JAMES MONROE AND

HISTORICAL LEGACY

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
AddRan College of Liberal Arts
Texas Christian University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December, 2012

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James Monroe and Historical Legacy

Introduction

"Start thinking now about what you want your legacy to be."

-Bill Clinton to Tony Blair, *The Special Relationship*

No one remembers James Monroe. At least not to the extent they do Thomas Jefferson, John Adams or George Washington. Even Monroe's death is overshadowed by his more famous contemporaries. Indeed, one of the most famous anecdotes of the early republic surrounds the death of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Many students of the founding era are familiar with the "Jefferson Survives" story. Adams and Jefferson, after a half- century as friends, correspondents, and rivals fittingly died exactly fifty years to the day of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Since that moment on July 4, 1826, when Adams famously uttered his last words, "Jefferson survives," not knowing that the sage of Monticello had died only hours earlier, stories have been told attesting to the serendipitous and possibly providential nature of their passing on such an auspicious date. When John Quincy Adams, then president and the eldest son of one of these American heroes heard of this amazing coincidence, he called it a "visible and palpable mark of divine favor." Generations of Americans have seen it as the passing of the founding generation. Conversely, few remember that James Monroe died exactly five

years later on July 4, 1831, the 55th anniversary of the nation's birth. As in so much else even Monroe's death has been overshadowed by his more illustrious colleagues.[1]

At first glance it is not altogether obvious why people neglect Monroe. On paper his career stands well enough beside even the most decorated members of the founding generation. Monroe came of age during the Revolution. As an 18-year-old he fought with General George Washington and received a wound at the battle of Trenton on a cold Christmas night in 1776. He served in the Confederation Congress during the so-called critical period of the 1780s and made a name for himself as a defender of the West when he opposed the Jay-Gardoqoui Treaty which would have ceded American rights to the Mississippi River to Spain. Later in the decade he became an Anti-Federalist after being denied a place in Virginia's delegation to the Constitutional Convention of 1787. He then opposed the Constitution at the Virginia Ratification Convention which ultimately led to his famous campaign against his friend James Madison for a Virginia seat in the House of Representatives.

Monroe also played a key political role during the 1790s as a member of the growing Republican opposition. Elected a senator from Virginia in 1791 he led the opposition to Alexander Hamilton's political program in the Senate while Madison led the Republicans in the House. From 1793-1797, he served as the U. S. Minister to the French Republic and upon his return from Paris, won election as governor of Virginia in 1799. He helped Jefferson win the presidency in 1800. Once Republicans assumed power, Monroe played a prominent role within Jefferson's administration, especially in

[1] Noble Cunningham, *In Pursuit of Reason: The Life of Thomas Jefferson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 349; Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1972), 571-572.

foreign affairs. He served as Jefferson's envoy to various European countries from 1802 to 1808. Jefferson in fact sent Monroe back to France to negotiate the Purchase of the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon Bonaparte in 1803. Throughout the rest of Jefferson's presidency Monroe served as a diplomat in Britain and Spain before returning home and assuming the position of secretary of state in 1811 under recently- elected President James Madison. Monroe entered Madison's cabinet just as the United States and Great Britain careened toward war and emerged as Madison's right hand and heir apparent and even heading the Departments of War and State simultaneously for a brief period.

Finally, in 1816 Monroe achieved the pinnacle of American political success when Americans elected him as their fifth President of the United States. Despite problems, Monroe's presidency saw its share of successes. During his famous tour of New England, Federalists greeted him warmly, and one newspaper termed it an "era of good feelings" in which party strife faded away. Many credited Monroe with killing political parties and restoring what most Americans regarded as the natural state of political affairs. Monroe also acquired Florida, extended America's claim to a border on the Pacific and helped broker the Missouri compromise. By the time of his re-election in 1820, Monroe's resume as a soldier, legislator, diplomat, cabinet member and chief executive matched even the most decorated of his contemporaries. Yet as Monroe entered his second term Americans still did not regard him in the same way they did George Washington or Thomas Jefferson. More importantly, Monroe knew that history would not view him in the same light as some of his predecessors and he believed he knew why.

Despite his many achievements, Monroe had not accomplished anything that matched his predecessors' contributions to the new republican experiment. Americans saw Washington as the Revolution's greatest leader, both as a military commander and as the first president. John Adams, though his Presidency was largely unremarkable, had already secured his legacy as one of the new republic's great advocates during the Revolution. Americans saw Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, as the Revolution's most revered scribe. They viewed James Madison, the "father" of the Constitution, as the republic's governmental architect. Monroe wanted to match his colleagues by ensuring his own legacy as the republic's greatest diplomat.[2] This work examines James Monroe's attempt to craft his historical legacy as a champion of liberal republicanism culminating with the creation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823.

A recent film entitled *The Special Relationship* touches briefly on the idea of legacy. In one scene Bill Clinton, played by actor Dennis Quaid, sits across from newly elected British Prime Minister Tony Blair, played by Michael Sheen, and advises his counterpart, "start thinking now about what you want your legacy to be." Blair laughed at the suggestion. He could not imagine thinking about his legacy only months after his election. Even so, Clinton's remark captures an often underappreciated aspect of political history. While almost everyone wants to be remembered, for most the audience remains relatively small and manageable. For most it is enough if one's friends and family think

[2] See James Monroe, *The Autobiography of James Monroe* ed. Stuart Gerry Brown. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959). Monroe saw himself for all intents and purposes, as a foreign policy specialist and his autobiography reflects this. Of the books' seven finished chapters six relate directly to U.S. foreign affairs. Monroe's account of his life reaches only 1805 and his ministry in Spain. The seven chapters: 1. "Soldier in the Revolution." 2. "Lawyer and Legislator" 3. "Minister from America to the French Revolution." 4. "Vindication"(justifying his actions in France) 5. "Minister to Napoleon" 6. "At the Court of St. James" 7. "Minister to Spain."

fondly of them after they pass. For others, however, a grander audience beckons. Leaders throughout history have considered how their actions will be viewed by posterity, and no group of Americans cared more about the way history would judge them than did the founders.[3]

Scholars have long recognized this desire within the founding generation. Historian Douglass Adair claimed that the founders became "great" precisely because they concerned themselves with posterity's judgment of their actions. He called this "fame."[4] In Adair's terms, fame transformed personal ambition for recognition and glory into public service. This particular conception of fame composed part of the classical tradition, handed down from Ancient Greece and Rome. Adair's work helped lead to a classical republican revision of the American founding. These "revisionists" argued that the founders wanted to recreate a classical republic in the United States. Chapter one of this project argues that the founders, while keenly aware of their place in history, did not see the American republic as a re-creation of Ancient Athens or the Roman Republic. Instead, they believed that they had created a new form of republicanism dedicated to the protection of liberty. They saw the United States therefore as a unique liberal, rather than a classical, republic and the founders dedicated their political lives to the promotion of this new kind of republicanism. This, they believed, would secure their legacies. The founders' view of their place in history moves beyond a simple desire for Adair's version of fame. Legacy, as defined in law as "a gift by will," provides a subtly different mentality than the search for mere fame. The founders wanted to leave the "gift" of

[3] *The Special Relationship*, directed by Richard Loncraine, (Rainmark Films, 2010).
[4] Douglass Adair, "Fame and the Founding Fathers" In *Fame and the Founding Fathers.* ed. Trevor Colburn (New York W.W. Norton and Co., 1974), 7.

liberal republicanism to the world and knew that their own personal legacies would be tied to what each of them did to champion the cause. [5]

Like the rest of his generation, James Monroe devoted his career to promoting liberal republicanism. While a highly successful statesman during the early republic, few see Monroe as a mythical figure like some of his more famous contemporaries. He therefore represents a more typical member of that generation. Chapter two shifts the focus to Monroe specifically. For Monroe, the American Revolution represented the most important event in human history. He saw his personal legacy as inexorably tied to the American experiment. In fact, his early years as a revolutionary war soldier and later as an apprentice in the philosophy of the Revolution under his lifelong friend and mentor Thomas Jefferson instilled within Monroe a burning urge to champion the liberal republican cause.

Monroe understood that the best way he could champion the republican cause would be by spread republicanism around the globe. Chapter three examines Monroe's first attempt to do this as Minister to France during the French Revolution. When in 1789, only a few years after the American Revolution, the French embarked on their own rebellion and Monroe saw it as the beginning of a worldwide movement toward Republicanism. When the revolutionaries executed Louis XVI and war broke out between Britain and France, the United States found itself caught between the world's two foremost powers. Monroe and Jefferson favored the French republicans while Alexander Hamilton and his Federalist followers preferred Britain. President Washington, hoping to steer a middle course between the pro-French Republicans and the

[5] *Black's Law Dictionary* Ed. Bryan A. Garner (West Group, 1996), 368.

pro-British Federalists, chose Monroe to become his minister in France. Finding himself thrust into the greatest political controversy of the early republic, Monroe arrived in Paris during the summer of 1794 and spent his almost three years in Europe defending the French cause. His devotion to the French Republic caused him to act recklessly in his official role. He declared the U.S. allegiance to France publicly and denounced the treaty John Jay negotiated with Britain as a betrayal of republicanism. Monroe hoped to bring these two republics- the United States and France- together even at the expense of narrow American interests. Yet his actions ran afoul of the Washington administration and this led to his recall some three years later. Monroe left France having failed to bring the two nations together and did not speed the expansion of republicanism in Europe. Securing his legacy would have to wait.

For the rest of his life Monroe believed that the United States had not done enough to support the French cause during this critical revolutionary period. At the same time he realized that his actions in France had nearly derailed his political career. During the next two decades Monroe shed the role of naïve republican zealot and morphed into a cunning politician. He came to understand that only by first achieving high political office could he acquire the power to cement his legacy as a republican champion. Chapter four examines Monroe's march to the presidency and details his growing political acumen. His newfound skills helped ensure that he would acquire the political power necessary to shape American policy and three critical moments in Monroe's career illustrate this transformation. First, with republicanism in the ascendancy within the United States after the Election of 1800, Jefferson sent Monroe to finalize the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Monroe's second stint in France, this time on

Jefferson's behalf, produced far better results than his first ministry. Monroe manipulated the situation to ensure that he received credit for negotiating the purchase and expanding the territorial reach of the United States. Later, in 1808, Monroe returned from Europe as an accomplished diplomat and ran for president against his friend James Madison. Monroe challenged Madison because he believed that he better embodied the true principles of republicanism and could advance Jefferson's republican legacy. In the same instance, Monroe also exhibited his growing political skills by taking the necessary steps to ensure that his relationship with Jefferson endured and secured his place within the Republican Party. This eventually helped Monroe and Madison's reconciliation and earned Monroe a position within Madison's cabinet. Finally, during the War of 1812, serving beside Madison as secretary of state, Monroe helped lead the fight against the British while eliminating a potential rival for the presidency. His successful removal of Secretary of War John Armstrong ensured that Monroe would succeed Madison to the presidency in 1817. Throughout he remained dedicated to his republican ideals, but he also built a reputation as a diplomat and developed a keen political sense that facilitated his road to the White House. During his presidency Monroe needed these skills not for his own political survival but in order to accomplish a final act, which he hoped would cement his legacy as a champion of republicanism.

Monroe finally tried to make up for his and the country's failure in Revolutionary France and secure his legacy with the Monroe Doctrine. In 1823, Monroe, by then re-elected to a second term, remained the last of the founders still active in American politics. Meanwhile, a new generation emerged to replace the founders and they appeared less encumbered by the obsession with republicanism. In particular, Monroe's

secretary of state, John Quincy Adams, wanted the United States to take its place amongst the European nations as an imperial power and had little interest in spreading republicanism abroad. As a result, Monroe and Adams had different ideas about what the doctrine should accomplish.

Traditionally historians point to Adams as the primary author of the Monroe Doctrine largely because his vision for it has essentially won out. He wanted to keep European powers out of the western hemisphere in order to secure it as an American sphere of influence. During the late 19th and early 20th century as the United States emerged as a world power, Monroe's doctrine took on a nationalist tone with "Roosevelt's Corollary." Theodore Roosevelt declared that the United States could intervene in the domestic affairs of Latin America if need arose and many historians argue that the doctrine's importance, therefore, lies in its dual role as a statement of American hegemony in the western hemisphere and isolation from Europe. This interpretation has greatly influenced the historiography of the doctrine's creation. Reading from Roosevelt's era backward, historians often interpret the doctrine as if these 20th century ideas alone shaped its creation in 1823. Scholars contend that the country's isolationist policy and its desire to dominate the western hemisphere formed the doctrine's primary goals from its inception. This contention naturally leads historians to emphasize John Quincy Adams's role in creating it and Adams, with his strong record as a nationalist and isolationist, often receives the bulk of the credit for building this new

pillar upon which so much of subsequent American foreign policy stands. Meanwhile, James Monroe's original goal for the doctrine remains largely forgotten. [6]

James Monroe did not see either isolationism or the projection of American power as the most important of the doctrine's legacies. Instead, he hoped to outline a message to the world that the United States supported the cause of republican revolution. Monroe took the opportunity to outline this new American position at a time when he believed the war between monarchy and republicanism had reached a critical point. After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, several European monarchs created a "Holy Alliance," which dedicated itself to quelling republican movements before another French-style Revolution could envelope the continent in blood again. This reactionary "concert of Europe" posed a grave threat to the spread of republican ideals. Meanwhile the Spanish empire crumbled. Across Latin America, nations declared independence and formed their own republican governments. Rumors swirled that the Holy Allies might use military power to re-establish monarchial government in Latin America just as they had done in Europe. Seeing this as a critically important for the future of republicanism, Monroe declared American support for republicanism around the world.

Monroe saw the doctrine as his last, best chance to cement his legacy as a champion of the republican cause. He hoped to use his annual message of 1823 as a

[6] For evaluations of the Doctrine's legacy see Luis Quintanilla "A Latin American View: Machiavellian Due to Corollaries" and Gaston Nerval, "Egoistic from Its Pronouncement"; For a discussion of the purpose of the Doctrine see Dexter Perkins, "To Deter the Continental Allies in the Western Hemisphere" and Arthur P. Whitaker, "To Frustrate France's Plans in South America"; For discussions on who formulated the Doctrine see Worthington C. Ford "The Work of John Quincy Adams"; All of the above can be found in Armin Rappaport ed, *The Monroe Doctrine*, (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1964); Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine: 1823-1826.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932).

signal to the world that the United States would support any people who hoped to throw off the shackles of monarchy and follow in the footsteps of the United States by embracing the republican experiment. Thus, rather than anticipating American hegemony in the western hemisphere he looked backward to the Revolutionary era. He hoped that championing the republican experiment in the west would be his legacy to the world. It would allow him to stand beside men like his mentor Jefferson and be remembered as the Revolution's greatest diplomat helping to spread republicanism around the globe.

Monroe's doctrine, however, is not the story of the fulfillment of the fifth president's legacy. While Monroe is most closely associated with the famous statement of American foreign policy which bears his name, the doctrine itself is not remembered as a symbol of liberal republicanism but rather as a declaration of American power and dominance over the Western Hemisphere.

Chapter One

Republican Legacy: The Founders and the Great Experiment

In the spring of 1965, at a hot and humid meeting of the Organization for American Historians in Kansas City, Douglass Adair delivered a lecture entitled "Fame and the Founding Fathers." In this paper Adair attempted to explain why America's founding generation produced such a disproportionately large number of what he calls "great men."[1]

Adair identified one overriding reason for this phenomenon- fame. The founders, he claimed, were "fantastically concerned with posterity's judgment of their behavior" and the desire to be remembered spurred them to achieve greatness. Adair proclaimed that "as the War for Independence enlarges the provincial stage upon which they act their roles to that of a world theater, the greatest of the great generation develop an almost obsessive desire for fame." In other words, the new world stage provided by the revolution provided the founders the opportunity to achieve the fame they craved.[2]

Adair himself remarked that something about this argument seems rather obvious. After all, most everyone and especially politicians want to be remembered by those they leave behind, and certainly succeeding generations of Americans have had the same world stage on which to achieve notoriety. Yet no generation has produced the sheer number of "great men" as the founding. As Adair put it, how could the colonies have produced, "a John Adams, a Hamilton, a Dickinson, a Rutledge, and the galaxy of

[1] Douglass Adair, "Fame and the Founding Fathers" In *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, ed. Trevor Colburn (New York W.W. Norton and Co., 1974).
[2] Ibid., 7.

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great Virginians?" Adair raises a valid point. The collection of prominent names amongst the founding generation is striking; George Washington, John Dickinson, John and Samuel Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Marshall, Benjamin Franklin (though older), Patrick Henry and even the subject of this study, James Monroe all emerged from a colonial population of about 4 million. Indeed, of the great Americans a disproportionate number belong to the first generation. Adair explains that the reason for this can be explained by the unique way in which the founders understood the concept of fame.[3]

The eighteenth century version of fame bears only a trace resemblance to its twenty-first century counterpart. Today, fame is equated roughly with celebrity. While presidents and certain key politicians are still considered to have achieved a measure of "fame," in the twenty-first century Hollywood actors, singers and even reality T.V. stars and villains are also thought of as famous.[4] Eighteenth century Americans viewed fame very differently and it bears only a cursory relationship to the vulgar popularity associated with its modern counterpart. Eighteenth century fame resembles something close to public honor. Fame could only be achieved by "great men" such as statesmen or generals. Only those who undertook action which set them apart and lifted them above their fellow men could achieve it. The lust for fame goaded these men to become a force in history; indeed to "make" history by imposing their will on events.[5]

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[3] Ibid., 4.

[4] Adair discussed this in his original essay. Living in the 1960s his gaze naturally fell on Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Now "fame" can apply to not only singers and actors but to people who are as simply "famous for being famous." See generally Daniel Boorstin *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America* (New York: Harper And Row, 1964).

[5] Note that Adair's collection of Rush-Adams letters is titled *The Spur of Fame*. See generally *The Spur of Fame*: *Dialogues of John Adams and Benjamin Rush*, eds. John Aschutz and Douglass Adair (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1966).

Only the "best men" in society aimed to set themselves above their fellows. Alexander Hamilton posited in Federalist 72 that fame included "the passion of the noblest minds." It served a necessary function within the state. The desire for fame could harness man's ambition and self interest and transform it into something that served the public good. Adair argued that, "the pursuit of fame, they had been taught, was a way of transforming egotism and self-aggrandizing impulses into public service; they had been taught that public service nobly (and selfishly) performed was the surest way to build 'lasting monuments' and earn the perpetual remembrance of posterity." The founders did not invent this concept of fame. In fact, its origins trace back thousands of years; through the Renaissance, to the republics of Ancient Greece and Rome.[6]

Adair understood better than most that the, "tradition of fame and honor that was most significant to the American Revolution....[was] classical in origin." Fame represented a pillar of what scholars call classical republicanism. Adair's scholarship on fame emerged as one of the first examples of a new emphasis on classical republican ideas on the history of the American founding. He helped pave the way for this new concept to become a dominant paradigm in American historiography.[7]

It is no accident that Adair references Charles Beard at the beginning of his discussion of fame.[8] Beard, in his hugely influential book, *An Economic Interpretation of the American Constitution*, argues that personal economic interests served as the driving force behind the creation of the U.S. Constitution and the establishment of the American republic. In his 1913 work, Beard contends that the founders used John Locke's

[6] Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist 72" *The Federalist Papers by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay*. ed. Garry Wills (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 367; Adair, "Fame" 8.
[7] Adair, 12.
[8] Ibid., 4.

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philosophy of individualism and government protection of property rights as a way to obscure their true aims; to achieve and secure personal wealth and political power. Beard and other members of what came to be known as the "Progressive school" largely ignored the importance of ideas, which they saw as either unimportant or as the means by which political elites duped the public into sacrificing their own interests. According to the Progressives, social and class conflict drove American history, not ideology. [9]

The Progressive school remained dominant during much of the early twentieth century. By the middle of the 1900s a new group of historians stressing American exceptionalism rose to challenge the progressives. The "consensus school," as these scholars were known, came to prominence just as the United States emerged as a dominant power after World War II. Louis Hartz represents the quintessential example of this school. In Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America,* he argues that John Locke's version of what we now call "classic liberalism" provided the basis for American exceptionalism.[10] Non-progressive historians always recognized Locke as a driving force behind the American founding and Hartz explains why. In fact, Hartz's thesis helps explain both the founding itself and tried to uncover exactly what made the United States "exceptional." According to Hartz, Lockean thought dominated American ideology to such an extent that no real oppositional thinking materialized within the United States. The reason for this lies in the unique way in which American society evolved.[11]

Hartz explains that feudalism never developed in the American colonies. Instead, independent farmers, who owned their own property in fee simple, dominated the

[9] Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the American Constitution* (New York: Macmillan 1913 reprint Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2004), 1-18.
[10] I refer to this as liberalism or Lockean liberalism throughout.
[11] Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955).

American colonies rather than European peasants who remained tied to the land and their feudal overlord. The American colonists thus developed a highly independent individualist culture and society. Locke's philosophy, with its emphasis on individual rights, found many adherents in the colonies. This explains why socialism and Marxist thought never prospered in the United States. Instead, Hartz argues, Americans overwhelmingly accepted the basic tenets of liberal capitalism. As he puts it, Locke "dominates American political thought as no thinker anywhere dominates the thought of a nation." Prominent examples of this dominance can be seen in the American founding, including Jefferson's appropriation of Locke's words in the Declaration of Independence and the strong protection of property rights found in the Constitution.[12]

Until the mid 20th century, historians in both the consensus and progressive schools agreed (albeit tacitly in the Progressives' case) that the founders used Locke as the basis for the structure of the American government. The critical difference lies in that progressives believed that Locke served merely as a tool that the founders, all elite landowners, used to justify a political system that protected their own power and personal wealth. The consensus school conversely argued that the founders earnestly believed Lockean liberalism provided the best system upon which to establish a government. The Progressives, in essence, conceded the ideological field to the Consensus School by claiming that ideas seemed largely immaterial when considering the actions of men like the American founders.

[12] Ibid., 9, 85-86, 140. In fact, Hartz argues that the American Constitution was only successful in the United States because the country held the same basic values; for a discussion of Locke's impact on the Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence see, Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A study in the history of political ideas* (New York: Knopf, 1948) 27-79.

