their country, establish free governments. We were their great example. Of us they constantly spoke as of brothers having a similar origin. They adopted our principles, copied our institutions, and, in some instances, employed the very language and sentiments of our revolutionary papers. . . .

But it is sometimes said that they are too ignorant and too superstitious to admit of the existence of free government. This charge of ignorance is often urged by persons themselves actually ignorant of the real condition of that people. He denied the alleged fact of ignorance; he denied the inference from that fact, if it were true, that they wanted capacity for free government; and he refused his assent to the further conclusion, if the fact were true and the inference just, that we were to be indifferent to their fate. All the writers of the most established authority, Depons, Humboldt, and others, concur in assigning to the people of Spanish America, great quickness, genius, and particular aptitude for the acquisition of the exact sciences, and others which they have been allowed to cultivate. In astronomy, geology, mineralogy, chemistry, botany, &c., they are allowed to make distinguished proficiency. They justly boast of their Abzate, Velasquez, and Gama, and other illustrious contributors to science. They have nine Universities, and in the city of Mexico it is affirmed, by Humboldt, that there are more solid scientific establishments than in any city even of North America. He would refer to the message of the Supreme Director of La Plata, which he would hereafter have occasion to use for another purpose, as a model of fine composition of a State paper, challenging a comparison with any, the most celebrated that ever issued from the pens of Jefferson or Madison. Gentlemen would egregiously err if they formed their opinions of the present moral condition of

Spanish America, from what it was under the debasing system of Spain. The eight years' revolution in which it has been engaged, has already produced a powerful effect. . . .

. . . Mr. C. [Clay] contended that it was to arraign the dispositions of Providence himself, to suppose that he had created beings incapable of governing themselves, and to be trampled on by kings. He contended that self-government was the natural government of man, and he referred to the aborigines of our own land. If he were to speculate in hypotheses unfavorable to human liberty, his should be founded rather upon the vices, refinements, or density of population. Crowded together in compact masses, even if they were philosophers, the contagion of the passions is communicated and caught, and the effect too often, he admitted, was the overthrow of liberty. Dispersed over such an immense space as that on which the people of Spanish America were spread, their physical, and he believed, also, their moral condition, both favored liberty.

With regard to their superstition, he said, they worshipped the same God with us. . . .

Mr. C. continued—having shown that the cause of the patriots was just, and that we had a great interest in its successful issue, he would next inquire what course of policy it became us to adopt. He had already declared that to be one of strict and impartial neutrality. It was not necessary for their interest, it was not expedient for our own, that we should take part in the war. All they demanded of us was a just neutrality. It was compatible with this pacific policy—it was required by it, that we should recognize any established Government . . . in Spanish America. . . .

If, then, there be an established Government in Spanish America, deserving to rank among the nations, we were morally and politically bound to acknowledge it, unless we renounced all the principles which ought to guide, and which hitherto had guided, our councils. . . .

Are we not bound, then, upon our own principles, to acknowledge this new Republic? If we do not, who will? Are we to expect, that Kings will set us the example of acknowledging the only Republic on earth, except our own? . . .

2. *John Quincy Adams Is Skeptical (1821)*

Despite the powerful arguments of gifted orators like Clay, the Monroe administration did not recognize any of Latin America's new states for another four years. Various considerations lay behind this delay. Recognition risked antagonizing Spain and thereby compromising the administration's ongoing effort to acquire Florida. It might also incur the displeasure of other powerful nations in Europe, which were far from sympathetic with the recent revolutions. Finally, some officials did not share Clay's confidence that the revolutions would lead to the establishment of democratic governments. John Quincy Adams, President Monroe's highly influential secretary of state, saw little cause for optimism in South America. Why was Adams so pessimistic?

²John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (1874–1877; Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), vol. 5, pp. 324–325.

[Mr. Clay] said he regretted that his views had differed from those of the Administration in relation to South American affairs. He hoped, however, that this difference would now be shortly over. But he was concerned to see indications of unfriendly dispositions towards the South Americans in our naval officers who were sent to the Pacific, and he was apprehensive they would get into some quarrel there, which might alienate the minds of the people in the two countries from each other.