Adair's work on fame belongs to a third school known as the classical republican revisionists. These new intellectual historians rejected both theses. These scholars were the first to question Locke's preeminent position in the founders' ideology. They agreed with the consensus school that ideology played a crucial role in the American founding but disagreed on which ideas. Led initially by Adair and Caroline Robbins, the work of Bernard Bailyn, Gordon Wood and J.G.A Pocock pointed not to Locke or to individual rights and the protection of private property, but to an older tradition built on honor, virtue and, most importantly for this study, fame.[13]

Classical Republicanism

This change in American historiography matched the changes occurring within the United States. The 1960s, especially, witnessed upheaval throughout society. The Cold War, student protests and racial tension tarnished American prestige. In response, historians began to question America's claims to exceptionalism. They attacked the old liberal consensus not from the progressive materialistic perspective but on ideological grounds. These scholars examined America's past for a less individualistic and less overtly capitalist ideology behind the founding. They sought to de-emphasize Locke's impact on the America's founding. The search led these scholars to stress a more communitarian strand of political thought. They highlighted a different concept, classical republicanism, at the expense of liberalism.

[13]The "founder" of the republican revisionist school is generally thought to be Caroline Robbins. See generally Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1959)

Gordon Wood and Bernard Bailyn led the charge for what became known as a classical republican revision of the ideological history of the American founding.[14] According to classical republicans, scholars had over-emphasized Locke's influence on the founding. The American revolutionaries, they claim, took their ideas from many sources. These included Ancient scholars like Cicero and Aristotle, Renaissance philosophers such as Machiavelli, Enlightenment thinkers including Locke, but also Algernon Sidney and James Harrington, and even English jurists such as Edward Coke and William Blackstone. The concept that united this and provided the linchpin upon which all the other sources revolved was not Lockean liberalism, but rather classical republicanism. The founders adopted this philosophy from "country" party ideology of the Whig opposition to British Prime Minister Robert Walpole during the early 1700s. Fighting against the corruption of the "court," a classical republican "country" party, influenced by the work of Viscount Bolingbroke, emerged as an alternative for English Whigs. Half a century later the American founders, according to the revisionists, saw the world in the same way as these early eighteenth century opponents to the English Crown. Both advocated a return to the values of the ancient republics, including duty to the community and sacrifice to the state. Athens, Sparta and especially the Roman Republic provided the models for America's republic. The American Revolution, they claimed, looked to the past in an attempt to recreate a classical republic within the United States.[15] Essentially, American thinkers looked to an uncorrupted past as the model for good government; one dedicated to public virtue and opposed to luxury, corruption and

[14]Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (London: Belknapp, 1967); Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969).
[15]See, Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick *The Age of Federalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 48.

individualism. The culmination of the classical republican revision came when JGA Pocock went so far as to call the American Founding a movement born of the Renaissance rather than the Enlightenment.[16]

Classical republicanism ultimately replaced the liberal tradition of the previous generation.[17] By the 1980s a "republican synthesis" emerged and the theory came to dominate early American historiography. Historians of the founding essentially agreed that the Revolution represented a great moment of classical communitarianism with the founders placing the good of society above that of the individual. They tried to recreate a society like the ancient republics dedicated to self sacrifice. Predictably, this synthesis was itself challenged. Led by historians like Joyce Appleby, scholars began to re-emphasize Locke's influence during the 1980s and 1990s.[18] Today the debate rages with each side giving some ground.[19] Still, classical republicanism remains the most important way to understand the ideological origins of the American founding.

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[16] JGA Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 545.

[17] See generally, Joyce Appleby, "Republicanism in Old and New Contexts" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series 43 (1986): 20-34 and Lance Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited: Liberal and Classical Idea in the New American Republic" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series. 43 (1986): 4-19. These two articles do an excellent job summarizing the state of the argument in the late 1980s.

[18] Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and the New Social Order (*New York: New York University Press, 1984). Appleby contends that while classical republicanism played a key role in the nation's ideology it was by no means more important than liberalism. She focuses her attention on the Jeffersonian Republicans. The Jeffersonians, according to Appleby, represented a radical strand of thought in American history. In Appleby's estimation, the Federalists represented the kind of "country party" that Wood and Bailyn discuss, while Jefferson and his Republican Party believed in an individualistic, essentially liberal, philosophy. Appleby argues that the capitalist revolution was already under way during the revolutionary era. She explains that capitalism, specifically commercial agriculture, played the major role in forming Jeffersonian thought. Though more nuanced than Hartz's work, Appleby ultimately restates the case for the importance of Locke and liberal ideas on the American founding; see also, John Patrick Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self Interest and the foundations of Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

[19] See Wood, *Creation*, v-xiii. In his preface to the 1998 version of *Creation* Gordon Wood concedes a number of points to the proponents of "liberalism." He agrees that American republicanism "was never as severely or as thoroughly classical as perhaps I and others suggest." Indeed, he admits that, "to picture the republican revolution as something undertaken in a pervasive mood of anxiety over corruption and the loss of virtue misses all the optimism and exuberance of the period."

On the surface, classical republican theory appears sound. There are numerous superficial reasons to equate the founding with the ancient republics. After all, the founders did make the somewhat peculiar decision to create a republic in a world surrounded by monarchies and they certainly admired the classics. They read Cicero, Aristotle and Plato voraciously, copied Roman architecture and adopted classical pseudonyms when they waged their famous pamphlet wars.[20] Yet a closer examination reveals that the founders and the ancient republicans remain fundamentally opposed on the most fundamental ideological principle; the relationship between politics and society. The ancients' theory on the role of politics has great implications for the concept of fame.[21]

Classical Politics and the Role of Fame

Description of classical republicanism would fill considerable space, but the fundamental presumption for the ancients can best be summed up by Aristotle's famous contention that, "man is by nature a political animal."[22] In the classical republican tradition no separation existed between state and society. In the classical Greek republics nearly every aspect of society itself was embedded within the political structure. In other words, society and state were one and the same. In such a world politics dominated life

[20]See generally, Richard Gummere, The *American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition: Essays in Comparative Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).
[21]Paul Rahe, *Republics: Ancient and Modern: Vol. 1 The Ancien Regime in Classical Greece* (Chapel Hill: University Press of North Carolina, 1994); Thomas Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*: *The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of John Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). In his masterful three volume work Paul Rahe outlines the progression of republican government from the ancient world until the creation of the liberal, modern republic. Pangle identifies the fundamentals of American republicanism. Both authors show that the fundamental difference between the republics of the Ancient world and the modern American republic was the relationship between politics and society.
[22]Aristotle, "Politics" found in *Aristotle: On Man In the Universe*, ed. Louise Loomis (Roslyn, New York: Walter J. Black 1943), 250.

nearly to the exclusion of any other material interest. In order to foster loyalty and civic pride the classical republics stressed political rights and participation.[23] In his most important writing on government Cicero outlined the importance of the practice of the political art, "There is no other occupation in which human virtue approaches more closely the august function of the gods than that of founding new states or preserving those already in existence."[24] Indeed, common wisdom concerning the ancient republics stressed the need for states to remain small in order to ensure solidarity and allow every citizen a voice within the government. As a result of this preoccupation with political rights, personal rights meant less.[25]

In a classical republic individuals possessed no pre-political rights. In other words, no rights existed before the creation of the state. As Aristotle pointed out, "the state is by nature clearly prior to the individual." The state granted rights and few personal rights existed. Thus, the state was not a collection of individuals entering into a "social contract" for every citizen's personal benefit but rather a community permanently bound together by a collective way of life. This preoccupation with political rather than private life and community rather than the individual naturally produced a number of important characteristics of classical society. The ancients believed that democratic regimes lacked stability. Selfishness and faction in a democracy undermined the state's cohesiveness and eventually led to mob rule. In order for the people to rule themselves effectively they needed to subordinate the concerns of individuals, families and

[23] Rahe, *Republics* I, 15-17.
[24]Marcus Tullius Cicero, "*De Re Publica,"* In *Cicero,* trans. Clinton Walker Keyes (New York: Putnam's Son's 1928), 29.
[25] See generally, "Federalist 9", "Federalist 10" and "Federalist 14," in Wills, *The Federalist Papers.* This became a key point of contention for the founders in creating their own republic. The founders, Madison especially, believed he had found a solution to the problem with the compound republic which depended on large groups of citizens and factions balancing one another. He and Alexander Hamilton outlined their theory, taken in part from David Hume in The Federalist Papers.

households to the good of the city as a whole. The state also strove to instill a kind of civic pride through uniformity. Greek city-states insisted on its citizens maintaining the same tastes and opinions while maintaining a hostile posture towards outsiders.[26]

In many ways Ancient Sparta represented the ideal classical republic. The Spartans resembled something close to an armed camp. Its citizens doubled as soldiers and Sparta itself maintained a permanently hostile stance toward its neighbors. They sought to smother factionalism and weaken foreign influence. The Spartans frowned upon individualism because it focused a citizen's thoughts toward his own benefit rather than the good of the state. The Ancients distrusted commerce, especially the acquisition of wealth and luxury, because it often entailed regular intercourse with foreigners and could infuse a member of the polity with selfishness. Sparta, for instance, attempted to completely insulate itself from market forces. Sparta banned anyone younger than 30 from the public market, fearing that the young might be infected with selfishness and foreign mores. Curtailing man's natural individuality, ambition and selfishness, all thought to be destructive to the state, posed a major problem for the ancients. They understood that these passions could not be simply switched off. Thus fame provided the perfect outlet for such desires.[27]

In classical republics fame played a crucial role in providing ambitious men an outlet through which they could satisfy their selfish desires. Thus, fame became a cornerstone of classical republican ideology. Ancient philosophers from Athens to Rome, Xenophon to Cicero make this plain. The obsession with fame began with the Greeks. The earliest Greek scholars recognized that some men sought to place themselves

[26] Aristotle, "Politics" in *On Man and the Universe*, 250; See also, Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism* 43-46; Rahe, *Republics* 1:16, 44, 97,103-125.
[27] Rahe, *Republics*, 1:15-17, 44, 70-75;Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 43-46.

above the rest. The pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus put it best, "The best men...choose one thing above all others-*everlasting fame among mortals*."[28] The Greek philosopher Xenophon understood the concept as well as any. He claimed that the very essence of man was tied up in winning honor and glory. What distinguished man from the other animals was "his desire for honor." But, and this is key to understanding the classical mindset, only the greatest men sought to achieve such distinction. As Xenophon put it, "The lust for honor and praise grows up only in those who are most fully distinguished from the beasts in the field: which is to say that it grows up only in those judged to be *Real Men* and no longer mere human beings." In other words, the desire for fame and glory distinguished mere mortals from heroes. It drove men to achieve glory and thus ensure their immortality. Plato went even further on this point in *The Symposium*. Men, Plato claimed, are "stirred by the love of an immortality of fame." In fact, he continued, ""I am persuaded that all men do all things, and the better they are the more they do them in the hope of the glorious fame of immortal virtue." Fame, according to Plato, represented the most important desire of the ancient world.[29]

Fame held a fascination for men of action as well as philosophers. In the greatest of the ancient world's books, Homer chose fame as a major theme for the *Iliad*. Fame, perhaps more than any other desire, drove Achilles, who explained one of his key motivations for fighting the Trojans, "My mother... says that I have two fates. If I stay here and fight on round the Trojan's city then gone is my homecoming, but my glory will never die and if I come back to my dear native land, then gone is my great glory but my

[28] Heraclitus, *Vorsokr, 22 B29,* found in Rahe, *Republics* 1:30.
[29] Xenophon, "Hiero," 7.3 quoted in Leo Strauss *On Tyranny,* eds. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 14-15; Plato "The Symposium" in *Plato* Trans. *B. Jowett. ed. Louise Ropes Loomis.* (Roslyn, New York: Walter j Black, 1942), 199-201; See generally Rahe, *Republics,* 1:28-32

life will stretch long."Achilles knew that the fighting at Troy would take his life but ensure his fame. He willingly faced his death for the chance at immortality.[30] What made fame most useful to the ancients however was not simply that certain men hoped to set themselves apart. Fame's utility within the classical republican world arose because the ancient republics successfully tied the winning of fame and honors to service to the state. In no place is this more apparent than in ancient Rome.

The Romans shared the love of fame with the Greeks but they harnessed it for the greater glory of Rome. While discussing the death of a soldier during the Punic Wars the Ancient historian Polybius explains how the Romans dressed mourners in death masks of fallen soldiers and illustrious relatives. He describes how a speaker praised the fallen soldier and his dead relatives. Polybius explains the effect meant to have on the crowd, "the *fame* of those who have performed any noble deed is never allowed to die; and the renown of those who have done good service to their country becomes a matter of common knowledge." Polybius continued to explain that "the chief benefit of the ceremony is that it inspires young men to shrink from no exertion for the general welfare, in the hope of obtaining the glory which awaits the brave." Romans used man's desire for fame and glory to serve the state. By glorifying death in the service of Rome they indoctrinated within succeeding generations a belief that the honor associated with sacrificing one's self for Rome outweighed life itself. In a society where the afterlife reserved itself only for those heroes chosen to ascend to Mount Olympus to join Hercules, achieving honor and glory represented the only way to secure immortality. The Romans sought to achieve for the greater glory of Rome by tying their own ambition to

[30]Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Martin Hammond (New York: Penguin 1987), 143.

expanding and extending Roman dominion over the world. If this meant sacrificing themselves for the state, so be it. These ideas endured to the Republic's end.[31]

Perhaps the most interesting Roman commentator on fame is Marcus Cicero. Throughout his long and remarkable life Cicero played the part of both philosopher and politician. He both theorized and practiced the political art. Thus, he offers keen insight as a man who considered fame from a theoretical level and achieved it in the political world. Cicero very nearly repeats Xenophon's thoughts on fame from three centuries earlier, "We are motivated by a keen desire for praise, and the better a man is the more he is inspired by glory."[32] He explains fame's importance in Rome's history in *The Republic*, "Our ancestors were inspired to many wonderful and admirable deeds by the eagerness for glory." In fact, fame provided sustenance for great men. As the boy from Arpinum put it, "the leading men of a state must be fed on glory" and Cicero took his fair share.[33]

Cicero ensured his own fame when he won the consulship and, despite his lowly provincial background, was hailed "father of his country" for defending the state from the Cataline conspiracy.[34] Near the end of his life, as the Republic of his ancestors crumbled around him, Cicero tried to rally the people around glorious sacrifice to the state. Cicero's 14th Philippic represents a final appeal for men to secure their own fame by saving the republic from Marc Antony. Cicero praises the soldiers who fought against Antony

[31] Polybius, "The Histories of Polybius': Book IX" In T*he Mammoth book of eyewitness Ancient Rome,* ed. Jon E. Lewis (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2003), 43 italics added; On the Roman afterlife see, Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 11; On service to the greater glory of Rome see, Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown Fame and its History. (*New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 115.
[32] Cicero, Marcus "In Defence of Aulus Licinius Archias" *Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero,* trans, Charles Yonge (New York: The Colonial Press, 1900), 119. Cicero also wrote two books on glory which are lost.
[33] Cicero, *De Re Publica*, 253.
[34] Lucius Sergius Cataline tried to overthrow the Roman Republic during Cicero's year as Consul.

during the Civil Wars. These men, he claimed, preserved the state from a tyrant. He bid the people of Rome give thanks and told the soldiers that, "in exchange for life's mortal state you will have gained yourselves immortality." Further, he attempted to console the families of those who had fallen in typical classical republican fashion, "Let us console their relatives, whose best consolation is indeed this: For parents, that they have begotten such staunch bulwarks of the state; for children, that they will have in their families models of valour; for wives, that they have lost husbands whom they will more fitly praise than mourn." The best consolation, according to Cicero, was that these men died for Rome. Even these common soldiers could achieve some small measure of fame by preserving the state. [35]

Classical republican virtue consisted of convincing individuals to subordinate their lives and achievements for the good of the polity. For the greatest of the Greeks and Romans this would result in lasting fame and a measure of immortality. But what of the American founders? Did they adopt this same love affair with fame as Adair and the revisionists argue? To answer this question it is crucial to examine the fundamental distinction between the ancient classical republicans and the American founders. While the ancient Greeks and Romans saw virtually no distinction between politics and society the founders viewed the two as distinct and even hostile entities. This key misunderstanding of the founders' philosophy led classical republicans like Adair to misconstrue the role fame played in the founder's philosophy.[36]

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[35]Marcus Tullius Cicero, "Philippic XIV," *Phillipics*, trans. Walter C.A. Ker (New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1926), 639. Cicero's constant attacks on Antony ultimately led to his own death.
[36] Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 62-73.

Thomas Paine's famous words from *Common Sense* perfectly illustrate the Founders' thoughts on the relationship between government and society, "Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one." The most important political pamphlet in American history, *Common Sense's* effectiveness came in large part precisely because Paine convinced Americans that the colonies no longer needed the British government. He did this by convincing the colonists that they possessed all the blessings of society and that the British crown had transformed itself from a necessary evil to an intolerable one. An examination of the founding generation reveals that they largely shared Paine's sentiments. [37]

Even the more conservative members of the founders distrusted government. James Wilson, perhaps the foremost legal mind of the Founding era, served as one of George Washington's first appointees to the U.S. Supreme Court. He spent many years advocating for the creation of a strong federal government.[38] Still, he agreed with the far more radical Paine on the relationship between society and government in his series of lectures on the law. He argued that many leaders misconstrued the relationship between politics and society, "By some politicians society has been considered as only the scaffolding of government; very improperly, in my judgment." Wilson explained that, "in the just order of things, government is the scaffolding of society and if society could

[37] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense,* ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 65; See also, Scott Liell, *46 Pages: Thomas Paine, Common Sense and the Turning Point to Independence.* (Philadelphia*:* Running Press, 2003), 72,115-117. One of the key ways that Paine helped turn the colonists away from conciliation to Independence was his use of language. He refrained from the usual classical allusions in favor of universal language. He wrote *Common Sense* in a vernacular that was accessible to all literate Americans.

[38] For information on James Wilson see, Stephen Conrad, "James Wilson," in *The Oxford Guide to the Supreme Court of the United States*, ed. Kermit L. Hall, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1091-1092.

be built and kept entire without government, the scaffolding might be thrown down, without the least inconvenience or regret." Wilson's understanding of the relationship between society and government is a far cry from Aristotle's contention that man was by nature a political animal. Other conservative founders shared this sentiment.[39]

John Adams also became a proponent of strong government in the years following the American Revolution. Adams even complimented the British model of strong central government from which the revolutionaries fought to escape. He infamously proposed that the American president style himself in a manner similar to European monarchs. This earned him the derisive nickname, "his rotundity" from his political enemies. Adams distrusted the French Revolution, for which the Democratic-Republicans of the 1790s accused him of being a secret monarchist.[40] Adams nevertheless shared the more radical founders' ideas on the role of government. Even in his *Thoughts on Government,* which criticizes Paine's *Common Sense,* Adams shares Paine's basic beliefs on the ends of government, "Upon this point all speculative politicians will agree, that the happiness of society is the end of government,"[41] Men like Adams became politicians in order to create and to preserve a world where individuals could enjoy the blessings of society. As he eloquently put it, "I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study philosophy, geography, natural history, architecture, navigation, commerce and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, musick, architecture statuary, tapestry, and porcelain."

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[39] James Wilson, "Of the study of law in the United States." *Selected Political Essays of James Wilson*, ed. Randolph Adams (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1930), 210.
[40]Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic 1788-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 46-50.
[41]John Adams, "Thoughts on Government" In *The Portable John Adams,* ed. John Patrick Diggins (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 234.

In other words, Adams's dedicated his life to politics in an effort to secure a world where his sons and grandsons could practice the free exercise of personal rights.[42]

Gouverneur Morris, another conservative, who was so critical of the French Revolution that the Jacobins requested his removal as Minister to France in the 1790s, nevertheless agreed with Paine and Adams, "If we consider political in connection with civil liberty we place the former as the Guard and Security to the latter. But if the latter be given up for the former we sacrifice the ends to the means." For the founders political freedom remained worthless without personal liberty.[43]

Because of the vast gulf between how the founders and the ancients viewed the relationship between politics and society many of the members of America's first generation expressed mixed feelings concerning the ancient republics. In some cases the example of the classical republics horrified the founders. As Alexander Hamilton put it in Federalist 9, "It is impossible to read the history of the petty republics of Greece and Italy without feeling sensations of horror and disgust." Throughout the Federalist Papers, Hamilton blamed the ancients for giving republics a bad name.[44] Similarly, Thomas Jefferson scorned Plato's political theories. He marveled at "how it could have been that the world should have so long consented to give reputation to such nonsense as this." Jefferson critiqued the greatest of the Greek philosopher's republican ideals. He rejected Plato's version of a republic ruled by philosopher kings dedicated to the public good.

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[42] John Adams to Abigail Adams, May 12, 1780, in *Adams Family Correspondence,* ed. L.H. Butterfield (Cambridge, Mass, Belknapp Press, 1973), 3:341-342. Of course the Adams's sons and grandsons never truly studied anything but politics though his great grandson Henry at least found a "nobler," though perhaps duller profession.

[43] Gouverneur Morris "Political Enquiries" quoted in Paul Rahe, "Fame, The Founders and the Idea of Founding in the Eighteenth Century" in *The Noblest Minds: Fame Honor and the American Founding,* ed. Peter McNamara (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 1999), 26.

[44] Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist 9". *The Federalist Papers by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay ed.* Gary Wills (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 71-72.

Indeed Jefferson expressed relief that "platonic republicanism had not obtained the same favor as platonic Christianity." [45] Benjamin Rush went further than most in his disdain for the ancients. He even denounced the idea of a classical education. "We do not stand in need now of Greek and Roman poets, histories and orators, Shakespeare, Milton, Thomas, Pope, Hume… and a dozen others more than fill their places." Further, "were every Greek and Latin book (The New Testament excluded) consumed in a bonfire the world would be wiser and better for it."[46] He then added in Latin "*Delenda, delenda est lingua Romana* (The Latin language must be destroyed, yea destroyed!)" in an ironic homage to Cato the Elder's famous phrase, "*Delenda est Carthago*."[47] Tench Coxe, a Federalist assistant treasury secretary under Hamilton, ably summed up the founders' primary criticism of the ancients, "self evident as the truth appears we find no friend to liberty in Ancient Greece and Rome."[48] The founders distrusted the ancients' dedication (or lack thereof) to liberty. It should not be surprising then that they did not share the ancients' obsession with classical fame.

The Founders and Fame

The founders exhibited a far different attitude toward fame than their ancient counterparts. With the state merely a necessary evil and politics reduced to means by

[45]Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 5, 1814, in *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams,* ed. Lester Cappon (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 430-433; On Plato see Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Great Philosophers of the Western World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 32

[46]Benjamin Rush to John Adams, October 2, 1810, *The Spur of Fame: Dialogues of John Adams and Benjamin Rush 1805-1812,* eds. John Schutz and Douglass Adair (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1966), 169.

[47]The Roman Senator Cato the Elder famously ended every speech with this phrase translated as "Carthage must be destroyed" during the period between the second and third Punic Wars.

[48]Tench Coxe, "Examination of the Constitution," in *Pamphlets on the Constitution of the United States,* ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), 148; See also Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism,* 36.

which to secure personal freedoms, fame for the glory of the state had no place in the republic Americans created. In their distrust of fame, as in so many things, the founders took after John Locke. Locke thought of the "great men" of history as little more than butchers, conquerors and tyrants. He went so far as to denounce the study of history because he feared that impressionable children would be unduly influenced and infatuated by the deeds of great conquerors. The founders shared this sentiment. Certainly the founders admired many of antiquity's "great men," but they also feared the havoc they could wreak on the people. They admired men like Cicero and the younger Cato but they also feared the rise of their own Julius Caesar. The founders recognized that those driven by lust for fame could as easily become tyrants as heroes. Indeed, the most "famous" founder understood this as well as anyone. [49]

Benjamin Franklin shared Locke's distrust of fame. Franklin provides unique perspective on fame because he alone among the founders achieved some measure of notoriety before the Revolution. By 1776, when other American revolutionaries found themselves thrust onto a new world stage Franklin was already a celebrated figure in Europe. Despite his own renown Franklin feared and distrusted the role fame played in society. In fact, like Locke he held a particular distaste for history's heroes. Consider the following poem:

> "Alas! That Heroes ever were made!
> The Plague, and the Hero, are both of a trade
> Yet the plague spares our goods which the Hero does not
> So a plague take such Heroes and let their *Fames* rot"

[49]John Locke, "Of Study," in *The Educational Writings of John Locke*, ed. James Axtell (Cambridge: University Press of Cambridge, 1968), 409-410; Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism* 23; See generally Rahe, "The Eighteenth Century," in *The Noblest Minds*, 21-29.

This poem, from *Poor Richard's Almanac*, sums up the American view of those who sought fame. Franklin made the same point in plainer language, "There are 3 great destroyers of mankind: plague, famine and Hero. Plagues and Famine destroy your persons only, and leave your goods to your Heirs; but Hero when he comes, takes life and goods together; his business and glory it is to destroy men and the works of man."[50] Franklin compares the great men of history, those seeking out Adair's version of classical fame, with the greatest evils faced by mankind. He recognized that the fame seekers could destroy the fragile republic the founders were building. Other founders shared Franklin's distrust. In *The Age of Reason* Thomas Paine calls the *Iliad*, "a book of false glory, tending to inspire immoral, and mischievous notions of honor." According to Paine, the lust for honor and glory was immoral. No man should aspire to the kind of fame found in Homer's epic. Achilles, while a great example for the ancients, was no role model for a modern republican.[51]

John Adams was as ambitious as any man. Early in his life Adams saw little chance for achievement and advancement in colonial Massachusetts and it irritated him. He believed that he must be content "to live and die an ignorant and obscure fellow."[52] Even at this early age he recognized the dangers associated with the lust for recognition and glory. "If we move back, through the history of all ages and nations, we shall find that the Tumults, Insurrections and Revolutions that have disturbed the peace of society and spilled oceans of blood have all arisen from the giddy rashness and extravagance of

[50]Benjamin Franklin, *The Complete Poor Richard's Almanacks*, ed. Whitfield J. Bell (Barre, Massachusetts: Imprint Society 1970), 2: 1748.
[51] Thomas Paine, "The Age of Reason," *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Phil Foner (New York: Citadel Press, 1945), 543.
[52] John Adams "Diary" April 23, 1756, *The Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, ed. L.H. Butterfield (Cambridge Mass: Belknapp Press, 1961), 1:22.

the sublimest[sic] minds." The great heroes' "unquenchable thirst for superiority and power" drove them to "get the world aware of their parts and Persons." A consummate student of history Adams saw the risks associated with man's lust for fame. Like Franklin, he saw it as a destructive force; tending to cause mischief to the rest of society.[53]

Later in life Adams rejected the desire for fame as a positive force in American society. While discussing Cicero Adams argued that while "Tully" had, "greater political objects to tempt his ambition, he had better opportunities to force the Hozanna's of his countrymen, but these are not advantages for happiness." On the contrary, "the passions which these objects were designed to gratify" eventually "goaded him into that Excess of Vanity and Pusillanimity, for which he has been often blamed, as ever he was praised for his Genius and Virtues." The great political opportunities that brought Cicero fame and glory also brought him criticism and in the end provided him with no road to happiness.[54] The founders did not trust men seeking the classical version of fame. An excellent example of this can be found in an anecdote from the tumultuous 1790s.

In an 1811 letter to Benjamin Rush, Thomas Jefferson, by then retired, relayed his version of a conversation with arch-rival Alexander Hamilton twenty years before. The year was 1791 just when Hamilton and Jefferson emerged as the leaders of the two major political factions within the new nation.[55] Jefferson kept portraits of three men in his lodgings. Hamilton asked who they were. Jefferson replied that they were John

[53]John Adams, "Diary," October 18, 1761, Ibid., 222.
[54]John Adams to Jonathon Sewell, February 17, 1760, in *John Adams: Revolutionary Writings*, ed. Gordon Wood (New York: Library of America, 2001), 1:51-52.
[55]James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1-14. In 1791 the Federalists and Republicans had not yet become political parties or perhaps even completely outlined factions but Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton and Secretary of State Jefferson were discovering that they had very different visions for the future of the United States.

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Locke, Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton, who made up Jefferson's trinity of the greatest men in human history. Hamilton scoffed at this notion and boldly declared that Julius Caesar was the greatest man in history.[56]

In "Fame and the Founding Fathers" Douglass Adair claims that this story's significance lies not in the fact that Jefferson came away from the meeting convinced that Hamilton sought even then to overthrow the American republic, but because it underscores that both men sought fame. Both Hamilton and Jefferson, according to Adair, applied the same standard of fame. Where they differed was only in which type of glory they admired. Hamilton identified with statesmen and soldiers while Jefferson admired men of science and reason. Each man therefore chose a famous figure to pattern their lives after based on their own particular interests. Thus, Adair concludes, fame ruled Hamilton and Jefferson alike.[57]

In light of what we have seen concerning the founders thoughts on the role of politics in American society we can come to a different conclusion. The gap Jefferson thought he saw between himself and Hamilton was far greater than a simple difference in the type of fame each man hoped to acquire. First, consider Jefferson's choices for his great trinity. He did not choose either an ancient role model or a political one, despite his own largely politically dominated life. Instead he chose perhaps the three most iconic figures of science and reason in the modern era. More importantly, and more ominously for Jefferson, was Hamilton's choice of role model.

Jefferson *did* suspect that Hamilton wanted to overthrow the American republic. Jefferson feared that Hamilton harbored the same kind of reckless ambition that drove all

[56] Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, Jan. 16, 1811, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Retirement Series*, Ed., J. Jefferson Looney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 3:304-308.
[57] Adair, "Fame," in *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, 13.

the great classical heroes, Caesar most of all. Caesar overthrew the Roman Republic and destroyed what little claim to liberty the Romans enjoyed. If Hamilton identified with a man like Caesar it would be natural for Jefferson to fear that the secretary of the treasury might have "Caesarian" designs on the American republic. It made him a threat to liberty. Jefferson feared what the lust for fame might push Hamilton to do. After all, one critical component of classical fame was that it provided for the founders a, "a pantheon of models that an eighteenth century individual was invited to copy and emulate if he would win secular glory and immortality."[58] If Hamilton "emulated" Caesar it would mean disaster for the republic. Hamilton's actions throughout the 1790s only confirmed Jefferson's fears as the secretary of the treasury consolidated federal power, pushed for war against a fellow republic in France and eventually made himself head of an American army. As Jefferson once put it, "His system flowed from principles adverse to liberty, and was calculated to undermine and demolish the republic."[59] This explains why Jefferson thought it relevant to mention this incident to Rush, himself no great lover of the ancients, twenty years later.[60] Jefferson feared the kind of glory he thought both Caesar and Hamilton craved. In fact, whenever the other founders expressed their reservations about Hamilton they often mentioned his Caesar-like ambition. In a letter to his wife Abigail, John Adams echoed Jefferson's fears, "Hamilton is a man ambitious as Caesar. A subtle intriguer, his abilities would make him dangerous if he was to espouse a wrong side. His thirst for Fame is insatiable. I have ever kept my eye on him."[61] For the other

[58]Ibid., 12-13.
[59]Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, Sept. 9, 1972, in *Something That Will Surprise the World*. ed. Susan Dunn (New York: Perseus Books, 2006), 289.
[60]See above, p. 20.
[61]John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 31, 1796, in *The Founders on the Founders*, ed. John P. Kaminski (Charoltesville, University of Virginia Press, 2008), 200.

founders Hamilton represented a threat precisely because he thirsted for the classical version of fame.[62]

Modern Republican Legacy

Though the founders lacked the ancients' fascination with the classical ideal of fame, they were not indifferent to the judgment of posterity; far from it. The founders replaced fame with a uniquely modern obsession of their own; the creation of a liberal republic. This obsession became the cause upon which they dedicated all their efforts and it came with an understanding that its success or failure would ultimately shape their legacies.

As Adair points out, the American Revolution provided a "new world stage" for the founders but they viewed the Revolution as more than simply a way to achieve the same kind of fame as their ancient heroes. [63] The Revolution represented a complete

[62]Despite Jefferson's fears even Hamilton did not completely embrace the classical idea of fame. Hamilton derived his thoughts on human nature from Locke. He too saw liberty as the primary object of government. Hamilton recognized that men could not always be trusted with power, "A fondness for power is implanted, in most men, and it is natural to abuse it, when acquired." in Alexander Hamilton, "The Farmer Refuted," *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton,* ed. Harold Syrett. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1:126; Hamilton particularly feared a certain kind of man who might seek fame and power through demagoguery. "Of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people, commencing demagogues and ending tyrants." in Alexander Hamilton "Federalist 1" in *The Federalist Papers,* 4; See also, Peter McNamara, "Alexander Hamilton: The Love of Fame and Modern Democratic Statesmanship" in *The Noblest Minds,* 141-162.

[63]See generally, Adair, 6. Adair argues that the American Revolution gave the founders a new stage upon which to achieve greatness. This is at least partly true. The gap between the potential for accomplishment in the colonies in the era before the revolution and that which opened to ambitious American leaders after 1776 can hardly be overestimated. As John Adams put it in a letter to Jefferson in 1813, "When I was young, the *Summum Bonum* in Massachusetts was to be worth ten thousand pounds sterling, ride in a chariot, be colonel in a regiment of militia and hold a seat in his Majesty's council. No man's imagination aspired to anything higher beneath the skies." See generally, John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Nov. 15, 1813 *The Adams- Jefferson Letters,* 402; The same was true for the subject of this study. Before 1776, James Monroe could have looked forward to a similar though more Virginian version of Adams's summum bonum. Without the Revolution he likely would have remained a planter, moderately wealthy attorney, and perhaps a member of the House of Burgesses. Afterward, Monroe, though a rather middling member of Virginia's gentry, achieved the highest office in the land.

break with the past. It was the culmination of the age in which the founders lived. They were caught up in the era's spirit of hope and progress for the future. As George Washington put it, "The foundation of our Empire was not laid in the gloomy age of Ignorance and Superstition, but at an Epoch when the rights of mankind were better understood and more clearly defined, than at any former period." This epoch was the enlightenment.[64]

Historian Peter Gay, one of the foremost authorities on the enlightenment provides this excellent summation of the age and those who lived through it,

> "The men of the enlightenment united on a vastly ambitious program, a program of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom, above all, freedom in its many forms-freedom from arbitrary power, freedom of speech, freedom of trade, freedom to realize one's talents, freedom of aesthetic response, freedom , in a word, of moral man to make his own way in the world."[65]

Enlightenment era thinkers believed that the movement represented a break with the past and this idea went a long way toward shaping the founders' philosophy.[66] They believed that reason, observation and science could unlock the secrets of the world. This was the age of Benjamin Franklin, his kite and key; Isaac Newton and his apple.[67] Science and reason, they believed, were rapidly replacing superstition. The universal principles of human nature could be discovered through observation and experiment. Enlightenment thinkers believed that reason had virtually no limitation and this held true for political theory as well as scientific. Just as Newton and Franklin had unlocked the secrets of gravity and electricity the founders believed they could uncover the science behind government, or, to paraphrase David Hume reduce politics to a science. They pored over

[64] George Washington, "Circular to the States," June 8, 1783, in *George Washington: Writings*. ed. John Rhodehamel. (New York: Library of America, 1997), 517.
[65]Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, (New York: Knopf, 1966), 1:3.
[66]See, Ibid., 2:555-568.
[67]Merrill Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 401-405.

the histories of the ancient republics to uncover how and why they failed. They read diligently from Locke, Hume and Montesquieu to uncover the theory behind government. They ultimately came to believe that a new modern form of republican government could be perfected. As Hamilton argued, "the science of politics, however, like most other sciences has received great improvement...the excellencies of republican government may be retained and its imperfections lessened or avoided."[68] For the founders, the United States represented much more than the rebirth of Ancient Rome or Sparta in the New World. In the spirit of the enlightenment it represented an invention in government; a government the world had never seen.

History provided no perfect model of government for the founders. As James Madison declared, "Is it not the glory of the people of America, that whilst they have paid a decent regard to the opinions of former times and other nations, they have not suffered a blind veneration for antiquity, for custom, or for names, to overrule the suggestions of their own good sense, the knowledge of their own situation, and the lessons of their own experience?"[69] The very foundation of past governments proved unsatisfactory for what the founders hoped to accomplish. As John Adams claimed that "fear is the foundation of most governments; but it is so sordid and brutal a passion, and renders men in whose breasts it predominates so stupid and miserable, that Americans will not be likely to approve of any political institution which is founded on it." Adams understood that the American republic needed to be built on principles alien to the governments of the past.[70]

[68]David Hume, "That Politics May be Reduced to a Science" in *Theory of Politics*, Ed. Frederick Watkins (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1953), *134-147;* Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist 9" in *Federalist Papers*, 38; See also, Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 44.
[69]James Madison, "Federalist 14" in *Federalist Papers*, 66-67.
[70] John Adams, "Thoughts on Government", in *The Portable John Adams. e*d. John Patrick Diggins (New York: Penguin, 2004), 234.

As children of the enlightenment the founders decided upon liberty as the natural foundation for their new government. Such a thing was unprecedented in world history and as such the American experiment did not have a classical model upon which to fall back. Thomas Paine claimed that, "the Grecians and Romans were strongly possessed of the spirit of liberty but not the principle, for at the time they were determined not to be slaves themselves, they employed their power to enslave the rest of mankind."[71] It also had no counterpart in modern times as Madison maintained, "In Europe, charters of liberty have been granted by power. America has set the example ... of charters of power granted by liberty. This revolution in the practice of the world, may, with an honest praise, be pronounced the most triumphant epoch of its history, and the most consoling presage of its happiness." The importance of liberty to the American cause can hardly be overstated. [72]

A government based on liberty had one goal; ensuring man's rights. Individual rights remained sacred even after the establishment of government. A government could not deprive individuals of their natural, pre-political rights. Sam Adams, as early as 1772, understood this, "If men through fear, fraud or mistake, should in terms renounce and give up any essential natural right, the eternal law of reason and the great end of society, would absolutely vacate such renunciation; the right to freedom being the gift of God Almighty, it is not in the power of Man to alienate this gift, and voluntarily become a slave." [73] In the American republic, unlike its classical counterparts, rights derived not

[71]Thomas Paine, "The American Crisis V " in *Thomas Paine: Collected Writings*, ed. Eric Foner (New York: Library of America, 1995),169.
[72] James Madison, "Charters," *The National Gazette*, January 19, 1792, in *James Madison: Writings*, ed. Jack Rakove,(New York: Library of America), 502.
[73]Samuel Adams, "The Rights of the Colonists," in *The Writings of Sam Adams*, ed Harry Cushing (New York: Octagon Books, 1968), 2:355.

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from the state but from God and nature. If a government impinged on the rights of its citizens it lost its legitimacy.

Personal rights remained critically important in the new American republic. The new American government needed to protect the rights that allowed Americans to enjoy the blessings of liberty and society and perhaps the most important of these was the right to property. Madison explained that one of government's most important jobs included the protection of property rights. “The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government.”[74] Madison expostulated his reasoning, “government is instituted to protect property of every sort; as well that which lies in the various rights of individuals, as that which the term particularly expresses. This being the end of government, that alone is a just government which impartially secures to every man whatever is his own.” [75] John Adams agreed, “The moment the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence. If `Thou shalt not covet' and `Thou shalt not steal' were not commandments of Heaven, they must be made inviolable precepts in every society before it can be civilized or made free.” The founders’ cause consisted of creating a new political order that protected the personal rights like the right to property for all its citizens.[76]

[74] James Madison, “Federalist 10”, *The Federalist Papers, 42-48*;
[75] James Madison, “Essay on Property” *The National Gazette*, April 7, 1792, in *James Madison: Writings,* 515-517.

[76]John Adams, “A Defense of the American Constitutions,” *The Works of John Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1851), 6:8-9.

The founders believed that a government based on liberty was both unprecedented and more importantly nobler than any that had come before. Consider Madison's language in *The Federalist* while discussing the Revolution, "Happily for America, happily, we trust, for the whole human race, they pursued a new and more noble course. They accomplished a revolution which has no parallel in the annals of human society."[77] Thomas Paine's famous line from *Common Sense* says it best, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again." [78] The enlightenment and the improvement in politics created a new kind of republic designed to ensure a better life for all Americans. The founders believed that their experiment would ultimately change the world forever, "To this manly spirit, posterity will be indebted for the possession, and the world for the example of the numerous innovations displayed on the American theater, in favor of private rights and public happiness."[79] Their obsession then was not with classical fame but the American cause.

The founders' veneration for the cause is easy to understand, as Tom Paine put it, "The Sun never shined on a cause of greater worth."[80] The American cause galvanized Americans. The United States represented a test case for this kind of republicanism. The question was whether a government based on liberty could survive. If it failed the world would be forced to go back to the tyranny of old world monarchy. This meant that the American cause was crucial to the rest of the world as well as the United States. As Paine posited, "the Cause of America is in great measure the cause of all mankind." Washington also echoed his statements, "Our cause is noble; it is the cause of mankind!"

[77]James Madison, "Federalist 14" in *The Federalist Papers*, 66-67.
[78] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, ed. Issac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), 120.
[79]James Madison, "Federalist14" in *The Federalist Papers*, 66-67.
[80]Paine, *Common Sense*, 82.

Benjamin Franklin agreed, "It is a common observation here that our cause is the cause of all mankind, and that we are fighting for their liberty in defending our own." The viability of liberty as a basis for government depended upon the success of their revolution.[81]

The cause provided vital historical significance as well. According to John Adams, "objects of the most stupendous magnitude, and measure in which the lives and liberties of millions yet unborn are intimately interested, are now before us. We are in the very midst of a revolution the most complete, unexpected and remarkable of any in the history of nations." Millions of future lives would depend on whether their republican experiment succeeded. They would be remembered for what they had created in the United States; handing to posterity a government based on freedom and liberty.[82] Yet there were also great risks.

Even after the military victory over Great Britain the experiment could still fail. Washington said it best in his inaugural address, "the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the republican model of government, are justly considered deeply, perhaps as finally, staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people."[83] Failure would mean disaster for the cause of liberty. The founders recognized that they would be thought either fools or tyrants if they failed. Washington continued, "It is yet to be decided whether the Revolution must ultimately be considered as a blessing or a curse: a blessing or a curse, not to the present age alone, for with our

[81] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 63; George Washington to James Warren, March 31, 1779, *George Washington: Writings*, 342; Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Cooper, May 1, 1777, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. William Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 24:7.
[82] John Adams to William Cushing, June 9, 1776, *John Adams: Revolutionary Writings*, ed. Gordon Wood (New York: Library of America, 2011), 80.
[83] George Washington, "First Inaugural Address," *George Washington: Writings*, 733.

fate will the destiny of unborn millions be involved." The experiment remained an open question and the founders dedicated all their efforts to ensuring the republic's success.[84]

The founders became convinced that their individual legacies attached to the republican experiment. They believed they would be judged not simply on service to the state but on the success or failure of the American republic itself and particularly what each of them had done to promote and preserve the cause. America's uniquely liberal republican cause therefore became the driving force behind the founders' attempts to shape their historical legacies. George Washington suggested, "Happy, thrice happy shall they be pronounced hereafter, who have contributed any thing...who have assisted in protecting the rights of humane [sic] nature and establishing an Asylum for the poor and oppressed of all nations and religions." Whether they, like Washington, became president of the United States or even "performed the meanest office in erecting this stupendous fabrick [sic] of Freedom and Empire on the broad basis of Independency." Contributing to the creation of a modern American republic would ensure a man's legacy as a champion of the cause.[85]

Legacy in Practice: Three Examples

The founders did more than simply pay lip service to the cause. In many cases it shaped their actions. Incidents in the lives of three men whose legacies are closely tied to the American experiment; George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson help illustrate the role legacy building had on the founders.

[84]George Washington, "Circular to the States," June 8, 1783, *George Washington: Writings*, 518.
[85]George Washington, "General Orders," April 18, 1783. *George Washington: Writings*, 513.

Washington is the one founder who might be said to have embodied the classical ideal of fame. Indeed, the terms used to praise him smack of classical republicanism. The Revolution made him, like Cicero two thousand years earlier, "father of his country." Americans also named him "Cincinnatus" after the Roman farmer who was plucked from his farm to serve as dictator and promptly returned to the plow after defeating Rome's enemies. Yet for Washington simple fame was not the goal. He dedicated much of his career to preserving liberty and self government. Two of the most significant decisions in his life show how the desire to be remembered as a champion of American republicanism outshone his own lust for personal fame.

Washington understood that his own ambitions were meaningless unless they served the new modern republic. Washington earned the bulk of his "fame" as commander of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. At the end of the war Washington made the momentous decision to lay down his sword in favor of civilian government; in essence refusing an offer to become king. Two hundred years of stable American republicanism blinds many Americans as to how critical, and indeed groundbreaking, such a decision was. When King George III learned that Washington planned to do such a thing he replied if he did Washington would be the "greatest man in the world."[86] The temptation to make himself king was considerable. The Articles of Confederation remained weak and the army went unpaid and under-supported throughout the war. Many of the problems Washington and the nation endured could have been alleviated had he made himself ruler. In fact, some in the continental army urged

[86]Quoted in Francois Furstenberg, I*n the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery and the Making of a Nation (*New York, Penguin, 2006), 66.