I said the instructions to the naval officers were as positive and pointed as words could make them to avoid everything of that kind. I hoped no such event would occur, as we could have no possible motive for quarrelling with the South Americans. I also regretted the difference between his views and those of the Administration upon South American affairs. That the final issue of their present struggle would be their entire independence of Spain I had never doubted. That it was our true policy and duty to take no part in the contest I was equally clear. The principle of neutrality to *all* foreign wars was, in my opinion, fundamental to the continuance of our liberties and of our Union. So far as they were contending for independence, I wished well to their cause; but I had seen and yet see no prospect that they would establish free or liberal institutions of government. They are not likely to promote the spirit either of freedom or order by their example. They have not the first elements of good or free government. Arbitrary power, military and ecclesiastical, was stamped upon their education, upon their habits, and upon all their institutions. Civil dissension was infused into all their seminal principles. War and mutual destruction was in every member of their organization, moral, political, and physical. I had little expectation of any beneficial result to this country from any future connection with them, political or commercial. We should derive no improvement to our own institutions by any communion with theirs. Nor was there any appearance of a disposition in them to take any political lesson from us. As to the commercial connection, I agreed with him that little weight should be allowed to arguments of mere pecuniary interest; but there was no basis for much traffic between us. They want none of our productions, and we could afford to purchase very few of theirs. Of these opinions, both his and mine, *time* must be the test; but, I would candidly acknowledge, nothing had hitherto occurred to weaken in my mind the view which I had taken of this subject from the first.

3. *Thomas Jefferson Turns Pro-British (1823)*

Stirred by the Napoleonic upheaval, most of Spain's colonies in the Americas threw off the monarchical yoke and set themselves up as independent republics. Late in 1823 rumors were afloat in Europe that the great powers—Russia, Austria, Prussia, and France (loosely called the Holy Alliance)—were planning to crush the upstart colonials and restore Spanish misrule. British foreign secretary George Canning, fearful that these newly opened markets would be lost to British merchants, proposed to the American minister in London, Richard Rush, that the United States and Britain issue a joint warning against foreign intervention in Spanish America. President Monroe sought the advice of former president Jefferson, the eight y-year-old Sage

⁵P. L. Ford, ed., *Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), vol. 10, pp. 277–278 (October 24, 1823).

of Monticello. Remember that Jefferson had been anti-alliance, antiwar, and anti-British. What is curious about his response? Why did he take the stand that he did?

Dear Sir, The question presented by the letters you have sent me is the most momentous which has ever been offered to my contemplation since that of Independence. That made us a nation; this sets our compass and points the course which we are to steer through the ocean of time opening on us. And never could we embark on it under circumstances more auspicious.

Our first and fundamental maxim should be never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe. Our second, never to suffer Europe to intermeddle with cis-Atlantic affairs. America—North and South—has a set of interests distinct from those of Europe, and peculiarly her own. She should therefore have a system of her own, separate and apart from that of Europe. While the last is laboring to become the domicile of despotism, our endeavor should surely be to make our hemisphere that of freedom.

One nation, most of all, could disturb us in this pursuit. She now offers to lead, aid, and accompany us in it. By acceding to her proposition, we detach her from the bands, bring her mighty weight into the scale of free government, and emancipate a continent [South America] at one stroke, which might otherwise linger in doubt and difficulty.

Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of any one, or all on earth. And with her on our side, we need not fear the whole world. With her, then, we should most sedulously cherish a cordial friendship; and nothing would tend more to knit our affections than to be fighting once more, side by side, in the same cause.

Not that I would purchase even her amity at the price of taking part in her wars. But the war in which the present proposition might engage us, should that be its consequence, is not her war, but ours. Its object is to introduce and establish the American system of keeping out of our land all foreign powers, of never permitting those of Europe to intermeddle with the affairs of our nations. It is to maintain our own principle, not to depart from it. And if, to facilitate this, we can effect a division in the body of the European powers, and draw over to our side its most powerful member, surely we should do it.

But I am clearly of Mr. Canning's opinion that it will prevent instead of provoking war. With Great Britain withdrawn from their scale and shifted into that of our two continents, all Europe combined would not undertake such a war. For how would they propose to get at either enemy without superior fleets? . . .

But we have first to ask ourselves a question. Do we wish to acquire to our own confederacy any one or more of the Spanish provinces?