Washington to do just that.[87] Some believed the experiment was failing and clamored for a strong leader to take the reins. Washington resisted whatever urge he might have had to rule. He understood that the greatest question of the age was liberty and the ability of a republic to protect it. As he put it, "It should be the highest ambition of every American to extend his views beyond himself, and to bear in mind that his conduct will not only affect himself, his country, and his immediate posterity; but that its influence may be co-extensive with the world, and stamp political happiness or misery on ages yet unborn."[88] Washington knew that civilian authority over the military remained paramount to the survival of a liberal republic. As commander of the continental army Washington realized that he posed the greatest threat to liberty.

In Washington's letter surrendering his command he describes himself and the rest of the founding generation as, "actors on a most conspicuous theatre." He believed that the United States had been granted a "fairer opportunity for political happiness than any other nation has ever been favored with." If the founders failed, "the fault would be intirely [sic] their own." He hoped that his actions and the remarks he made concerning the experiment would "be the *Legacy* of one who has ardently wished on all occasions to be useful to his country." [89] Washington recognized that by turning down the kingship and subordinating himself to civilian government he took a major step toward proving

[87]See, generally, Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution*, 1763-1789 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 603-604. When Washington rode to Annapolis in December of 1783 to surrender his command some feared and others hoped that he might become an American Caesar. In fact, elements in the army and Congress back in March were ready to attempt a coup. This became known as the Newburgh conspiracy for the city in which the incident took place.
[88] George Washington to the Legislature of Pennsylvania, September 12, 1789, *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*, W.W Abbot and Dorothy Twohig, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 24
[89] George Washington, "Circular to the States," June 8, 1783, in *George Washington: Writings*, 517-518, 525.

that a republic dedicated to liberty could survive. In the process Washington secured his own legacy as a champion of modern republicanism.[90]

Shortly after Washington gave up his command, Lafayette summed up the relationship between the former general and the American cause, "Never did one man live whom the soldier, statesmen, patriot and philosopher could equally admire, and never was a Revolution brought about, that in its motives its conduct and its consequences could so well immortalize its Glorious Chief." Washington cemented his legacy as a champion of American republicanism by risking all the accolades men like Lafayette heaped upon him in order to guide the country as its first President.[91]

By the time Washington assumed the presidency, his war record and his decision to surrender his military command made him America's most celebrated hero. When the new government under the Constitution formed Washington showed reluctance to assume the presidency. He realized that the office might erode the reputation he had earned as a general. Yet his countrymen told him, quite correctly, that he was the only man who could be trusted with such an office given the nation's fragile state. Before the first election, Alexander Hamilton declared to Washington, "on your acceptance of the office of President the success of the new government in its commencement may materially depend." Hamilton maintained that Washington's acceptance of the presidency would convince the populace that the Constitution and the new government were worthy of

[90] See, Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 186; Elkins and Mckitrick, 34. Most historians agree with Hamilton's assessment that it was Washington who provided the new government with legitimacy. Joseph Ellis explains that Washington "hoped to lend his prestige to the fledgling federal government thereby helping it survive its formative and fragile phase." It was his duty to aid the government by giving it legitimacy. His ultimate goal was to add the "necessary credibility" to the federal government. Elkins and Mckitrick agree, explaining that Washington's person and "more pertinently his prior career and what was known of it represented much that that was most essential… to legitimize a republic."

[91] Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington July, 22, 1783, in *Founders, 486*

support, “Your signature to the proposed system pledges your judgment for its being such a one as upon the whole was worthy of the public approbation.”[92] Hamilton knew and ultimately convinced Washington that the government would not survive without his taking the presidency. Washington realized that any accolades he earned during the war would be for naught if the nation itself crumbled after the victory over Great Britain.[93]

Washington's contemporaries praised his dedication to the republican cause. One observer nicely outlines the difference in how the founding generation viewed the kind of fame the ancients' possessed with the republican legacy of a man like Washington, “How much stronger and bolder the claims of Washington to immortality! In the impulses of mad and selfish ambition [Caesar and Alexander] acquired fame by wading to the conquest of the world through seas of blood.” Washington was different. For his countrymen he “stood forth, the pure and virtuous champion of their rights.”[94] Lafayette agreed, calling his old friend the “Savior of his country, Benefactor of mankind the Protecting angel of Liberty.”[95] Washington was not alone in shaping his actions to ensure his legacy as a champion of modern American republicanism.

Benjamin Franklin is perhaps the most explicit example of one of the founders attempting to extend his republican views into posterity. Though Franklin rejected the classical ideal of fame, he nevertheless hoped to cement his own republican legacy. He tried to accomplish this with his famous autobiography. Franklin explains in the opening pages that, “Having emerged from the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and

[92]Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, September 1788, in Alexander Hamilton, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, Harold C. Syrett, ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 5: 221; Gouverneur Morris also insisted to Washington that though the office would likely do no good to his own reputation he was needed Gouverneur Morris to George Washington, Oct. 30 1787, in *Founders*, 497.
[93] Thomas Pangle and Lorraine Smith Pangle. “George Washington and the Life of Honor” in *Noblest Minds*, 67
[94]Elkanah Watson, “Memoir,” Jan 23-25, 1785, in *Founders on the Founders*, 492.
[95]Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, January 10, 1784, in ibid. 489.

bred, to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world," he believed that "my posterity may like to know," the methods by which he accomplished so much, "as they may find some of them suitable to their own situations and therefore to be imitated." In other words, Franklin wrote the autobiography as a guide or manual for other modern republicans to follow. [96]

Unlike Washington, Franklin wanted his legacy to be apolitical. The most striking thing about the autobiography is that it largely ignores politics. This is all the more interesting considering that Franklin wrote much of it during the most momentous political events of his life.[97] This illustrates a great deal concerning Franklin's intent when writing it. Franklin ignores politics because he did not think it critical for Americans to participate in "public life." He takes great pains to make himself look less a politician and more an entrepreneur. He focuses on the skills that made him a successful businessman and citizen.[98] The new American republic did not need heroes or "giants who straddled the earth," but good citizens. [99] His motto, far from highlighting the importance of fame, instead aimed at producing good men, "Strive to be the greatest man in your country, and you may be disappointed. Strive to be the best and you may

[96]Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: J. Lipppincott, 1868. Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 1; See generally, Gordon Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin, 2004); See also, Ormond Seavy, *Becoming Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and the Life*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 9,29-51; A number of scholars have noted that the Franklin of the Autobiography does not reflect Franklin's actual life but what is important is that he tried to portray himself and his life as a way to be emulated.
[97]Franklin wrote Part I of the autobiography in 1771, Part 2 in 1784 in Paris, Part 3 in 1788 and part 4 in 1789.
[98]Steven Forde, "Ben Franklin: Hero" in *The Noblest Minds*, 39-58.
[99] Ibid., 41.

succeed." This is all the more important given how critical the autobiography has become in understanding eighteenth century American culture.[100]

Max Weber famously wrote that Franklin's autobiography represented the most important document for understanding the spirit of modern capitalism.[101] Weber argues that Franklin saw the acquisition of money and hard work as a duty. He called it a "psychic hangover" from Calvinism but Weber misunderstood Franklin's means for his goals. Franklin, taking his cue from enlightenment scholars, believed that for Americans earning money was not a duty in itself but rather a key to achieving personal happiness. Just as the creation of the United States was the culmination of the political theories of the enlightenment the autobiography is the final product of a transition from classical to modern ideas on the importance of wealth. Classical republics needed citizens willing to sacrifice themselves to the public good. The United States, a modern republic, needed citizens to lead prosperous lives.[102] The great French enlightenment philosopher, the Baron de Montesquieu, who exerted enormous influence on the founders outlines the sharp distinction between modern political thinkers on commerce and those from the ancient world in *The Spirit of the Laws,* "Greek political writers who lived under popular government acknowledged no other force to sustain them except that of virtue. Those of our own day speak of nothing else but of manufactures, of commerce, of wealth and of

[100]Benjamin Franklin, "Poor Richard's Almanack 1747" in *Benjamin Franklin: Writings*, ed. J.A. Leo Lemay, (New York: Library of America, 1987), 1240; In 1748 Poor Richard wrote a similar poem which underscores the problems he had with fame, see ibid, 1245;

> Robbers must exalted be,
> Small ones on the Gallow-Tree,
> While Greater ones ascend to Thrones,
> But what is that to thee or me?

[101]Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, ed. Richard Wedberg (New York: Norton, 2009).Weber believed that Franklin's protestant work ethic came through in the pages of the autobiography which led to his insistence on work and toil. Weber believes that Franklin advocated these virtues as ends. Earning money was an end in itself. Work was a positive good for its own sake.
[102]See generally, Ormond Seavy, *Becoming Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and the Life* (University Park, Penn: The Pennsylvania State University, 1988), 10-11, 29-51.

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luxury itself."[103] To modern republicans like Franklin, commerce provided what political participation and civic virtue did to the ancients. [104]

Nearly everything Franklin advocates in the autobiography revolved around business rather than politics.[105] He proposes that all American citizens strive for a "useful" education consisting of those skills necessary for business and commerce, including mathematics, accounting and mechanics. Like Benjamin Rush he saw little use for a classical education for most Americans. Latin and Greek did not serve the vast majority of American businessmen.[106]

Franklin's famous 13 virtues were also meant to provide the moral path to prosperity.[107] Franklin did not advocate the traditional classical virtues of honor, duty or fame.[108] Virtues such as industry and frugality are aimed at simple, common Americans.[109] Franklin believed that developing social virtue within the citizenry outweighed those skills necessary for a man to become a political creature. This was how he hoped to benefit the cause; by giving American citizens a model to strive for; to work hard, save money and generally make the most out of their personal lives, leaving politics to side rather than striving to achieve honor and fame.

It is most fitting to end this chapter with Thomas Jefferson because he understood better than most the relationship between the American cause and his own historical legacy and he more than any other person influenced James Monroe's life. Jefferson, as

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[103] Montesquieu, quoted in Rahe, *Republics* 1:3.
[104] See Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism,* 16-24; Forde, "Hero" in *Noblest Minds,* 46
[105] Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism,* 17-19.
[106] Forde, "Benjamin Franklin: Hero" in *Noblest Minds*, 41-42.
[107] Franklin's Thirteen Virtues: Temperance, Silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, humility.
[108]See Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism* 55; Forde, "Hero" in *Noblest Minds*, 45
[109] Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin Mineola* (Philadelphia: J Lipincott, 1868, reprint New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 64-66.

we saw with Alexander Hamilton, rejected the classical version of fame. Yet he, like Washington and Franklin, understood that his part in the revolution would shape his legacy. Jefferson's now famous inscription on his own tomb is a testament to that. Jefferson was perhaps the most accomplished statesman of his era. He served as secretary of state and vice president, wrote treaties with Great Britain and France, and twice won election as president. He even founded the first American political party; a party which he led from obscurity in the 1790s to such dominance in the 1820s that its opponent was eliminated from American politics forever. Yet, when the time came to write his epitaph Jefferson virtually ignored his political accomplishments.

Jefferson, keenly aware that these would be his final words to posterity, chose these simple words for his gravestone,

"Here was buried
Thomas Jefferson
Author
of the Declaration of Independence,
of
the Statute of Virginia
for Religious Freedom and
Father of the University
of Virginia."[110]

Of all his accomplishments Jefferson chose to highlight only these three. Only the Declaration of Independence is an overtly political accomplishment and its inclusion in

[110]Thomas Jefferson, "Inscription for his Tombstone" *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 12:483.

the list is telling. For Jefferson the Declaration was not important simply because it severed the political ties between Great Britain and the colonies. In his mind it signaled to the world the dawning of a new era in the United States and the world. He wanted posterity to remember, above all, his part in creating the American republic. This, he believed, would secure his legacy.

Jefferson's inclusion of the Declaration on his epitaph was the last in a series of small battles he had waged to highlight his role in creating the document. Federalists like John Marshall tried to diminish Jefferson's role as primary author of the Declaration. Jefferson responded late in life by including within his own autobiography his first draft of the Declaration along with the changes made by Congress. Jefferson hoped to emphasize his own role as the author of the document both with his autobiography and later his tombstone.[111] Jefferson's final words on the subject of the Declaration give great insight into how he hoped to be remembered by succeeding generations. In 1826 Jefferson was invited to the 50th anniversary celebration of the Declaration in Washington, D.C. Far too sick to attend, Jefferson penned what historian Merrill Peterson calls, his "last opportunity to embellish a legend." Jefferson claimed that in the years since the Revolution, "All eyes are opened or opening to the rights of men." Because of the Enlightenment, "the general spread of the light of science has already laid open the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with a saddle on his back." Finally, Jefferson wanted the anniversary of his famous Declaration to be the symbol for this new age, "let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollection

[111] Francis Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson: Reputation and Legacy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006),138-141, 160-161.

of these rights and an undiminished devotion to them." This is how Jefferson hoped to be remembered; as a champion of the republican cause.[112]

In the cases of Washington, Franklin and Jefferson their dedication to the cause had tangible results. The same can be said for somewhat lesser figures such as James Monroe. Before we turn to Monroe's efforts to secure his own republican legacy we should first look more closely at how he came to view the republican cause.

[112]Thomas Jefferson to Roger O. Weightman, June 24, 1826, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 476-477; See also, Merrill Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 5.

Chapter Two

James Monroe and the Liberal Republic

Most Americans recognize Emmanuel Leutze's famous painting "Washington crossing the Delaware." This 1850 work shows a towering George Washington proudly standing in the bow of a longboat leading a group of American soldiers across the icy Delaware River en route to a glorious Christmas victory over the Hessians at the Battle of Trenton in 1776. Fewer people realize that the man holding the American flag standing beside the general is meant to be a young James Monroe, America's fifth president and at the time an 18-year-old lieutenant who suffered a bullet wound during the battle. While this specific image is apocryphal, Monroe would have agreed that Leutze's dramatic portrayal of that night captures the spirit of the American Revolution. After all, for Monroe, the American Revolution represented the most important event in human history.[1] Monroe saw his personal legacy as inexorably tied to the American experiment. His early years as a revolutionary war soldier and later as an apprentice in the philosophy of the Revolution under his lifelong friend and mentor Thomas Jefferson instilled within Monroe a burning urge to champion the liberal republican cause.

James Monroe became closely associated with the American cause at an early age. Born in 1758, few records from Monroe's early life exist. In 1766, he watched as his father Spence joined the Virginia resistance to the Stamp Act.[2] Spence Monroe died in 1774 and his son came under the protection of Joseph Jones, his uncle and a prominent member of the Virginia gentry. Jones, a leading figure in the House of Burgesses later

[1]David Hackett Fisher, *Washington's Crossing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-6.
[2]David Eaton, *Historical Atlas of Westmoreland County* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1942), 15-18.

served as a member of the Committee of Public Safety, which governed Virginia during the war. Jones was Monroe's first mentor and with the loss of his father became the dominant influence during the young man's formative years. Many years later Monroe praised his uncle's virtues in the first pages of his autobiography proclaiming that, "few men possessed in a higher degree the confidence and esteem of his fellow citizens, or merited it more, for soundness of intellect, perfect integrity, and devotion to his country."[3] Jones brought his nephew with him to Williamsburg, then the Virginia capital, and enrolled him at the College of William and Mary. While at William and Mary Monroe, still only 16, witnessed Virginia's colonial leadership move toward open rebellion to British rule.[4]

Monroe arrived in Williamsburg as Virginia began to take the fateful steps that led to revolution. Many Virginia leaders saw the British response to the Boston Tea Party, specifically the closing of the Port of Boston and the so-called Coercive Acts, as a violation of all the colonies' rights. As reports of events in Massachusetts came to Williamsburg in 1774 the Virginia leadership called for a day of fasting and prayer in order to, as Thomas Jefferson put it, "turn the king and Parliament to moderation and justice."[5] In response, Governor John Murray, the Fourth Earl of Dunmore, dissolved the House of Burgesses. The members of the Virginia assembly refused to disband and

[3] James Monroe, *The Autobiography of James Monroe*, ed., Stuart Gerry Brown (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 21-22.
[4] See generally, John Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (Williamsbrug,: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 1-5.
[5]Merrill Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 69-70.

declared that the attack on Massachusetts represented an attack on all the colonies and pledged solidarity.[6]

Events in Williamsburg made quite an impression on the teenaged Monroe. Like many students at William and Mary he became actively involved in the rebellion. Monroe took part in a raid on the governor's mansion during the summer of 1775. Upon learning of the governor's refusal to turn over a cache of weapons held at his residence, a group of two dozen men, of whom Monroe was the youngest, stormed the governor's "palace" on June 24, 1775. They met no resistance and confiscated 230 muskets 301 swords and 18 pistols. Soon the Revolution would come to dominate Monroe's life.[7]

Whether through his father's lingering influence, his uncle's patronage, or his time in Williamsburg, Monroe reacted strongly to what he saw as British tyranny. As Virginia and the other colonies moved toward war Monroe found he could not sit idle. During the spring of 1776, after only two years at William and Mary, he abandoned his schooling and joined the Continental Army. Training for several months in Williamsburg, Monroe departed to join George Washington's army in New York as a lieutenant in the newly created 3rd Virginia Regiment. Monroe's Virginians arrived in New York in September just before the British invaded Manhattan Island.[8] The young lieutenant saw action in a number of engagements during the fall and early winter of 1776, but it was at Trenton on Christmas night where Monroe actually shed blood for the cause.

The battle of Trenton occurred when Washington, after weeks of retreating from the British in the early winter of 1776, resolved to strike back. A detachment of Hessian

[6]Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest For National Identity* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971),4.
[7]Theodorick Bland Jr., *The Bland Papers* (Petersburg, Virginia: J.C. Ruffin, 1840), 1:xxiii; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 5-7.
[8]Monroe, *Autobiography*; 22; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 7.

mercenaries occupied the New Jersey town of Trenton. Washington and his small, tired and hungry band of patriots re-crossed the Delaware River on the night of December 25. Monroe's own exploits at the Battle of Trenton were only slightly less dramatic than the famous scene in Leutze's painting. On this "tempestuous" Christmas night Lieutenant Monroe, still just a teenager, accompanied a unit of 50 men in the advanced guard through "a heavy fall of snow" toward the town of Trenton where 1500 Hessians waited.[9] Along this frigid road Monroe's company met a Dr. Riker who initially berated the soldiers for occupying the path near his home until learning that they were American patriots whereupon he immediately insisted on accompanying the men to Trenton, because as he told Monroe, "I know something is to be done and I am going with you. I am a doctor and I may help some poor fellow."[10] Monroe turned out to be that "poor fellow."

The American cause, in large part, depended upon the coming battle. Losses at Long Island and White Plains and the capture of Forts Washington and Lee, not to mention the capture of General Charles Lee himself, put the American cause in jeopardy. American morale desperately needed a victory. These were, as Thomas Paine wrote, "the times that try men's souls."[11] Year later Monroe echoed Paine's dire assessment. The army's setbacks had, he believed, "put fairly at issue with the nation the great question whether they were competent and resolved to support their independence or would sink

[9] James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 25.
[10] James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 25, 230.
[11] Paine, Thomas "The American Crisis." Number I December 19, 1776 in *The American Revolution: Writings from the War of Independence* (New York: Literary Classics of America, 2001), 238.

under the pressure."[12] On that day Monroe showed that he at least would not "sink under the pressure."

Monroe, along with his commanding officer Captain William Washington, a relative of the commanding general, comprised the advanced guard. As the attack began Washington, Monroe and their men surged forward and captured the Hessians' cannon just as they were about to open fire.[13] During the assault Captain Washington suffered a wound and Monroe assumed command. In his memoirs, James Wilkinson the nefarious future commanding general of the U.S. Army remarked that, "these particular acts of gallantry have never been noticed and yet they could not have been too highly appreciated."[14] Victory at Trenton did not come cheap for Monroe. "Shot down by a musket ball which passed through his [my] breast and shoulder, he" would have died but for the actions of Dr. Riker, who "took up an artery" and saved his life.[15] Although the 18 year old survived the wound troubled him for the rest of his life and served as a constant reminder of the cause.[16]

This marked the high point of Monroe's military service. After Trenton, his army career stalled. Upon recovering from the wound he returned to Virginia and during the next few months attempted, without success, to recruit men for the war effort.[17] Monroe then served as an aide-de-camp to William Alexander (the heir to a Scottish earldom and known to his contemporaries by the honorific Lord Stirling) before returning to Virginia

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[12] James Monroe, *Autobiography,* 24.
[13]William Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1898), 360-364.
[14]James Wilkinson, *Memoirs of my Own Times*, (New York: AMS Press, 1816) 130. Interestingly while Wilkinson praised Monroe's actions some 30 years later Monroe told Thomas Jefferson that he'd rather be shot than serve under Wilkinson.
[15]James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 25-26, 223-224.. Note that Monroe wrote his autobiography in the third person thus the awkward use of his own name in place of I.
[16]Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 222, 231, 247; James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 25-26.
[17]Monroe to John Thornton, July 3, 1777, *The Papers of James Monroe*, ed. Daniel Preston (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), 2:4-5; Ammon, *James Monroe,* 15-17.

in early 1779 with a commission as a colonel in the militia and with orders to recruit a regiment to command. Again his efforts failed. While the rest of Monroe's military career paled in excitement to his exploits at Trenton it did reinforce his dedication to the cause. His interaction with the men who led the revolutionary struggle made a significant impression on the young officer. [18]

Monroe was awestruck by the men of the Revolutionary generation. They served as an example for him to follow and a model upon which to pattern his own career. As a staff officer for Lord Stirling, Monroe met men like Alexander Hamilton, John Marshall, and even the young French general the Marquis de Lafayette. Monroe, years later commented on these men in his autobiography, "young as he was, he became acquainted with all the general officers of the army, with their aides and all the other officers in that circle who were the most distinguished for their talents and merit."[19] Monroe explained why they left such a powerful impression on him, "commencing in that great theater with advantage at the earliest moment at which the mind is capable of extended exertion."[20] He believed that his own exploits during the war were unworthy of notice when compared with these men. "In the great events of which I have spoken Mr. Monroe, being a mere youth counted for nothing in comparison with those distinguished citizens who had the direction of public affairs." The Revolutionary leaders even provided Monroe with an example to live his own life, "the opportunity afforded him for practical

[18]Ammon, *James Monroe*, 27.
[19]James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 31. Again Monroe used the third person to refer to himself in the Autobiography.
[20]Ibid, 26.

instruction aided by the society in which he moved could not fail to have been useful to him."[21] In fact, George Washington represented the most important of these models.

Though Thomas Jefferson became the dominant influence in Monroe's political life Washington also served as an important role model. Monroe modeled his philosophy after Jefferson but during his career he also strove to emulate Washington's style of leadership. He hoped, on some level, to garner the same kind of praise Washington achieved. In his autobiography, Monroe commented on the impression Washington made on him. The General exhibited, "a deportment so firm so dignified, exalted, but yet so modest and composed I have never seen in any other person."[22] Monroe sang Washington's praises for his actions during the war. He called the general an example of, "integrity, fortitude [and] respect to the civil authority and devotion to the rights and liberties of his country, of which neither Rome nor Greece have exhibited the equal."[23] As the liberal republic's champion Washington was, for Monroe, the greatest hero in human history.

Monroe witnessed Washington's exploits first-hand. During a retreat from the British Monroe saw Washington, "at the head of a small band, or rather in its rear for he was always near the enemy, and his countenance and manner made an impression….which time can never efface."[24] Throughout his career Monroe tried, ultimately in vain, to at least approach Washington's military exploits. During the War of 1812 Monroe attempted unsuccessfully to convince President James Madison to give him a field command against the British in defense of the republic. Moreover, Washington

[21]Ibid., 26, 31.
[22]Ibid., 24.
[23] Ibid.
[24]Ibid.

made such an impression on Monroe that he even followed Washington's example as President; once in the White House Monroe modeled his own administration after the First President. Monroe built a geographically and politically diverse Cabinet just as Washington had done, with an eye toward uniting the nation after a divisive war.[25] Also, Monroe again like Washington took a series of Presidential tours designed to bring the country together. While men like Washington provided a model of behavior for the young patriot, others did not live up to Monroe's lofty expectations.

Monroe criticized those who he thought were not doing their part in helping the American cause. He lamented that many of the best men sat at home: "Retired from the war & neglecting the cause in which our Country is engaged the more respectable part of the Inhabitants of this Country give themselves up to domestic repose and suffer nothing to obtrude on them which may disturb it." Like most Americans Monroe recognized the right of men to enjoy their "domestic repose," and concluded that, "tis true that these men in a moral point of view do no injury." Still, "at such a time as this when … the perpetual freedom and Independence of an extensive Continent [is] at stake, something more is required from good Citizens than barely to avoid moral evil."[26] Unlike his Greek and Roman predecessors, Monroe understood and appreciated the right to enjoy private life but he believed so fiercely in the cause that it infuriated him when the "best" men shirked their duty. He could not understand why so many of his fellow Americans refused to support the cause that had nearly killed him. This was especially true considering many

[25]The similarities between Washington and Monroe's cabinet are fascinating. During their presidency's each enjoyed a period of non-partisan harmony(for Washington this lasted only a few years before it became clear that his Secretary of State Jefferson's vision for the country contrasted sharply with his Secretary of the Treasury's) Both tried desperately to unite the country and thereby head off the insidious power of faction and party. Yet each saw the very thing they tried so hard to stamp out rise again under the very men they appointed to the cabinet.

[26]James Monroe to William Woodford, September, 1779, *Papers of James Monroe*, 2:14-15(Exact Date Unknown)

of these “stay-at-homes” had led the country to war. He felt the sting greater on his return home when he pondered his own experiences during the war and compared it with the lack of resolve from his fellow Virginians. He became frustrated with his inability to recruit troops, and was appalled that many Virginians refused to defend the country without some kind of bounty. It appeared to Monroe that many Americans had abandoned or at least only paid lip service to the great cause. In a letter to John Thornton, the Captain of his company, the young soldier proclaimed, “the principles on which the war is carried on now is intirely [sic] different from what it was at first.” This represented both an ideological and a personal affront to Monroe. He was offended that his fellow Virginians were not properly motivated to fight for the cause and at the same time they were depriving him of his much coveted field command. Yet Monroe's failure to secure a command eventually turned out to be a blessing because it led him to Thomas Jefferson and his second career.[27]

When his military career ended in frustration in 1780, Monroe was still only 22 years old. By this point in his life he had witnessed his home state, led in part by his uncle, rebel against the mother country. He had achieved some measure of notoriety on the battlefield, having been wounded in service to his country. Also, Monroe had been frustrated by his inability to recruit troops and earn a field command. Until this point Monroe did not fully understand exactly what the Revolution meant. In many respects Monroe fought for the American cause before truly understanding it. Prior to his apprenticeship to Jefferson there is little evidence from Monroe's surviving correspondence that he understood the nature of the founders’ version of liberal

[27] James Monroe to John Thornton, November 21, 1777, *Papers of James Monroe*, 6-7; James Monroe to John Thornton, July 3, 1777, in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 2: 4-5. In this letter Monroe tells Thornton of his failed efforts to raise a regiment

republicanism. In fact, prior to his apprenticeship Monroe, simply describes the "spirit" of the war in an almost militaristic fashion. He highlights classical republican characteristics such as honor, and self-sacrifice. In the same letter complaining of his fellow Americans lack of resolve for the fight Monroe told Thornton that, "patriotism, publick [sic] spirit and disinterestedness have almost vanished and honor and virtue are empty names."[28] After coming under Jefferson's wing, the fellow Virginian taught Monroe that the Revolution ultimately hinged upon the new ideas of individualism, freedom, and republican government.

Monroe and Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson's impact on Monroe's life can hardly be overstated. Jefferson emerged as the guiding influence in Monroe's political career. While it is probably too much to say that Monroe came to Jefferson as a political blank slate, according to Monroe, his time at William and Mary had only laid "a good foundation" for his education.[29] Jefferson built upon that foundation by schooling Monroe in the enlightenment era principles upon which the Revolution stood.

Monroe may have met Jefferson during his time in Williamsburg before the war but his close association with his future mentor did not begin until after Monroe left the army. Failing to recruit a regiment in Virginia, Monroe decided to put military life behind him. [30] During 1779 his uncle Joseph Jones provided Monroe with a letter of introduction to Jefferson, then serving as governor of Virginia and residing in Williamsburg. Jones told

[28] James Monroe to John Thornton, November 21, 1777, in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 6-7.
[29]Monroe, *Autobiography*, 31.
[30]Joseph Jones to George Washington, Aug 11, 1777, in *The Letters of Joseph Jones*, ed. Worthington Ford. (New York, The New York Times, 1971), 77-87; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 15.

his nephew that he "would do well to cultivate his [Jefferson's] friendship." Because, "while you continue to deserve his esteem he will not withdraw his countenance."[31] Jefferson, who adopted a number of protégés during his long political career, took to the young colonel immediately. Jefferson eased the professional soldier back into civilian life by permitting Monroe to study law under his watchful eye. Monroe also re-enrolled in the College of William and Mary to finish his education.[32]

From the moment he came into Jefferson's circle Monroe realized that his new mentor would be of singular importance to his career. Monroe told Jefferson that his apprenticeship began after, "a variety of disappointments with respect to the prospects of my private fortune" which "nearly destroyed me." Monroe believed that "in this situation had I not form'd [sic] a connection with you I sho'd [sic] most certainly have retired from society with a resolution never to have entered on the stage again." Jefferson "became acquainted with me and undertook the direction of my studies." In fact Monroe went as far as to tell Jefferson that "whatever I am at present in the opinion of others or whatever I may be in future has greatly arose from your friendship." Jefferson saved Monroe's career and set him down the proper path. Monroe remembered Jefferson's kindness almost half a century later, and preserved it for posterity when he wrote his memoirs.[33]

Monroe's devotion to Jefferson is clear throughout his autobiography. In a book which is almost devoid of personal affairs an obvious fondness and attachment to Jefferson emerges.[34] While discussing his early years studying with Jefferson, Monroe gushes over the opportunity to read law under, "a very enlightened and distinguished

[31]Joseph Jones to James Monroe, March 1 1780, in *Papers of James Monroe*, 16-17.
[32]Ammon, *James Monroe* 29-31; James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 31; Noble Cunningham, *Jefferson and Monroe*, 15.
[33]James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson. Sept. 9, 1780, in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 26-27.
[34]Stuart Gerry Brown, *The Autobiography of James Monroe,* "Preface" v-vii.

patriot."[35] Monroe recognized Jefferson's importance to his own future. He strove to prove himself to his mentor. He assured Jefferson that nothing in his life would make him happier than to prove to the Governor that his, "kindness and attention" made the "proper impressions" on Monroe. He remained forever grateful to Jefferson for his tutelage, which Monroe claimed, "really put me under such obligations to you that I fear I shall hardly ever have it in my power to repay them." Monroe quickly realized that he needed to remain tied to Jefferson if his ambitions were to flourish.[36]

One particular incident shows how far his dedication went. When the Virginia capital moved from Williamsburg to Richmond Jefferson asked his protégé to accompany him in order for Monroe to continue his apprenticeship. Following Jefferson meant leaving William and Mary as well as foregoing the opportunity to study under one of Virginia's preeminent legal minds, George Wythe, who had recently taken a position as the College's Professor of Law. Monroe's decision to follow Jefferson speaks about his own preference for the future. Had Monroe decided to stay at William and Mary, he would likely have focused primarily on the law and may have become a country attorney largely forgotten by history. One major reason behind Monroe's decision: following Jefferson meant grasping an opportunity to enter a profession that appealed to Monroe far more than the law.[37]

Monroe's apprenticeship to Jefferson while ostensibly "reading law" entailed far more than simple preparation for the Virginia Bar. Jefferson introduced Monroe to the

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[35] James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 33.
[36]Quotes are from James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, September 9, 1780 in *Papers of James Monroe*, 26-27; W.P. Cresson, *James Monroe*, (Norwalk Connecticut: The Easton Press, 1974.Originally published by University Of North Carolina Press, 1946), 63.
[37]Ammon *James Monroe*, 29-32; Joseph Jones to James Monroe, March 1, 1780, *The Papers of James Monroe*. 2: 16-17.

world of the enlightenment. Monroe embarked on a course of study that taught him the Revolution's core principles. Though often dismissed as a practical politician uninterested in political theory, Monroe became fascinated by the intellectual work Jefferson offered precisely because it led him to the kind of career he envisioned for himself. He told Jefferson, "I mean to convey to you that although I shall most probably be glad some time hence to acquire more by the practice of the law (if I have it in my power) I would wish to prosecute my studies on the most liberal plan to qualify myself for any business I might chance to engage in." Although the law would be Monroe's nominal business, his true calling lay elsewhere.[38] The governor provided his apprentice with a reading list that prepared him to be more than a simple country lawyer. Jefferson designed these readings to prepare Monroe for a career dedicated to championing the American cause.[39]

Two documents provide evidence as to the kind of work-load Jefferson provided. The first consists of a list of books Jefferson provided to another protégé a decade before. In 1771 Jefferson sent Robert Skipwith a list of books outlining the works he thought would help any young aspiring politician. The second is a list of books Jefferson sold to Monroe in 1784 before the latter left for Paris. In his letter to Skipwith Jefferson included works from various scholars. Jefferson assigned the old legal standards such as Coke and Blackstone, but he also suggested others, less obviously useful for a future lawyer. He wanted to provide his students with a well-rounded education. He advised Skipwith to read the great political works of John Locke, Algernon Sidney and Montesquieu. He also assigned works of history; choosing David Hume as the best of the modern historians and

[38]James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson. October 1, 1781, *The Papers of James Monroe* 31-32.
[39]Ammon, *James Monroe*, 30; Monroe, *Autobiography,* 32; W.P. Cresson, *James Monroe*, 53.

Livy and Plutarch as the best of the ancient scholars. Jefferson recommended works like Georges Buffon and Benjamin Franklin in the sciences and even John Milton and Joseph Addison under the heading, Fine Arts. Jefferson defended his inclusion of works of fiction from critics of such work who argued that "nothing can be useful but the learned lumber of Greek and Roman reading." Jefferson wanted his pupils to understand the Enlightenment as well as legal doctrine. He hoped to mold his students into well-rounded Enlightenment thinkers like himself.[40]

The second list is a set of books Jefferson sold Monroe in 1784 when he departed for France as the American Minister. Jefferson conveyed these books to Monroe after the younger man's formal apprenticeship had ended; one can assume that Monroe was already familiar with the books Jefferson had assigned to Skipwith a decade earlier. This list leaned toward the radically liberal side of the Enlightenment of the late 18th century. It included writers such as Helvetius, whose "On Mind" was considered heretical and atheist by the 1780s French government. He also added works by the Prussian nobleman Anarchisis Cloots, an advocate of a "cult of reason," who once declared himself a "public enemy of Jesus Christ." He included a book by Gabriel Mably, a former French official turned rabid republican. He also included Denis Diderot, the famous author of the *Encyclopedia*, which for many at the time was the living embodiment of the Enlightenment's spirit. This liberal plan of study was designed to accomplish two things: first, it would teach Monroe the principles upon which the newly created United States had been formed; second, it would prepare Monroe for a life in politics. Jefferson hoped to turn Monroe into a modern Enlightenment liberal. The American Revolution was born

[40]Thomas Jefferson to Robert Skipwith, August 3, 1771, in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*. Ed. Merrill Peterson (The Library of America, 1984),740.

of the Enlightenment and Monroe had to understand it if he wanted to dedicate his career to defending the fledgling republic.[41]

Monroe spent long hours with the works Jefferson assigned. In his memoirs he wrote that he was "devoted to his studies" and pursued them with "utmost zeal and perseverance."[42] In a note to Washington thanking him for a previous letter of recommendation Monroe described the amount of time he devoted to his studies, "upon relinquiching [sic] my military pursuits, which I did with reluctance, & returning to those studies in which I had been engaged previously to my joining the army, till of late I have been literally a recluse."[43] With the war winding down Monroe sent letters to his former commanders explaining the books Jefferson had assigned. . He told Lord Stirling, "having gone through that course which in the opinion of Mr. Jefferson to whom I submitted the direction of my studies, was sufficient to qualify me in some degree for public business." Monroe told Lord Stirling that, "being fond of study I submitted the direction of my time & plan to my friend Mr. Jefferson, one of our wisest and most virtuous Republicans."[44] His use of the word republican was no idle choice.

Monroe's apprenticeship to Jefferson also focused on the principles of Republicanism.[45] Jefferson's teachings were not only designed to expose Monroe to the great books of the enlightenment but also to help the former soldier understand the principles upon which the Revolution was fought. Jefferson, as a "virtuous republican" instructed Monroe on the subject. Monroe thought himself lucky to work under of one of

[41]Thomas Jefferson "List of Books sold to James Monroe" May 10 1784, in *The Papers of James Monroe*: 2: 96-97.
[42] James Monroe, *Autobiography,* 32.
[43] James Monroe to George Washington, August 15, 1782 in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 44.
[44]James Monroe to William Alexander Lord Stirling, September 10, 1782 in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 45.
[45]Ibid.

the great champions of republicanism and hoped to become one of its defenders in his own right.

It is hard to say exactly how much of Monroe's political philosophy directly resulted from his apprenticeship to Thomas Jefferson. What is clear, is that in 1791 Monroe told Jefferson, "upon political subjects we perfectly agree." Throughout their careers Monroe and Jefferson maintained similar political ideologies. The fundamental concept on which they agreed was the importance of safeguarding liberty. This comprised the one philosophical point above all others that Jefferson tried to instill within Monroe.[46]

While historians depict Thomas Jefferson as many things; Whig, liberal, conservative, aristocrat, champion of the common man, states rightist, even Epicurean but at the heart of his philosophy lay a love of liberty. During 1791 he informed Archibald Stuart that he, "would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than those attending too small a degree of it."[47] For a man whose political ideas constantly shifted and evolved, his dedication to liberty and individual rights remained remarkably constant. In the last months of his life Jefferson told John Cartright that, "nothing, then is unchangeable but the inherent and inalienable rights of man."[48] Jefferson believed that men could live their lives for themselves rather than the state and anything less was slavery.

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[46]James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, June 17, 1791 in Ibid, 505.
[47]Thomas Jefferson to Archibald Stuart, December 23, 1791 in Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, 983-984
[48]See David Mayer,*The Constitutional Thought of Thomas Jefferson*, (Charlottesville:The University Press of Virginia, 1994). See also, David Mayer "The Holy Cause of Freedom' The Libertarian Legacy of Thomas Jefferson" in *The Noblest Minds Fame, Honor and the American Founding*, 98; Quotes are from Thomas Jefferson, "Response to Address of Welcome by the Citizens of Albemarle." February 12, 1790, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-) 16:179; and Thomas Jefferson to William Short, October 31 1819, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Paul L. Ford New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1892-1899) 10:143-46.

One incident helps illustrate Jefferson's attempt to instill this philosophy within his protégé. During 1782, just as Monroe began his own political career as a delegate to the Virginia Assembly, Jefferson refused an appointment to the same body. Monroe attempted to coax Jefferson back to public life by appealing to his sense of duty. He reminded Jefferson that a "fundamental maxim of republican government" was to serve the country in times of need and that he "should not decline" the post out of deference to the people.[49] Jefferson, ever the teacher, took the opportunity to explain the principles of liberty to his young pupil, "If we are made in some degree for others, yet in a greater degree are we made for ourselves. It were contrary to feeling and indeed ridiculous to suppose a man had less right in himself than one of his neighbors or all of them put together." The very thought of such a thing was anathema to Jefferson's dedication to liberty. "This would be slavery & not that liberty which the bill of rights has made inviolable and for the preservation of which our government has been changed. Nothing could so completely divest us of that liberty as the establishment of the opinion that the state has a perpetual right to the services of all its members." Liberty took precedent over any duty to the state. The kind of sacrifice to the state found in classical republicanism had no place in Jefferson's philosophy. Instead he adhered to the enlightenment era's more liberal version of republicanism with its protection of liberty; the best example of which Jefferson believed could be found in the writings of John Locke.[50]

Locke's influence on Jefferson's philosophy has been the source of considerable debate. Much of it has centered on the Declaration of Independence, which stands as the

[49]James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, May 11, 1782 in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 34. See also, Merrill Peterson, Jefferson and the New Nation, 242-244. Jefferson's practical reason for not joining was his wife's sickness. She had recently given birth to her last child and would die only a few months later.
[50] Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, May 20, 1782 in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 34-35

most prominent example of Jefferson's political philosophy. In fact, some of Jefferson's contemporaries accused him of lifting the Declaration's main ideas wholesale from Locke.[51] Since Carl Becker's famous 1923 work on the Declaration, the most common interpretation is that Locke, especially his "Second Treatise on Government" and his "Essay Concerning Human Understanding," provided the framework upon which Jefferson built his philosophy as it appears in the Declaration. While others, most notably historian Gary Wills, have challenged this thesis, most scholars accept that Locke's philosophy played a key role in Jefferson's Declaration.[52] Monroe, for his part, believed that the liberal republic was built on Lockean principles.

Monroe shared Jefferson's love of liberty. He once called it the "celestial cause" to which he dedicated his life.[53] He is thought to have told his daughter while in France comparing the United States to the nations of Europe, "Our country may be likened to a new house. We lack many things, but we possess the most precious of all-liberty!"[54] Like his mentor he embraced the great Enlightenment proponent of liberty, John Locke whose, "work was written with great ability... He touches no subject which he does not thoroughly analyze, nor advance any doctrine which he does not fully illustrate and ably support." From Locke, Monroe absorbed the same principles that shaped his mentor's philosophy. The most important being the, "support which he gives to the general cause of liberty." Monroe believed that, "There is no difference of sentiment on these points

[51]Francis Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson: Reputation and Legacy*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006),138-147.
[52]Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Ideas*; Gary Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (New York: Doubleday, 1978).
[53]James Monroe, *The People, the Sovereigns: Being a Comparison of the Government of the United States with those Republics which have existed before with the causes of their decline and fal,* ed. Samuel L. Gouverneur. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1867), 25.
[54] Paul Boller, *Presidential Anecdotes*, (New York: Penguin Books), 53.

with us. All our governments are founded on that principle."[55] Monroe credited Locke with tracing "the origin of government to its true source, the consent of the people and equal rights to all."[56]Thus, Locke, "in all that he advances in favor of the rights of the people, his view is unquestionably correct."[57] According to Monroe, the true value of, "Mr. Locke's work may, therefore, be viewed in the light in which I have placed it…. as exhibiting a true picture of the nature of the governments, the state of society, and of the science at the time." While Locke encapsulated enlightenment era thinking on government, Monroe also believed that the United States had surpassed him by putting his theories into "practical and successful operation since the Declaration of our Independence." What made the American Revolution unique in Monroe's mind was that the United States had successfully crafted a government which put Locke's principles into practice. [58]

Jefferson and Monroe wanted to build a government dedicated to preserving these Lockean rights. In fact, they agreed that the defense of liberty should be the government's primary function. Jefferson explained that, "the equal rights of man, and the happiness of every individual, are now acknowledged to be the only legitimate objects of government." Monroe echoed his mentor's sentiments. He believed that the people's rights could only be protected if they created the proper government because "it must now be obvious that the liberty of the citizen depends solely on the government, that the government be founded on just principles and be in the hands of a virtuous and intelligent people" Most importantly the founders had succeeded in creating a

[55] James Monroe, *The People, The Sovereigns*, 144-148.
[56] Ibid, 143.
[57]Ibid.
[58] Ibid, 144-148.

government which accomplished this goal. "Modern times have the signal advantage, too, of having discovered the only device by which these rights can be secured, to wit: government by the people, acting not in person, but by representatives chosen by themselves." Thus, government's only legitimate function was to secure rights for individuals and a republic was the only government which could accomplish this.[59]

According to Jefferson, republicanism served as, "the only form of government which is not eternally at open or secret war with the rights of mankind." Jefferson was so dedicated to creating a republican government that he willingly abandoned his own private lifestyle. It led Jefferson to dedicate himself to politics and to leave the comforts of Monticello. Monroe also adopted this same theory of government and ultimately believed that creating it was his life's goal. Yet, unlike his mentor, historians do not consider him among the forefront of early American political theorists. Nevertheless Monroe attempted to outline the nature of America's governmental experiment in a little-known book entitled *The People, the Sovereign*s.[60]

Monroe scholars have paid scant attention to this work. Harry Ammon, the foremost Monroe biographer, dedicated only a paragraph of his 700-page book to it. In many ways this is perfectly understandable. After all, George Hay, Monroe's own son-in-law, told the former president upon reading it that his time could have been better spent elsewhere.[61] Monroe never finished the project, the writing itself is difficult to penetrate and it contains few original thoughts on government. Moreover, Monroe did not try to

[59] Thomas Jefferson to Monsieur A. Coray, October 31, 1823 in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Andrew A Lipsomb and Albert Ellery Bergh, (Washington D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904), 15:480; James Monroe, *The People, The Sovereigns*, 154.
[60] Thomas Jefferson to William Hunter, the Mayor of Alexandria, March 11, 1790, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 16:225.
[61] Ammon, *James Monroe*, 562. A suggestion which Monroe took to heart in starting his autobiography shortly thereafter.

outline his own unique and original personal political philosophy. Instead as Monroe explains in the opening sentence, his mind was turning toward "the principles of the system itself." He meant this work to summarize the political philosophy of the Revolution. In fact, as the last of the founders he believed it incumbent upon him to provide posterity with a clear picture of the principles upon which the nation was founded.[62] Consider the ludicrously descriptive full title "*The People the Sovereigns, Being a comparison of the Government of the United States with those of the Republics which have existed before, with the causes of their Decadence and Fall."* He wanted to, "present in a clear light the difference in government between the governments and people of the United States and those of other countries, ancient and modern, and to show that certain causes which produced disastrous effects in them do not exist in most instances and are inapplicable in all to ours."[63] Thus it can be used as a guide to understanding the liberal republic.[64]

Monroe begins his work by discussing the Revolution's historical importance, "It has been often affirmed that our Revolution forms the most important epoch in the history of mankind, and in this sentiment I fully concur." The reasons behind such high praise were clear to Monroe, "The sentiment is founded in a belief that it has introduced a system of new governments better calculated to secure to the people the blessings of liberty, and under circumstances more favorable to success, than any which the world ever knew before."[65] Again, for Monroe, like his mentor, the critical point was to create a

[62]At least the last founder to play an active role in American politics. Madison and Burr outlived Monroe
[63] James Monroe, *The People, the Sovereigns*, 19.
[64]While reading both *The People, The Sovereigns* and Monroe's *Autobiography* it is impossible not to consider the era in which he was writing. Monroe looked on much of what was happening in American politics with disgust and fear. He saw the second generation of American politicians rapidly turning away from the founders' vision for the United States.
[65]James Monroe, *The People, The Sovereigns*, 18.

government which secured liberty for its citizens. The question though was how the United States managed to secure this liberty.