I candidly confess that I have ever looked on Cuba as the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of states. The control which, with Florida Point, this island would give us over the Gulf of Mexico . . . would fill up the measure of our political well-being. Yet, as I am sensible that this can never be obtained, even with her own consent, but by war; and its independence, which is our second interest (and especially its independence of England), can be secured without it, I have no hesitation in abandoning my first wish to future chances, and accepting its independence, with peace and the friendship of England, rather than its association at the expense of war and her enmity.

4. John Quincy Adams Rejects a Joint Declaration (1823)

John Quincy Adams, Monroe's stiff-backed and lone-wolf secretary of state, strongly suspected Canning's motives in approaching Minister Rush. Adams cleverly calculated that the potent British navy would not permit the newly opened Spanish-American markets to be closed, and he therefore concluded that the European monarchs were powerless to intervene, no matter what the United States did. He failed to share Secretary John Calhoun's fear of the French army, which, acting as the avenging sword of the reactionary powers, was then crushing a republican uprising in Spain. Adams here records in his diary the relevant cabinet discussion. Of the arguments he advanced against cooperation with Canning, which was strongest? Why?

Washington, November 7th.—Cabinet meeting at the President's from half-past one till four. Mr. Calhoun, Secretary of War, and Mr. Southard, Secretary of the Navy, present. The subject for consideration was the confidential proposals of the British Secretary of State, George Canning, to Richard Rush, and the correspondence between them relating to the projects of the Holy Alliance upon South America. There was much conversation without coming to any definite point. The object of Canning appears to have been to obtain some public pledge from the government of the United States, ostensibly against the forcible interference of the Holy Alliance between Spain and South America, but really or especially against the acquisition to the United States themselves of any part of the Spanish-American possessions.

Mr. Calhoun inclined to giving a discretionary power to Mr. Rush to join in a declaration against the interference of the Holy Allies, if necessary, even if it should pledge us not to take Cuba or the province of Texas; because the power of Great Britain being greater than ours to seize upon them, we should get the advantage of obtaining from her the same declaration we should make ourselves.

I thought the cases not parallel. We have no intentions of seizing either Texas or Cuba. But the inhabitants of either or both may exercise their primitive rights, and solicit a union with us. They will certainly do no such thing to Great Britain. By joining with her, therefore, in her proposed declaration, we give her a substantial and perhaps inconvenient pledge against ourselves, and really obtain nothing in return.

Without entering now into the enquiry of the expediency of our annexing Texas or Cuba to our Union, we should at least keep ourselves free to act as emergencies may arise, and not tie ourselves down to any principle which might immediately afterwards be brought to bear against ourselves. . . .

I remarked that the communications recently received from the Russian minister, Baron Tuyl, afforded, as I thought, a very suitable and convenient opportunity for us to take our stand against the Holy Alliance, and at the same time to decline the overture of Great Britain. It would be more candid, as well as more dignified, to avow our principles explicitly to Russia and France than to come in as a cockboat in the wake of the British man-of-war.

⁴C. F. Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1875), vol. 6, pp. 177–179.

5. James Monroe Warns the European Powers (1823)

Secretary Adams's cogent arguments helped turn President Monroe toward a go-it-alone policy. The president's annual message to Congress, surprisingly, contained several emphatic warnings. The Russians, who had caused some alarm by their push toward California, had privately shown a willingness to retreat to the southern bounds of present-day Alaska. But Monroe warned them and the other powers that there was now a closed season on colonizing in the Americas. On the other hand, the heroic struggle of the Greeks for independence from the Turks was creating some agitation in America for intervention, but Monroe made his "you stay out" warning seem fairer by volunteering a "we'll stay out" pledge. Did he aim his main warning at noncolonization on the northwest coast or at the nonextension of monarchical systems to Spanish America? To what extent did he tie America's hands regarding the acquisition of Cuba or intervention in Greece? Did he actually threaten the European powers?

In the discussions to which this interest [Russia's on the northwest coast] has given rise, the occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for the future colonization by any European powers. . . .

The political system of the Allied Powers [Holy Alliance] is essentially different . . . from that of America. This difference proceeds from that which exists in their respective [monarchical] governments; and to the defense of our own . . . this whole nation is devoted. We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.

With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power, we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the governments [of Spanish America] who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States. . . .

Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the government *de facto* as the legitimate government for us; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm, and manly policy, meeting in all instances the just claims of every power, submitting to injuries from none.

But in regard to those [American] continents, circumstances are eminently and conspicuously different. It is impossible that the Allied Powers should extend their

³J. D. Richardson, ed., *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (1896), vol. 2, pp. 209, 218–219.

political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness. Nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition in any form with indifference.