According to Monroe, the United States achieved such great things in part because, "our system is two-fold. State and National....both governments rest on the same basis, the sovereignty of the people." This was unique in the late 18th and early 19th century when European monarchies dominated the world. Of course, other nations had attempted popular government but, "of democratic governments, by representation in its best form, we have no example in ancient or modern times prior to our revolution…. Despotism has been the prevailing government in all ages throughout the globe."[66] Comparing other democratic forms of government to his own, Monroe found them wanting. He believed that the ancient republics had been vastly inferior to America's version. This contributed to what Monroe called the "gloomy spectacle" that the ancients displayed to history. Granted, ancient leaders displayed great talents, but they were of a "military character" and "the people are held by such governments in a state of degradation and oppression."[67] Monroe believed both the ancient Greek democracies and the United States were dedicated to popular sovereignty, they still remained miles apart. In fact, they had so little in common that, "it is impossible to proceed in the comparison of our governments with those of Greece....without being forcibly struck with the differences between them in all those circumstances which are most important."[68] Monroe even dismissed the comparisons to ancient Athens because, "so numerous and vital were its defects that no inference whatever unfavorable to our system can with

[66] James Monroe, *The People, the Sovereigns*, 54-58.
[67] Ibid 164.
[68] Ibid, 170-171.

propriety be drawn from it."[69] Popular sovereignty alone then was not sufficient to ensure good government. The ancient republics had all fallen into tyranny. His young country avoided their fate by keeping sovereignty outside and ultimately above government. In Athens while government had been built on the sovereignty of the people, that sovereignty was not kept separate from government. "The objections which apply on principle to the union of the government with the sovereignty are equally strong. When the government is united with the sovereignty there can be no checks whatever on the government. A concentration which all political writers agree is despotic"[70] Monroe distrusted the ancients' method of wedding sovereignty with government because it could not effectively be held in check. A sovereign government could expand its powers indefinitely. The United States protected liberty because government's powers were limited and the people retained sovereignty.

Separating the people's sovereignty from government provided a bulwark against tyranny. Monroe explains that historically "the terms sovereignty and government have generally been considered as synonyms." Americans thought differently. "To us, however, they convey different ideas."[71] Under the liberal republic "powers may be separated and placed in distinct hands" but only because "sovereign power is vested in the people."[72] As a result, in the United States the people represented "the power that creates" and were "always the same" while government became, "the subject which is created" and therefore "may be modified at the will of those who made it." Therefore

[69]Ibid, 196.
[70] Monroe, *The People, the Sovereigns*, 200-201.
[71] Ibid, 30.
[72] Ibid.

ultimately the "Constitution becomes law" and anything the government does "repugnant thereto, void." The creation of this kind of government made Monroe's country unique.[73]

Monroe claimed "no analogy between the present case and any to be found in the annals of mankind." Because "mankind stand here on the broad, the noble plan of nature....here men are equal, here government is instituted for the common good, is the rational effort of enlightened minds and formed for their protection not their oppression."[74] As Monroe contended in a speech to the Virginia Ratification Convention in 1788, "the American states exhibit at present a new and interesting spectacle to the eyes of mankind." The United States represented the best hope for the future. In a statement echoing Thomas Paine, Monroe claimed that "the freedom of mankind has found an asylum here, which it could find no where else."The American Revolution had laid a foundation for government, "under circumstances more favorable to success than were ever enjoyed by any ancient republic" and thus America had found the "best means of correcting their errors and avoiding their fate." [75] Under Jefferson's tutelage Monroe adopted the Founders' goal of building a government based on liberty. And like Jefferson, Monroe believed that the best way for him to make his mark on history was to dedicate his life to promoting this cause.

Republican Champion

Jefferson tried to mold Monroe into a champion of republicanism. Jefferson helped guide Monroe toward a political life. As Monroe wrote Jefferson, "my plan of life

[73] Ibid, 32-24.
[74] James Monroe, "Some Hints Directing the measures to be taken to form a monarchy out of several confederate democracies," June 1788 in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 445-446.
[75]James Monroe, "Speech to the Virginia Ratification Convention," June 10, 1788, found in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 429-430; Monroe, *The People The Sovereigns*, 165.

is now fixed, has a certain object for its view."[76] Monroe did not hope simply to achieve power and fame on his own, though of course he had ambition to spare. Neither did he adhere to the classical republican ideal of sacrificing himself to the state. He believed that his task was to ensure that government itself did not become tyrannical. In 1791 Monroe told Jefferson that they shared "the reprobation of all measures that may be calculated to elevate the government above the people, or place it in any respect without its natural boundary." He distrusted any political measure that invested the government with additional power. They also agreed on the role of statesmen within this new republic. His part, as a statesman, was to prevent the expansion of government. What they needed was, "virtue in part only, for in the whole it cannot be expected, of the high publick [sic] servants." Monroe argued that if some key political leaders maintained their virtue they could protect U.S. from those hoping to shift it away from republicanism.[77] The position of the statesman then was crucial to this new experiment and it was the role Monroe envisioned for himself. "Government is a trust created by compact, in which those who discharge its duties have no rights or interests of their own, but are mere agents employed for the people."[78] Thus, during his lifelong dedication to politics and work in government he worked, somewhat counter-intuitively, to ensure that the very government he served did not grow so powerful as to threaten liberty. Monroe believed, and said so in *The People, the Sovereigns* that "as power proceeds from the people it must be made subservient to their purposes and this cannot be accomplished unless those who exercise it feel their responsibility to their constituents in every measure which they

[76]James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, September 9, 1780 in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 26-27.
[77]James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, June 17, 1791 in *The Papers of James Monroe*, 503-506.
[78] James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 52.

adopt."[79] Monroe and Jefferson, as agents of the people endeavored to protect government from those who wanted to transform it into despotism. As a result Monroe saw his career as part of a struggle between the defenders of republicanism and its enemies. It should not be surprising then that Monroe's own autobiography provided an account of his fight for the cause.

Just as *The People, the Sovereigns* represents Monroe's attempt to explain to posterity the political philosophy to which he devoted his life, his autobiography served as an attempt to outline what his own role in defending the American cause entailed.[80] He hoped to inspire future generations with his tale of how the founders had succeeded in creating this new liberal republic. Monroe remarks on the importance of the events he witnessed in his autobiography's opening pages, "the Theatre on which Mr. Monroe was now placed was a very important one." Monroe reiterates the importance of the cause, calling it critical "not only to his fellow citizens, but to the whole civilized world, because the people were called on to make a fair experiment of the practicability of free government and under circumstances more favorable to their success than were ever enjoyed by any other people."[81] Looking back on those years Monroe believed that they had succeeded. "Taken together, they formed a school of practical instruction…of which it is believed that history has furnished no equal example." Monroe believed that the founders provided "instruction in the knowledge of mankind, in the science of government." The founders had laid the groundwork for how a government should work, "and what is of still greater importance, for inculcating on the youthful mind those sound

[79] Monroe, *The People, the Sovereigns*, 36.
[80] Both works, but especially his *Autobiography* were specifically designed to convince Congress that the government should reimburse Monroe for his expenses from his days as a diplomat.
[81] James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 35.

moral and political principles on which the success of our system depends." In other words, the founders and Monroe had proven that their version of republican government would work. Monroe believed they had provided the nation with a model for government upon which to sustain the American republic.

Monroe's distaste for monarchy ran deep. As he wrote *The People, the Sovereigns*, "from every view that can be taken of the subject, reasoning on principle, the doctrine of divine or paternal right, as the foundation of a claim, in any one, to the sovereign power of the state, or to any power in it, is utterly absurd." The enlightenment had, he believed, successfully banished the doctrine of the divine right of kings, "It belonged to the dark ages, and was characteristic of the superstition and idolatry which prevailed in them." The enlightenment had proven that, "All men are by nature equally free....the governments which have been established over them, founded on other principles, have proceeded from other causes, by which their natural rights have been subverted."[82] In this he agreed with his mentor. As Jefferson penned in his first inaugural, "sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern us." For Monroe and Jefferson though the threat was not just from foreign "angels in the form of kings" but also from would- be monarchists within the United States. [83]

Monroe concluded that not all Americans held to the same principles as he and Jefferson. During the turbulent decade of the 1790s the federal government, he believed, fell into the hands of people who did not adhere to the liberal republicanism of the

[82]James Monroe, *The People, The Sovereigns*, 64-68.
[83] Thomas Jefferson "First Inaugural Address," March 4, 1801 in *Something That will Surprise the World* ed. Susan Dunn (New York: Perseus, 2006,) 303.

Revolution. While "no one suspected George Washington of a desire to promote the establishment of Monarchy," but "of the political principles, however of some other of our Revolutionary patriots, a portion of whom had rendered service in the council and others in the field, a different sentiment was entertained." Even his own revolutionary brethren had abandoned the principles of the Revolution, "it was known that they did not confide in a government founded exclusively on the sovereignty of the people; that they considered the experiment, as they called it, which we were then making as sure to fail." The Federalists, who Monroe considered little more than American monarchists, wanted nothing less than to overthrow the system the Revolution had put in effect. They "looked forward to its failing as leading to a change more favorable to their political views and principles."[84] Monroe argued that many in the Federalist Party, most prominently Alexander Hamilton and Monroe's own personal political nemesis John Jay, did not adhere to the principles of republicanism. They wanted what Monroe called "consolidation" of federal power which would eventually "lead to monarchy and to despotism,"[85] Monroe believed that Hamilton and the Federalists advocated the expansion of federal power to pave the way for a monarchical system to replace the republic in fact if not in name.[86] Thus, Monroe saw his fight against monarchy as a war against both the kings and queens of Europe and their allies within the United States who hoped to bring the United States economically and politically closer to Great Britain.[87]

[84]James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 26.
[85] Monroe, *The People, the sovereigns*, 23.
[86] It is important to note that Monroe was almost certainly wrong in his belief that the Federalists were not committed republicans. In fact, this is what makes the 1790s such an interesting period to study. Both Federalists and Republicans honestly saw their opponents as a genuine threat to overthrow the American republic.
[87]James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 51-52.

For much of Monroe's career American foreign policy provided the primary battlefield in his war against monarchy.

As Monroe himself wrote in his autobiography "our relations with foreign powers even at this early period became an object of the highest importance"[88] During the early years of the American republic foreign policy dominated the political discourse for a number of reasons. As a former colony of Great Britain America's relationship with the former mother country remained a source of contention. The United States had also secured independence largely through French aid and remained tied to that nation through treaties dating back to 1778. The United States also remained relatively weak compared with nations like Great Britain and France and its system of government was altogether different and in some regards hostile to theirs. Finally, with so little power invested in it domestically the federal government's overriding sphere of operation was in directing the nation's foreign affairs.

Certainly Monroe played a role in domestic politics but foreign policy eventually dominated his career and it was foreign policy where he hoped to cement his legacy as a champion of American republicanism. Monroe became, for all intents and purposes, a foreign policy specialist and his autobiography reflects this. Of the book's seven finished chapters, six relate directly to U.S. Foreign affairs.[89] The first critical role he played in American politics occurred in 1785 as a fierce opponent of the Jay-Gardoqiu Treaty. John Jay, at the time American Secretary of Foreign Affairs, proposed to cut off American access to the Mississippi in exchange for Spanish maritime concessions. Monroe led the

[88] James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 36.
[89]Monroe's account of his life only reaches 1805 and his ministry in Spain. The seven chapters: 1. Soldier in the Revolution. 2. Lawyer and Legislator 3. Minister from America to the French Revolution 4. Vindication(justifying his actions in France. 5. Minister to Napoleon 6. At the Court of St. James 7. Minister to Spain.

opposition to this treaty in his first major role as a member of the Confederation Congress only a few years after finishing with Jefferson. Though superseded by the debate over the Constitution in 1787, the controversy over access to the Mississippi remained an important issue until 1802-1803 when Monroe, in one of his greatest foreign policy achievements, helped negotiate the Louisiana Purchase. Foreign policy continued to dominate Monroe's career from 1803-1808 when he worked as a kind of roving diplomat for Jefferson. After concluding the Purchase in France he traveled to Spain in an attempt to include Florida in the Louisiana territory. Later, he became Minister to Great Britain where he helped negotiate the Monroe-Pinckney Treaty, later rejected by Thomas Jefferson.[90] His exploits made him a challenger, though not a particularly serious one, to James Madison in the election of 1808 and eventually led to his appointment as Secretary of State in 1811. During the second war with Britain, he and Madison directed the American war effort and Monroe became the heir apparent to the Republican dynasty. While his many foreign policy accomplishments led Monroe to the presidency it was one of his failures, both his own and the country's, which made the biggest impression on him.

Because he believed that the United States had created a superior system of government than any that existed before, Monroe ardently believed that the rest of the world would follow the American example. When the French undertook their own Revolution in 1789 Monroe saw it as the next theatre in the war between republicanism and monarchy. He believed the French followed in America's footsteps and that support for the French Revolution was required of any good American republican. He saw the

[90]Indeed, his disagreement with Jefferson over this treaty led to their only real feud during Monroe's long apprenticeship and nearly destroyed his entire relationship with James Madison.

Revolution in France as an opportunity for he and his fellow Americans to champion the cause abroad and help spread liberal republicanism to Europe.

Chapter Three

"Republics Should Approach Near to Each Other:" James Monroe, France and the Spread of Liberal Republicanism

The American merchantman *Amity* arrived in Philadelphia on June 27, 1797. Waiting for the ship at the dock stood Thomas Jefferson, Albert Gallatin and Aaron Burr, three titans of the growing republican opposition. Aboard ship James Monroe, his wife Elizabeth and their 10-year old daughter Eliza returned after nearly three years in France where James served as Minister to the new French Republic. Before the Monroes disembarked the three republican leaders boarded the vessel to greet Jefferson's former apprentice. They took the time to welcome Monroe and demonstrate their support for the recently recalled minister and more importantly, for the French Republic. At that moment Monroe stood at the center of the controversy upon which the entire American political world revolved: the French Revolution.[1]

The Revolution that erupted in Paris at the Bastille on July 14, 1789 dominated the American political landscape during the 1790s. The Revolution and the resulting conflict in Europe placed the United States in a precarious situation. After the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, Britain and France made war upon other with only occasional lapses until Napoleon's final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. For a quarter century the United States found itself caught between these two powers.[2]

[1] Harry Ammon, *James Monroe, The Quest for National Identity* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971) 157-158; Albert Gallatin to Hannah Gallitin, June 28, 1797, in Raymond Walters, *Albert Gallatin: Jeffersonian Financier and Diplomat* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1957), 104-105.

[2] For a general treatment of the French Revolution and the early American republic see Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 174-208; See also, Stanley Elkins and Eric

Initially most Americans cheered the outbreak of revolution in France. They saw it as the natural extension of the American Revolution abroad. Future Federalists and Republicans alike enjoyed the legitimacy it seemed to grant their own republican experiment. John Fenno's *Gazette of the United States*, which later emerged as the mouthpiece of the Federalist Party and a harsh critic of the Revolution, initially called the French uprising, "one of the most glorious objects that can arrest the attention of mankind."[3] As the violence in France increased, however, many Americans, including future Federalists like Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, questioned whether the two revolutions truly shared the same goals. Meanwhile, men like Monroe and Jefferson continued to see it as fulfilling the dream of spreading liberal republicanism to Europe. As a result the French Revolution became the issue upon which the American political landscape divided the nation into two opposing camps.[4]

It was fitting for Thomas Jefferson to meet his former protégé in 1797 when Monroe arrived in Philadelphia after Monroe's unceremonious removal as Minister to the French Republic. After all, Monroe's actions in France came largely as a result of his adherence to a Jeffersonian interpretation of the French Revolution. Jefferson watched the opening stages of the Revolution firsthand during the late 1780s and Monroe learned of the world shattering events gripping France from his old mentor. Indeed Jefferson, as

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McKitrick, The *Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)303-365.

[3] "Gazette of the United States," October 10, 1789, found in Elkins and Mckitrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 310.

[4] See James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 69-92; Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1958) Through the great events of the first months and years of the Revolution most Americans maintained their positive attitude toward the French. They mostly cheered the calling of the Estates general in May of '89 as well as the fall of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. They appreciated when the French-American hero Lafayette sent his surrogate father George Washington the key to the hated Prison which symbolized of the old regime's tyranny.

he did in so much else, helped shape the way Monroe viewed the Revolution. In August of 1788, almost a year before the fall of the Bastille, the then Minister to France, Jefferson described the opening moments of the great drama to his protégé. Jefferson depicted the Revolution as a contest with, "the authority of the crown on one part & that of the parliament on the other." Jefferson described the French uprising as a contest between monarchial forces and republican revolutionaries. He looked with hope towards a rapid republican victory. With the government, "yielding up daily one right after another to the nation," every day the French gained more freedom.[5]

Jefferson also claimed that the French Revolution was a close cousin to America's. He claimed the new French provincial assemblies served as, "perfect representations of the nation and stand somewhat in the place of our state assemblies." Jefferson looked forward to the next year with unbridled optimism. He believed that the Estates General, called for the first time since 1614, would create a "bill of rights" and a "national assembly" in the image of the United States. Jefferson predicted that after years of suffering under a cruel monarchy France would, "within two or three years be in the enjoiment [sic] of a tolerably free constitution." Finally, he added that France stood to achieve all this "without its having cost them a drop of blood."[6]

Jefferson used similar terms to describe the Revolution to other correspondents. To John Adams he marveled that in only a few short months the French people "gained

[5]For an account of Jefferson's time in France during the final years of the Old Regime see Connor Cruise O'Brien, *The Long Affair* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 38-68; Quotes are from Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, August 9, 1788, *The Papers of James Monroe,* ed. Daniel Preston, (Westport: Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), 2: 450.
[6] Ibid.

as much ground" as England did "during all her civil wars under the Stuarts."[7] In January of 1789 Jefferson reiterated his belief to the Welsh philosopher Richard Price that "the American war seems to have first awakened the thinking part of this nation in general from the sleep of despotism."[8] In March Jefferson told John Jay that the French Revolution proceeded "without encountering anything which deserves to be called a difficulty."[9]

He presented an even more sanguine picture of the Revolution's future. Only weeks after the fall of the Bastille he told a correspondent that he would "agree to be stoned as a false prophet if all does not go well in this country." France's Revolution formed "but the first chapter of the history of European liberty."[10] The upheavals in France signaled the beginnings of a movement toward republicanism for Europe following America's example. Although Jefferson left Paris just after the fall of the Bastille he brought his love of the Revolution and a firm belief that Americans remained duty bound to support the French cause.[11]

Jefferson returned home to assume his post as Secretary of State in 1789 while his protégé Monroe found himself elected to the U.S. Senate in 1790. Relying on his mentor's reports Monroe championed the French cause in 1791. Writing under the

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[7] Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 30, 1787, *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, Ed. Merrill Peterson, (New York: Library of America, 1984) 908.
[8] Thomas Jefferson to Richard Price, January 8, 1789, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson,* ed. Julian Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 14:420-424.
[9] Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, March 9, 1789, in *Ibid*, 15:110. Immediately following this statement Jefferson told Jay of various riots in the streets of Paris.
[10] Thomas Jefferson to Count Diodati, August 3, 1789, in *Ibid*, 15:326-7.
[11] Noble E. Cunningham, *Jefferson and Monroe: Constant Friendship and Respect* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press Press, 2003), 15; Robert McColley, *Federalists, Republicans and Foreign Entanglements* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969) 19. Many historians casually refer to Jefferson and Monroe as unabashed Francophiles. While both men exhibited a certain fondness for French culture it was only with the beginning of the Revolution that they became so overwhelmingly pro-France.

penname of Aratus, Monroe defended the Revolution from its growing number of critics.[12] He scoffed at those who treated the Revolution as a disease they feared the United States might catch. Like his mentor, Monroe tried hard to connect events in France to America's own Revolution. He explained that during the American Revolution the tyranny of monarchy remained "in embryo only, and at a distance," whereas, "in France it was at its height and at home." In Monroe's mind France emerged as the new frontline in the war between monarchial forces and the champions of republicanism. Monroe argued that like their American brothers, the French people were justified in rising up to secure their rights. "In both instances the power which belonged to the body of the people, and which had been, or was about to be wrested from them, was resumed." He summed up his argument by stating that "whoever owns the principles of one revolution, must cherish those of the other; and the person who draws a distinction between them is either blinded by prejudice, or boldly denies what at the bar of reason, he cannot refute." The two Revolutions constituted the same cause.[13]

During the next few months Monroe penned two more essays. In these he called on the friends of republicanism to support the French government. Monroe warned Americans that the future of republicanism depended upon a French victory. For

[12]Monroe took the penname Aratus from the Greek statesman Aratus of Sicyon who deposed the Sicyonian Tyrant Nicocoles in 251 BC and helped lead create the Achaean League. See Ammon, *James Monroe*, 86-87; See also, R.R. Fenessy, *Burke, Paine and the Rights of Man: A Difference of Political Opinion* (The Hague: Martins Nijhoff, 1963). Monroe's defense of the Revolution is only a small part in the massive trans-Atlantic debate occurring between those who supported the Revolution and those who feared its outcome. Edmund Burke, an ardent supporter of America's Revolution, published *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790. He argued that the Revolution was ultimately doomed to failure because it was based on too abstract of principles. Burke defended hereditary rule and the nobility. Thomas Paine responded to this by writing *The Rights of Man* in which he defended citizens' right to overthrow their government. Paine was tried in absentia in England after leaving for France to aid the revolution.

[13] Quotes are from James Monroe, "Aratus Number I," 9 November 1791, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 2: 511-513; Harry Ammon, *James Monroe*, 87-88.

centuries the failure of free governments around the world "shielded despotism behind a wall of impregnable strength." The "dark cloud" of absolutism must be "dispelled or the light of truth and reason will be extinguished forever." He argued that Americans needed to aid the Revolution to accomplish this. Americans should look upon the Revolution with favor, "as a friend of humanity I rejoice in the French Revolution; but as the citizen of America the gratification is greatly heightened" because it was in France where republicanism would succeed or fail. In France as well as in the United States, "a fair experiment will be made…whether mankind are capable of self government." If the French and American versions of republicanism failed they would never be attempted again. Americans, as the "authors of a great revolution" themselves owed it to France and the rest of the world to aid this new revolution. Although the fate of both governments seemed, "intimately linked" to Monroe other former revolutionaries did not share he and Jefferson's rosy portrayal of events.[14]

During the years following the fall of the Bastille, when Jefferson watched the Revolution's progress until Monroe's own posting as Minister to the new French Republic in 1794, the American political world divided into two camps. Those who supported the French Revolution began to refer to themselves as Republicans or Democratic-Republicans while those who opposed it maintained the title Federalists from the days of the battle over ratification of the Constitution. As the French Revolution devolved further into violence Federalists eventually came to reject it utterly. By March 1793, after word had reached the United States of King Louis XVI's execution and the

[14] Quotes are from James Monroe "Aratus Number II," November 22, 1791, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 2: 514; James Monroe "Aratus Number III" December 17, 1791, *Ibid*, 2: 521; W.P Cresson, *James Monroe* (Norwalk, Connecticut: The Easton Press, Originally published by University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 127.

outbreak of war between France and Britain, the two budding political parties stood totally at odds on the question of whom the U.S. should support.[15]

As the nominal leaders of each faction Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton agreed on a policy of neutrality. Jefferson hoped to delay an actual declaration of neutrality so the United States might coax Britain into granting concessions to her former colonies. He also remained committed to the Treaty of Alliance with France of 1778 which no longer influenced most Federalist politicians. Jefferson and Monroe also objected to the tone of the neutrality proclamation because they believed it favored Britain and did not properly reflect the country's support for the French and their worthy cause. While they did not advocate direct American action they also did not think it proper to declare neutrality in a contest between monarchy and republicanism.[16]

With tension between the two sides mounting, the two parties vehemently contested President Washington's choices for diplomatic posts to the two belligerent superpowers. Washington, over objections from the Republican camp, appointed Gouvernuer Morris as American Minister to France in early 1792 and Morris, no less than a monarchist in Monroe's eyes, eventually proved a poor choice for the post.[17] Washington then sought a diplomat to travel to Great Britain to come to terms over various issues left over from the Revolutionary War. Initially rumors swirled that

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[15] Noble Cunningham, *Jefferson Vs. Hamilton: Confrontations that Shaped a Nation* (Boston: Bedford, 2000), 106-110.

[16] Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, June 4, 1793, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 2: 625; See also Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, June 28 and July 14, 1793, *Ibid* 2: 629-630, 632-633. On July 14, Jefferson claimed that America's declaration of neutrality made the "disgust of France inevitable"; On the neutrality debate see, Elkins and Mckitrick *The Age of Federalism*, 336-341.

[17] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, January 11, 1792, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 2:525; James Monroe to St. George Tucker, January 24, 1792, *Ibid*, 2:528-529; See also Monroe's attack on American neutrality in his Agricola Essays, James Monroe, "Agricola," October 8, 1793, Ibid, 2:646.

Hamilton himself might be chosen before Washington eventually settled on Chief Justice John Jay as his new envoy extraordinary to the British Empire.[18]

With the outcry over Jay's appointment and criticism from Morris's mission in France where he predictably alienated the French Jacobin leadership, Washington decided to send a known friend to the French Revolution as his next minister in Paris and he turned to James Monroe. A more circumspect politician might have declined the appointment. In point of fact, a number did turn it down, including James Madison and Robert R. Livingston. Monroe expressed his surprise at the appointment but accepted after Secretary of State and fellow Virginian Edmund Randolph informed him that Washington "was resolved to send a republican character to that nation." After conferring with Madison, Monroe accepted the position.[19] Washington had chosen Monroe for the post precisely because of his strong support of the Revolution. Randolph had assured Monroe that his appointment was made in order to prove to France that the U.S. remained its staunch friend.

Monroe accepted the position because he believed only a republican could bridge the divide between the two nations. He told Jefferson that there was "no sacrifice I would not be willing to make for the sake of France and her cause."[20] He wanted to be remembered for bringing these two republics together. [21] "The French historians will record the conduct of this country toward theirs. They will note that of individuals also.

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[18] James Monroe to George Washington, April 8, 1794, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 2:710.Monroe wrote to Washington personally explaining exactly what the Republican reaction might be if Hamilton were nominated. Washington's chilly response can be found in George Washington to James Monroe, April 9, 1794, *Ibid* 2:710-711; On Morris's mission see, Deconde, *Entangling Alliance*, 311-341; On Washington's Presidency and neutrality see, Forrest McDonald, *The Presidency of George Washington* (Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 1974), 113-138.

[19] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, May 27, 1794, *Papers of James Monroe*, 3:1.

[20] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, July 23, 1793, Ibid, 2:634-635.

[21] Ammon, *James Monroe*, 112-115.

Those who shall take any part which the world & posterity may not approve, be them who they may, will be handed down in their proper colours."[22] Monroe wanted to be remembered in the proper "colour." Ultimately Monroe hoped to conclude a treaty with France thus securing a grand republican alliance to stand together, united against the princes of Europe. This explains why he accepted the position where others declined and also helps explain his behavior while in France.

As minister Monroe officially represented the interests of the U.S. government, but from his perspective he thought he owed a greater duty to the republican cause. Monroe believed that rather than simply achieving the country's narrowly defined national security goals, his higher duty was to bring the two republics closer together. To accomplish this Monroe portrayed events in France in the most favorable light possible in his reports back to the administration. Secretary of State Edmund Randolph directed him to report on the state of politics in France and Monroe did everything he could to portray the French uprising as a close cousin to the American Revolution. Monroe put his own unique republican spin on his instructions in order to accomplish his larger goals.

In his instructions Randolph wanted Monroe to assure the French that "the president has been an early and decided friend to the French Revolution."[23] The

[22] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, August 21, 1793, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 2:635-636.
[23] Edmund Randolph "Instructions to James Monroe," June 10, 1794, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3:6-8; See also, Harry Ammon, *The Genet Mission* (New York: Norton, 1973) The Girondin Party, of which Genet had been a member, had fallen out of power in the Spring and summer months of 1793 to be replaced with the more radical Jacobins and their leader Robespierre. By the end of '93 the Jacobins dominated the committee of public safety and imposed the system arrests and executions commonly known as the "Terror." For Randolph's perspective as Secretary of State see John Reardon, *Edmund Randolph: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1974), 220-306. Randolph also wanted Monroe to make it clear that whatever the French may have heard from their minister about the existence of two "parties" within the United States, one hostile and the other favorable to the Revolution, this was not the case.

government also needed information on Maximilian Robespierre, the Committee of Public Safety, the various factions within Paris and the people's reaction to the Revolution, "for without doubting the solidity of the French cause, we ought not be unprepared for any event."[24] Events in France in the year and a half since the outbreak of war terrified conservative Federalists with doubts about the course of the Revolution.[25]

In fact, even as he witnessed firsthand the Revolution's violence, Monroe remained convinced throughout his ministry that the excessive violence of the "Terror" did not accurately reflect the Revolution's principles.[26] Monroe arrived in France a mere five days after Robespierre's execution. Alternatively nicknamed "the Incorruptible" by his supporters and the *dictateur sanguinaire* (bloodthirsty dictator) by his enemies, Robespierre had for the past year ruled France with an iron fist. To many he stood as the living manifestation of the Terror**.** The Thermidorian Reaction, a revolt against the Jacobins, executed Robespierre on July 28, though only after his reign of Terror sent thousands to the guillotine.[27]

Monroe felt no sympathy for Robespierre. His initial reports to the secretary of state explained that the "the Incorruptible" bore full responsibility for the recent mayhem. Robespierre, in Monroe's estimation, "amassed in his hands all the powers of the government." He stood nearly "omnipotent" within the French Committee of Public

[24] Edmund Randolph, "Instructions to James Monroe," June 10, 1794, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3:8.
[25] For an evaluation of the Jacobin Republic see Furet, *The French Revolution*, 101-150 and Patrice Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue: Jacobins During the French Revolution*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
[26] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, June 2, 1823, *Writings of Monroe*, 6: 310.
[27] Ammon, *James Monroe* 108; For an evaluation of Robespierre see, Peter McPhee, *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

Safety before his downfall.[28] Robespierre's "spirit" dictated these horrific events. In particular, Robespierre directed "the unceasing operation of the guillotine" which so horrified many Americans.[29]

Monroe knew his audience well. Americans strongly distrusted executive tyranny, and Monroe reported how none of history's great tyrants could match Robespierre whose "acts of cruelty and oppression are perhaps without parallel in the annals of history."[30] Monroe focused so exclusively on this "bloody and merciless tyrant" in order to protect the "true revolution" from attack by its enemies in America. Monroe told Randolph that Robespierre "aimed at despotic powers" and ultimately hoped to "establish himself on the throne of the Capets." He essentially tried to remove Robespierre from the republican column and depict him as a power hungry aspiring monarch. Americans understood this kind of tyranny all too well. Monroe no doubt hoped to evoke memories of George III before the Revolution within the American polity.[31] The founders understood the tyranny wrought by fame seekers like Lucius Cornelius Sulla, Gaius Marius and Julius Caesar, all of whom ultimately played a role in overthrowing the Roman Republic. A single power-hungry tyrant could easily be blamed for the brutality of the revolution.

Monroe continued in this theme. He knew that Federalists and Republicans alike feared that the chaos within France might give rise to a Caesar-like figure using the

[28] Revolutionaries wanted to wipe out any and all evidence of the ancient regime's existence and one of their targets became Christianity itself. They even attacked the Christian calendar. Instead they began dating events from the beginning of the revolution.
[29] James Monroe to Edmond Randolph Secretary of State, Aug 15th 1794, *The Papers of James Monro*e, 3: 25.
[30] Ibid., 3: 25-26.
[31] Though to be fair to the Hanoverian King of England his taxes on tea, sugar and stamps hardly approached the level of Robespierre.

military to crush the fledging republic. Monroe believed the soldiers themselves would prevent such a thing. He dismissed the idea of the French army participating in a Sullan-like "March on Rome." Showing a high regard for the typical French soldier, Monroe believed that the "spirit of the age" imbued the Revolutionary warriors with a zeal that precluded such a calamity. He even claimed that Robespierre's rise and fall actually demonstrated the Revolution's continued success. Only those who remained dedicated to the Revolution's principles and "attachment to the cause" rose to power. The "moment doubts were entertained" concerning Robespierre's commitment to the cause "his influence begin to decline." The Revolution remained pure. Though men like Robespierre, Danton and Brissot assumed power, once they behaved in a manner inconsistent with the principles of the Revolution, they were quickly deposed, and subsequently beheaded.[32]

The Revolutionaries refused to "turn aside from the great object of Revolution, to countenance in any individual, schemes of usurpation."[33] With the fall of Robespierre, Monroe assured his fellow Americans that the Revolution would right itself. It would morph from the tyranny of the Jacobin Terror into an American-like republic. Monroe asked Randolph, rhetorically, "is there any hope that the vicious operation of the guillotine may be hereafter suspended?" In answer to his own question Monroe explained that with Robespierre gone the entire country, "from Havre to Paris and Paris itself appears to enjoy perfect tranquility." This single word, tranquility, best captures Monroe's depiction of the Revolution. The outbreaks of violence had been exceptions. Monroe even dismissed the "Terror" as a foreign plot. Robespierre and his allies were,

[32] James Monroe to Edmond Randolph, Aug 15th 1794, *Papers of James Monroe*, 3:26.
[33] Ibid.

"probably in the pay of foreign powers & employed to perpetrate those atrocities merely to make the revolution odious & thus oppose it."[34]

Monroe believed that the people stood prepared to support the Revolution to the end. Even with the constant taxes, military drafts, and general problems facing the French, Monroe claimed to have "neither seen nor heard any symptom of discontent showing itself among the people at large." In fact, Monroe informed Randolph that he "never saw in the countenance of men more apparent content." On his journey from Havre to Paris he witnessed celebrations of French military victories, citizens willingly handing over money, supplies and even their own sons for the war. These were not the "symptoms" of a people tired of republicanism and willing to reject it.[35]

Monroe continued to focus on the Revolution's "righting itself" throughout his three years in Paris. Whether to friends such as Madison and Jefferson or in his official correspondence to the Secretary of State and the President, Monroe continually stressed the Revolution's steady progress toward an American style republic. In January of 1795, half a year after his arrival, Monroe informed Edmund Randolph that the French were healing the ill effects of Robespierre's Terror. He advocated closer economic ties to the new Republic by citing various commercial opportunities open to Americans in Paris.[36]

Monroe never lost faith in the French people. In February 1795, Monroe informed Robert R, Livingston, a New York Republican, of the trials of the fallen Jacobins. After telling his fellow Republican that "tranquility prevails" within the National Convention, he dismissed fears that the famine striking France might derail the

[34] Ibid., 3:27; Quote is from James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson , July, 30 1796, *Writings of James Monroe*, ed. Stanislaus Murray Hamilton(New York: AMS Press, 1900),45.
[35] James Monroe to Edmund Randolph, Aug 15th 1794, *Papers of James Monroe*, 3:27-28.
[36] James Monroe to Edmund Randolph, January 13, 1795, *Ibid*, 3: 202-206.

Revolution. The "patience and fortitude of the people" was such that they could "surmount much greater difficulties than are like to threaten them."[37] In fact, he repeated this refrain weeks later to Randolph, again stressing Paris's "tranquility." Monroe marveled that the French people faced such "internal convulsions" yet still remained staunch supporters of the Revolution. The culmination of Monroe's triumphant reports came when the French finally completed a new Constitution.[38]

When the National Convention finally, after two failed attempts, created a new Constitution Monroe reveled in the achievement. He told the new Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, quixotically as it turned out, that this new French Constitution "resembled in many respects what we see daily acted on our side of the Atlantic." Monroe saw the Constitution as the French finally putting themselves on a solid footing.[39]

Although anyone with a passing knowledge of the French Revolution will see that Monroe's evaluation of the situation displays an optimism bordering on delusion, Monroe truly believed most of the things he reported. In his article on Monroe's time in France historian Arthur Scherr claims that "Monroe drew a sharp dichotomy between the radical phase of the French Revolution and the kind of republicanism he considered legitimate and respectable." Monroe saw the Revolution as essentially moderate. The triumph of republicanism represented the "just" aspects of the Revolution. In Monroe's world view

[37] James Monroe to Robert R. Livingston, Feb 23, 1795, Ibid, 3:242-243.
[38] James Monroe to Edmund Randolph, March 6, 1795, Ibid, 3:253-256.
[39] Monroe was wildly optimistic concerning the new French Constitution. For an evaluation of the new Constitution see Francois Furet, *The French Revolution* (Cambridge: Mass, Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 162-168 James Monroe to Timothy Pickering, November 5, 1795, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3:506; See also, James Monroe to Timothy Pickering, December 6, 1795, Ibid, 3: 534-535; Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, November, 18, Ibid 3: 516-520; Monroe to James Madison, January 12, 1796, Ibid 3:563-565. Monroe marveled in his letter to Madison of the "wise, steady and energetic" progress of the French government.

it was proceeding along the same lines as the American Revolution with the violence representing only minor interruptions along the way.[40] There were few true extremists in the United States. Both sides were instead committed to the liberal republic. They were simply unable to recognize this similarity.[41] The political situation in the United States blinded Monroe to the realities of the French Revolution and he could not conceive of a truly radical movement. The true Revolution was, in Monroe's mind, the quest for freedom from monarchial rule and representative government. Monroe could, with intellectual honesty, omit anything that did not fit the model of a revolution toward American republicanism. With this mindset Monroe hoped to bring these two liberal republics together by any means necessary.

As Monroe wrote to Randolph of the great success of the Revolution and the overall tranquility in France following the fall of Robespierre, he also tried to convince the French of his government's "loyalty" to their new Republic. Monroe found himself in a difficult position. Robespierre's fall threw the French government into chaos. Meanwhile, Franco-American relations were strained to the point of breaking when he

[40] Quote is from Arthur Scherr, "The Limits of Republican Ideology: James Monroe in Thermidorian Paris, 1794-1796 *Mid-America*, 79:1 Winter 1997, 6-11, 33, 41-44; Quote is from James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson July, 30 1796, *Writings of James Monroe*, 3: 45.

[41] See Sharp, *American Politics*, 1-17 and Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of A Party System* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1969). Of course this did not stop each side of the political aisle from depicting the other as extreme. As Sharp and Hofstadter have explained both sides of the debate in the early republic honestly believed the other intent on destroying the American Constitution. Federalists saw Jefferson, Monroe and the other republicans as intent upon overthrowing the government in a new Revolution that would look more like the French Terror than the high ideals of 1776. Indeed, the Democratic Republican Societies looked to all the world American versions of the Jacobin clubs which Robespierre and others had ridden to power. The Republicans, on the other hand, saw the Federalist government as inching closer and closer to what Monroe called in the People the Sovereigns, consolidation-monarchy in all but name. Both sides shared a genuine commitment to the American Constitution. They differed on how it should be interpreted. Hamiltonians hoped for a stronger government with implied powers while Jeffersonians thought the Constitution only provided government with the express powers found in the language. Nevertheless both sides were intent on conducting their battle within its general parameters.

arrived in France. Gouverneur Morris's recall and America's declaration of neutrality contributed to the cool reception Monroe received when he provided his papers to the Committee of Public Safety. After waiting in vain for the Committee to recognize him as the new minister in France, Monroe took drastic measures.[42] He sent a letter to Phillipe Merlin de Douai, President of the French National Convention on August 13, 1794, requesting recognition as a representative of a "Sister Republic." Monroe believed that only by reaching out to the French people could he hope to accomplish his objectives. The French Convention agreed to Monroe's request and he addressed the Convention the next day.[43]

A crowd surrounded Monroe as he made his way to the Hall of the French National Convention, "Long live the United States of America, our brave brothers" they cried at the tall Virginian. Monroe entered the Hall as the Parisian mob cheered him as a symbol of the Revolution. Monroe positioned himself at the dais, standing before 700 revolutionaries, and affirmed the two nation's connection. "Republics should approach near to each other" he began as a translator related his words in French. "The French and American republics in particular should stand side by side. After all, their "governments are similar" and both constructed upon "the equal and inalienable rights of man." He also claimed that just as America once endured her own "day of oppression" and emerged from it "in the enjoyment of peace, liberty and independence" so would the French Republic. Furthermore, Monroe presented declarations from both houses of Congress,

[42] Beverley Bond, *The Monroe Mission to France, 1794-1796* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1907), 15-16.
[43] James Monroe to Phillipe Merlin De Douai August 13, 1794. *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3:24; James Monroe, *The Autobiography of James Monroe,* 59-61.

wishing the French people well, and he personally expressed President George Washington's own fond wishes.[44]

Monroe ended his speech by referring to the role he hoped to play in this great drama, "I pursue the dictates of my own heart in wishing the liberty and happiness of the French nation." He vowed to do "everything in [his] power to preserve and perpetuate the harmony so happily subsisting at present between the two Republics" and thus "merit the approbation of both." This, Monroe believed, was the most important cause he could possibly devote his energies: "I shall deem it the happiest event of my life, and return with a consolation, which those who mean well and have served the cause of liberty alone can feel."[45]

Monroe recognized that some in the United States might not appreciate his actions. Some, he knew, would have preferred he "smuggled" Congress's statements of support for the French republic under the cover of darkness.[46] He preemptively wrote to the secretary of state explaining the positive reaction his address received. After his speech the French exhibited great "affection" for their sister republic.[47]

When news reached the United States of Monroe's speech the administration and Federalists everywhere expressed considerable irritation. In December of 1794 Randolph wrote to Monroe that in future he should behave in a more "circumspect" manner. He reminded Monroe of his duty to present the administration's policy rather than simply express his own views on the Revolution. Randolph worried that the British might look

[44] James Monroe, Address to the French National Convention. August 15, 1794. *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 30-31.
[45] Ibid.
[46] James Monroe to James Madison, September 2, 1794. *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 47-49.
[47] James Monroe to Edmund Randolph, August, 25, 1794, Ibid, 3: 40. They even offered the new minister a house to live in at the expense of the French government which Monroe was forced to turn down because of its unconstitutionality.

askance at this public display of support for France. Randolph also informed Monroe that his instructions did not call for "the extreme glow of some parts of your address;" he should use caution when making public speeches in his role as Minister. Randolph finished his rebuke by urging Monroe to "cultivate the French Republic with zeal, but without any unnecessary éclat." In a much friendlier tone Madison wrote to Monroe that his speech had been "grating" to many in the Federalist camp, yet he and his fellow Republicans rejoiced at the sentiments.[48]

Monroe learned of the administration's reprimand in February 1795 and responded with a long letter to Randolph explaining exactly why he took the action he did. He reminded the secretary of state of the strained state of relations between France and the United States upon his arrival; the treaty of 1778 had been violated, American commerce harassed and the previous Minister removed. Monroe described to Randolph how, "connections between the two countries hung, as it were, by a thread." In fact, the Committee of Public Safety distrusted Monroe's presence in France thinking he might be there only to cover Jay's mission. All in all, it appeared to Monroe that without strong measures the relationship between the two republics might deteriorate completely. As such he thought his duty was to act in such a way that assured the French public and the members of the National Convention that the United States supported their Revolution. Furthermore, Monroe argued, the scheme had worked. With the French people and the

[48] Edmund Randolph to James Monroe, December 2, 1794. *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3:172; James Madison to James Monroe, December 4, 1794 Ibid, 3:174; See also John Brown to James Monroe Dec. 5, 1794 Ibid, 3: 182-184. Brown told Monroe that his address to the Convention "has been read wth enthusiasm and approbation by every friend to the Rights of Man, as breathing the genuine sentiments of republicanism and as expressing the sense of nineteen twenthiets of the citizens of the Union."