6. *A Baltimore Editor Exults (1823)*

Monroe's defiant pronouncement touched a patriotic chord and evoked near-unanimous acclaim. The Vermont Gazette, with remarkable foresight, predicted that the message would "go down in our annals along with Washington's Farewell Address." Other journals guessed that the president must have had some secret information about a possible hostile move by the "crowned conspirators" of Europe. The Baltimore Morning Chronicle gave vent to the following editorial bombast. What role in the world did the writer envision for the United States?

We can tell . . . further that this high-toned, independent, and dignified message will not be read by the crowned heads of Europe without a revolting stare of astonishment. The conquerors of Bonaparte, with their laurels still green and blooming on their brows, and their disciplined animal machines, called armies, at their backs, could not have anticipated that their united force would so soon be defied by a young republic, whose existence, as yet, cannot be measured with the ordinary life of man.

This message itself constitutes an era in American history, worthy of commemoration. . . . We are confident that, on this occasion, we speak the great body of American sentiment, such as exulting millions are ready to re-echo. . . . We are very far from being confident that, if Congress occupy the high and elevated ground taken in the Message, it may not, under the smiles of Divine Providence, be the means of breaking up the Holy Alliance.

Of this we are positively sure: that all timidity, wavering, imbecility, and backwardness on our part will confirm these detested tyrants in their confederacy; paralyze the exertions of freedom in every country; accelerate the fall of those young sister republics whom we have recently recognized; and, perhaps, eventually destroy our own at the feet of absolute monarchy.

7. *Prince Metternich Is Miffed (1824)*

Only minor dissenting voices in the American press complained that the United States was not endangered and that the president had gone too far. A few surviving Federalist newspapers quibbled over the unwisdom of safeguarding the Patagonians and Eskimos from despotism. But the reaction in continental Europe was uniformly unfavorable. The monarchical powers were not frightened away by Monroe's paper pronouncement; they were painfully aware that the thundering broadsides of the

⁶Baltimore *Morning Chronicle*, December 5, 1823, in *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), December 8, 1823.

⁷Quoted in Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823–1826* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 167.

British navy stood between them and Spanish America. In their anger and frustration, they vented their spleen against the upstart American republic, which had already given much unofficial aid and comfort to Spain's rebelling subjects. Prince Metternich, the Austrian chancellor and archpriest of post-Napoleonic reaction, boiled over. What seemed to bother him most, and why?

These United States of America, which we have seen arise and grow, and which during their too short youth already meditated projects which they dared not then avow, have suddenly left a sphere too narrow for their ambition, and have astonished Europe by a new act of revolt, more unprovoked, fully as audacious, and no less dangerous than the former. They have distinctly and clearly announced their intention to set not only power against power, but, to express it more exactly, altar against altar. In their indecent declarations they have cast blame and scorn on the institutions of Europe most worthy of respect, on the principles of its greatest sovereigns, on the whole of those measures which a sacred duty no less than an evident necessity has forced our government to adopt to frustrate plans most criminal.

In permitting themselves these unprovoked attacks, in fostering revolutions wherever they show themselves, in regretting those which have failed, in extending a helping hand to those which seem to prosper, they lend new strength to the apostles of sedition, and reanimate the courage of every conspirator.

If this flood of evil doctrines and pernicious examples should extend over the whole of America, what would become of our religious and political institutions, of the moral force of our governments, and of that conservative system which has saved Europe from complete dissolution?

Thought Provokers

1. Why did the United States go to war with Britain in 1812? Was there any single cause whose removal would have averted hostilities?
2. Why were the Federalists so bitterly opposed to the war? Were their grievances legitimate? Were they victims of the "tyranny of the majority" or simply poor losers?
3. If the peace of Ghent was so unpopular in Britain and so popular in America, what conclusions might be drawn as to which side won the war? How is "victory" to be measured in a military contest?
4. If many leaders of the South acknowledged that slavery was a wicked institution, why did they fight its proposed abolition in Missouri?
5. Would the United States have been better off in the long run if Monroe had followed Jefferson's advice and joined hands with Britain to keep the other European powers out of the Americas?
6. Why did the American public react so favorably to the Monroe Doctrine, and why did the European governments, then and later, never show much enthusiasm for it?