National Convention on his side, the Committee of Public Safety had relented. Monroe informed Randolph that his actions had gained concessions from the French.[49]

While some initial problems arose due to Monroe's outpouring of support for the Revolution, John Jay's treaty put Monroe's mission in serious jeopardy. The Washington government knew Jay's Mission to Britain might arouse suspicion in France. Secretary of State Randolph told Monroe that he should assure the French that Jay received no authorization to make any agreement with the British Empire that imperiled America's relationship with France. Time and again Randolph assured Monroe that the goals of Jay's mission included only securing compensation for property lost during the Revolutionary War and the restoration of America's western frontier posts. Jay's mission, the administration insisted, did not signal a decision to forfeit the U.S. relationship with France in exchange for a closer connection to England.[50]

In his instructions Randolph told Monroe to "remove all jealousy with respect to Mr. Jay's mission in London" He assured Monroe that Jay "is positively forbidden to weaken the engagements between this country and France." He also instructed Monroe to assure the French that Jay's Mission only had the goals of obtaining "immediate compensation for our plundered property, and the restitution of the posts."[51] Monroe conveyed "solemn declarations" to the French Committee of Public Safety to that effect.[52] While this may have been strictly true, Randolph and the administration misled Monroe when it came to Jay's Mission. Along with the goals Monroe understood the

[49] James Monroe to Edmund Randolph, February 12, 1795, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 2:224-227; For the concessions Monroe achieved during his mission see James Monroe to Edmund Randolph January 13, 1795 Ibid, 2:202-206; James Monroe to Committee of Public Safety. January 4, 1795. Ibid, 2:195-196.
[50] Beverly Bond, *The Monroe Mission to France*, 13; Edmund Randolph to James Monroe, Sept. 25 1794, *Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 89.
[51] Ibid., 3: 7,11.
[52] James Monroe to Edmund Randolph, December 18, 1794, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3:188-190.

administration had also authorized Jay to negotiate a commercial treaty with the British. Monroe knew nothing of these instructions.[53] The administration kept Monroe in the dark because only someone believed to be a friend to the Revolution could mollify both the French government and the growing pro-French faction in the United States. Furthermore, the administration needed to keep the French happy in the event that Jay failed to secure a treaty.[54]

Fortunately for the administration and unfortunately for Monroe's mission, Jay did secure a treaty with Britain. Word leaked of the treaty, though its specific contents remained unknown. When rumors of the treaty reached Monroe in late 1794 he told the French to put no stock in such things, "I cannot believe that an American minister would ever forget the connections between the United States and France."[55] And while Jay informed Monroe that the treaty did not infringe on any U.S. commitment to France, he did not immediately send the contents of the Treaty to Paris.[56]

The French government questioned Monroe about the treaty. The Committee of Public Safety asked Monroe directly to "communicate to us the treaty in question as soon as possible." Only by doing so could Monroe dispel the rumors surrounding the treaty

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[53] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, May 4 1794, Ibid, 2:720-721. "Tis said the envoy will be armed with extraordinary powers… and "authorized to form a commercial treaty." Monroe did not relish the prospect of giving the man who had "bartered away" the Mississippi such power; John Jay's Instructions as Envoy Extraordinary to Great Britain May 6, 1794. *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1890/1970), 4:10-21.

[54] See, Edmund Randolph to James Monroe, Sept. 25 1794, *Papers of James Monroe*, 89. Randolph again told Monroe "You know how Mr Jay is restricted." He went on to lament the chances of Jay coming home with any concessions from the British, "I must acknowledge to you, that notwithstanding all the pompous expectations announced in the Gazettes of compensation to the merchants the prospect of it is in my judgment illusory, and I do not entertain the distant hope of the surrender of the Western Posts….Judge then how indispensible it is that you should keep the French Republic in good humor with us;" See also Bond, *The Monroe Mission*, 14.

[55] James Monroe to the Committee of Public Safety, December 27, 1794, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3:193.

[56] John Jay to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1794. Ibid, 3:158.

which were, according to the Committee, "harmful to America." The Committee reiterated that they would view any commercial treaty between the United States and Great Britain as damaging to Franco-American relations.[57]

Rumors circulating about the treaty, mostly from the British press, put Monroe in a difficult position. The French government felt an "uneasiness" concerning Jay's mission, which Monroe tried to alleviate by consistently repeating Randolph's assurance that Jay only possessed restricted powers to treat with the British. This new treaty, which rumors indicated might even include, "an alliance offensive and defensive" elicited a "kind of horror" from the French. As a result Monroe agreed to let the French view the treaty as soon as he received it from Jay.[58]

Monroe asked Jay for a copy of the treaty. He, perhaps foolishly, told the Pro-British Jay that "nothing will satisfy this government but a copy of the instrument itself."[59] Jay refused. Though he originally promised to send Monroe a copy Jay now agreed to do so only, "in the most perfect confidence." He did not believe it proper to send an un-ratified treaty to a foreign government "however friendly." Jay was in the right in terms of diplomatic protocol. A foreign nation had no right to inspect a proposed treaty between two other powers. To allow France to do such would make the United States appear supplicant to their interests. Diplomatic protocol did not overly concern Monroe who believed that a closer alliance with France could only enhance American prestige. He insisted that his efforts during the past year held together the fragile Franco-

[57] The Committee of Public Safety to James Monroe, Dec. 26, 1794, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 191; Bond, *The Monroe Mission*, 30-31.
[58] James Monroe to Edmund Randolph, Dec. 18, 1794, *Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 188, 190; James Monroe to the Committee of Public Safety, Dec 27, 1794, Ibid, 3: 192. Monroe also believed the treaty was a "project" conceived by "Messrs [British Prime Minister William] Pitt and Jay…to weaken our connection with France and put us again under the influence of England."
[59] James Monroe to John Jay, Jan 17 1795, *Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 207.

American alliance and he well knew that Jay's treaty might undo all his work. If it meant breaking diplomatic protocol to keep the world's two republics together, it was simply a price worth paying.[60]

Monroe refused to accept the contents of the treaty under such a stipulation. He thought it incumbent upon him to communicate the treaty to the French as per his promise. He and Jay reached an impasse and when the French heard nothing from Monroe concerning the treaty they suspected that the contents of Jay's agreement did not favor the French. After all, "if the treaty was not injurious to France why was it withheld from her?"[61] Monroe finally received a basic outline of the treaty from an American in Paris named Benjamin Hichborn, which he passed on to the Committee of Public Safety.[62]

With no help from the administration and knowing that Jay's full instructions had been kept from him, Monroe looked to his fellow Republicans for support. If the treaty contained provisions that hurt Franco-American relations he wanted his allies in the United States to defeat it in Congress. In a letter circulated to Republican leaders John Beckley, Aaron Burr, George Logan and, of course, Thomas Jefferson, Monroe reported that during his tenure as Minister he succeeded in bringing the two republics together. Now Jay's Treaty risked destroying everything he had accomplished. Reports of the favorable concessions to the English "operated like a stroke of thunder and produced

[60] John Jay to James Monroe, February 5, 1795. Ibid, 3: 222.
[61] James Monroe to Edmund Randolph, March 17, 1795, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 271-273; James Monroe to Edmund Randolph, April 14, 1795, Ibid, 3:290; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 143.
[62] Benjamin Hichborn to James Monroe, March 31, 1795, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3:282; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 144.

upon all France amazement." Monroe felt the same way. He saw it as nothing less than a betrayal of the liberal republican cause.[63]

Finally, Monroe learned the full text of the treaty during the fall of 1795, "I consider this treaty as forming an important epoch in the history of our country. It fully explains the views of its author and his political associates." This treaty laid bare the Federalists' true colors. Monroe hoped that the president's rejection of the treaty, which he thought likely, might rally the Republican faction around Washington. The treaty inspired a belief in France that the United States planned to "abandon this republic for a connection with England." Jay had sacrificed the interests of both the country and the republican cause in order to preserve a relationship with Great Britain. Monroe believed that the United States could achieve far more from Britain by threatening to join France militarily. "If our sage negotiator in London had waited a little longer till the victories of France were more complete we might have gained terms satisfactory to all his countrymen." After the Treaty, Monroe turned completely against Jay and the administration. He suspected that "perhaps [Jay] wished for the honor of England to deprive the Republican Party in America of the opportunity of saying his success was owing in any degree to that cause."[64] Monroe sent Madison a copy of his correspondence with Jay and copies of his letters to Randolph. [65] "My object was and is to put in your possession facts which may be useful in a certain view of things, perhaps to he publick

[63] James Monroe to John Beckley, June 23, 1795, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 368-372. Monroe also sent copies of this letter to George Logan, Robert R. Livingston, Thomas Jefferson, Aaron Burr and possibly George Clinton.
[64] James Monroe to James Madison, Sept. 8 1795, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3:438.
[65] James Monroe to James Madison, February, 18, 1795, *Ibid*, 3:232.

[sic] and certainly to myself." By now Monroe expected an attack from Jay and the other arch-Federalists.[66]

By early 1796 Monroe and his ministry were in jeopardy. Two developments sealed his fate, one in France the other in the United States. First, after the creation of the French Constitution of 1795, the Committee of Public Safety gave way to a new multi-person executive known as the Directory. After minimal deliberation, the Directory adopted the old Jacobin policy of directing harsh measures against the United States. Built partly on simple annoyance at what they viewed as an ungrateful ally and partly in hopes of exerting pressure on the pro-British Federalist Party the Directory hoped it might influence a republican electoral victory in the United States. The other development occurred with the removal of Edmund Randolph as Secretary of State in favor of Timothy Pickering. Randolph, a moderate, actually supported a strong relationship with France and he opposed the Jay Treaty. As a Virginian his connections to Monroe made their working relationship palatable. Pickering represented a different animal entirely. An arch-Federalist, the New Englander also owned a reputation as an anglophile.[67]

Monroe learned of the Directory's harsh new policy in February of 1796. The French told Monroe that "it considered the alliance between us as ceasing to exist, from the moment the [Jay] Treaty was ratified."[68] Monroe tried to convince members of the Directory to reconsider. He warned that only France's monarchial enemies benefited from a split between two republics. Monroe also assured the Directory that despite the

[66] James Monroe to James Madison, October 24, 1795, Ibid, 3: 497
[67] Ammon, *James Monroe* 146-147. For a nation at war with the whole of Europe and beset by massive domestic crises relations with a small nearly powerless country an ocean away did not represent a priority.
[68] James Monroe to Timothy Pickering, Feb 16, 1796, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 590.

Treaty France had many friends in the United States and breaking off relations would turn some of these against France and her cause. France's enemies both within the United States and outside would jump at such a measure to use against the Revolution. Remarkably, and rather inappropriately, he told the French that "left to ourselves every thing will I think be satisfactorily arranged, and perhaps in the course of the present year." This represented a not so subtle hint that he believed Jefferson would win the election of 1796 which he repeated to Madison during the summer of '96 when complaining of his "ill treatment" by the administration. In that happy event, Monroe did not doubt that he could come home with a favorable treaty from the French. Events moved quicker and more erratically as Pickering even then was planning to remove Monroe as the minister to France.[69]

With the Senate's ratification, Washington's signature and the failure of Republicans in the House to block the implementation of the Treaty any chance for Monroe to preserve relations with France fell apart. Almost from the moment he assumed control of the State Department, Timothy Pickering decided that keeping a Francophile like Monroe as Minister to France threatened both national security and the Federalist Party itself. Pickering seized on Monroe's unsuccessful replies to French complaints of the Jay Treaty as a pretext for removing the minister. Pickering also furnished the June 1795 letter Monroe wrote to George Logan, founder of the Democratic Republican Societies in which he condemned Jay's Treaty.[70]

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[69] James Monroe to Charles Delacroix, Feb. 17 1796, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 3: 591-592; James Monroe to James Madison, July 5, 1796, Ibid, 4: 39-40.

[70] James Monroe to John Beckley, June 23, 1795, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 368-372. Monroe also sent copies of this letter to George Logan, RR Livingston, Thomas Jefferson, Aaron Burr and possibly George Clinton.

After Monroe's recall France decided to suspend relations with the United States. Monroe credited himself with delaying their action but never blamed the French for any of the issues between the two countries. Like his introductory speech to the Convention nearly three years before, Monroe addressed the French Directory upon his removal as Minister in much the same language of republican brotherhood. "I was witness to a revolution in my own country. I was deeply penetrated with its principles which are the same with those of your revolution." Monroe even felt as though he had "partaken with you in all the perilous and trying situations in which you have been placed." He saw the French about to enter a "dawn of prosperity." Monroe told the Directory he wanted more than anything "the continuance of a close union and perfect harmony between our two nations" and he tried to do everything he could to "promote this object."[71] Monroe left his position in December 1796 yet he waited until spring of '97 to leave for home, arriving in late June some three years since his departure. Though he never expressed regret over his actions in France the criticism he received from Federalists bothered Monroe.

Monroe fumed at the administration's conduct. Washington's famous Farewell Address, urging Americans to avoid entangling alliances arrived in France just as Monroe learned of his recall as Minister. The bitter Republican lashed out at President Washington. Equating the First president with monarchs past and present Monroe claimed that Washington like the rest "practiced ingratitude in their transactions with other great power" but only Washington made it a "publick virtue." Then he followed it

[71] James Monroe, "Address to the Executive Directory," January 1, 1797, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 4:138-139.

up with a typical anti-Federalist rant, "Where these men will plunge our affairs God only knows, but such a collection of vain, superficial blunderers, to say no worse of them, were never I think before placed at the head of any respectable State." Monroe spent the next year taking on these "blunderers" by vindicating his actions in France.[72]

In December of 1797, roughly a year after his recall, Monroe still smarting from the wounds to his reputation, fought a war of words against the administration. He first attempted to receive a written statement of reasons for his dismissal from the administration but Pickering refused to oblige.[73] Monroe's frustration led him to publish a political work aimed at the administration. In typical 19th century fashion Monroe named the work *A View of the Conduct of the Executive, in the Foreign Affairs of the United States, Connected with the Mission to the French Republic, during the years 1794, 1795, 1796.* Monroe laid out, in painstaking detail his entire three year ministry, complete with accompanying correspondence. Monroe ended by describing how severely the Administration bungled relations with France.

According to Monroe, the American situation at the commencement of war between Britain and France was excellent. America's standing with France was "so advantageous…so easy to preserve! And yet all these advantages have been thrown away." The administration instead sought to "plunge us into a war with our ancient ally, and on the side of the kings of Europe contending against her for the subversion of liberty!" The Federalists hoped to bring the United States in line with England. Thus,

[72] James Monroe to James Madison, Jan 1, 1797, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 4: 140.
[73] James Monroe to Timothy Pickering, July 6, 1797, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 4:157-158; Timothy Pickering to James Monroe, July 17, 1797, Ibid, 164-165; James Monroe to Timothy Pickering, July 19, 1797. Ibid: 4:165-166; Timothy Pickering to James Monroe, July 24, 1797 Ibid, 4: 170-171; James Monroe to Timothy Pickering, July, 31, 1797, Ibid 4:173-176.

the United States threw "our national honor... in the dust." All this might easily have been avoided, "We might have preserved our ancient renown; bought at a great expense of blood and treasure, in a long war, in a contest for liberty, and even appeared as a defender of liberty" without actually g oing to war. A strong statement of support would have thrown the moral weight of the United States, the beacon of liberal republicanism, behind the French cause. By failing to do so the country missed a chance that would haunt it for ages to come, "nor will centuries suffice to raise us to the high ground from which we have fallen." Eventually Monroe himself tried to hasten America's climb back to the high ground with the Monroe Doctrine but first he spent the next two decades attempting to climb the political ladder in order to acquire the political power necessary to rectify America's failure in France.[74]

[74] James Monroe, "A View of the Conduct of the Executive" December 23 1797, *The Papers of James Monroe*, 4:227: The "View" consists of a 64 page pamphlet and 407 pages of documents.

Chapter 4

"James Monroe: Traitor"

George Washington remains the only person in United States history unanimously elected to the nation's highest office but James Monroe, the man Washington fired as his minister to the French Revolution in 1796, came within one electoral vote in 1820 of matching his feat. The Monroe of the mid-1790s appeared completely incapable of such an accomplishment but during the years following his return from France in 1797 Monroe transformed from a reckless zealot of republicanism to a shrewd political operator. In many ways he became the most astute politician of the Virginia dynasty. From 1803 when Jefferson sent him back to France to help negotiate the Louisiana Purchase until he emerged as President Madison's right hand during the War of 1812, Monroe increasingly recognized that only by first attaining high political office could he acquire the power to make his mark on American republicanism. While he always remained dedicated to his republican ideals he built a reputation as a diplomat and developed a keen political sense. These newfound skills allowed Monroe to take the necessary actions to ensure that he would acquire the power necessary to cement his legacy as a champion of republicanism.

Three critical moments in Monroe's career illustrate this transformation. First, with republicanism in the ascendancy after the Election of 1800, Jefferson sent Monroe to finalize the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Monroe's second stint in France, this time on Jefferson's behalf, produced far better results than his first sojourn. Monroe manipulated the situation to ensure that he received credit for negotiating the Purchase and expanding

the territorial reach of the United States. Later, in 1808, Monroe returned from Europe as an accomplished diplomat and ran for president of the United States against his friend James Madison. Monroe challenged Madison because he believed that he better embodied the true principles of republicanism and that only he could further Jefferson's republican legacy. In the same instance, Monroe also exhibited his maturation by recognizing that he could not risk his standing within the Democratic- Republican Party. He therefore took the necessary steps to ensure that his relationship with Jefferson endured. This eventually facilitated his return to the republican hierarchy and helped secure a position within Madison's cabinet. Third, during the War of 1812 Monroe, by then serving beside Madison as secretary of state, helped lead the fight against the British while eliminating a potential rival for the presidency. His successful removal of Secretary of War John Armstrong ensured that Monroe would succeed Madison in 1817.

Louisiana

The first incident illustrating Monroe's political maturation occurred when he returned to France in response to a crisis surrounding the future of the American west. The fate of the liberal republican experiment looked increasingly uncertain in the years following Monroe's stint in Revolutionary France. While things looked bright in the United States with Jefferson's election in 1800, the promise Republicans beheld in the French Revolution faded as Napoleon Bonaparte assumed power as First Consul in November of 1799 with the coup of 18 Brumaire (November 9). Napoleon's bid for

power disabused many Republicans of the notion that France's Revolution mirrored the American version.[1]

Thus, panic ensued in 1801 when word circulated throughout the United States that Napoleon forced the Spanish to retrocede the Louisiana Territory to France. Americans, Republicans included, viewed French occupation of Louisiana as a grave threat to the young country. Jefferson summed it correctly when he claimed to Robert R. Livingston, the minister to France, that, "nothing since the Revolution has produced more uneasy sensations through the body of the nation." For his part, Monroe wrote a series of essays on the subject which was, "exciting much interest" throughout the nation during the spring of 1802.[2]

French control of Louisiana presented a host of fears for the United States. Spain, with its crumbling American empire, provided an ideal neighbor while France, the world's preeminent military power, presented a much greater threat to American interests. To complicate matters French interest in the western hemisphere appeared ascendant. As the Louisiana crisis unfolded Napoleon sent his brother-in-law, General Charles Leclerc, to St. Domingue (present-day Haiti) to crush the slave rebellion in 1801. It appeared that Napoleon and the French aimed at re-creating a vast French empire in the New World. At best a renewed French Louisiana might prevent the kind of westward expansion that Republicans envisioned for the country. At worst Americans feared

[1] Merrill Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (New York: Oxford, 1975), 628. Peterson claims that the 18th Brumaire "crushed the last hopes" Jefferson had for the Revolution.

[2] Thomas Jefferson to Robert R. Livingston, April 18, 1802, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* Ed. Barbara Oberg. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 37:266; Frank W. Brecher, *Negotiating the Louisiana Purchase: Robert Livingston's Mission to France 1801-1804* (London: Mcfarland Co., 2006), 1-3; James Monroe, "Richmond Examiner" May 5 and 12, 1802, found in *The Papers of James Monroe*, Ed. Daniel Preston, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2012), 4: 593-595. The rumors proved to be true. The French had in fact forced the Spanish to retrocede Louisiana with the Treaty of San Ildefonso of October 1800. In these essays, Monroe, true to form, blamed the previous Federalist administration for the crisis.

Napoleon's armies roaming the Mississippi. Even Jefferson, the prototypical arch Anglophobe, asserted that French presence in Louisiana would force the United States to "marry" the British fleet.[3]

The crisis intensified in October of 1802 when the Spanish intendant at New Orleans suspended the right of deposit. This decree prevented American boats on the Mississippi from unloading their cargo in New Orleans. This effectively cut off the entire American west from the global economy. Jefferson posited that this the news created an extreme "agitation in the public mind." He even boldly maintained that "every eye in the United States was now fixed on the affairs of Louisiana." The public, particularly westerners, clamored for Jefferson to take action immediately. Jefferson's alternative plan to diffuse the situation called for an American purchase of the city of New Orleans. This would alleviate westerners' fears by ensuring that their goods reached the open market. In fact, Jefferson tried to facilitate such an act upon hearing rumor of the Spanish retrocession in 1801. Robert R. Livingston, minister in France, began negotiating with the French upon his arrival in Paris in the fall of 1801 but achieved little headway in reaching an agreement. With the port of New Orleans suddenly closed Jefferson decided the crisis warranted more drastic measures. He sent James Monroe.[4]

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[3] Thomas Jefferson to Robert R. Livingston, April 18,1802. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 37:264-265; See generally, James E. Lewis Jr., *The Louisiana Purchase: Jefferson's Noble Bargain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 18-24. Lewis argues that the major reason Americans feared French occupation of Louisiana was not the threat of French troops somehow appearing on the Mississippi but the fear of disunion. American leaders, both Federalist and Republican alike feared that new states, west of the Appalachians might form separate nations independent of the United States. With a great power like France controlling the Mississippi, and with it the trade of these nations, they might look to the French for support in remaining independent from the U.S.

[4] Thomas Jefferson to Robert R. Livingston, April 18, 1802, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 37:266. Lewis, *The Louisiana Purchase*, 31-53.

In January of 1803 Jefferson appointed Monroe as minister extraordinary for the express purpose of acquiring New Orleans. Monroe made for an obvious selection to send to France. Personally loyal to Jefferson and politically bound to the Republican Party, he maintained many of his former connections in France and remained well liked in that country due to his unerring support for their revolution. Finally, and probably most importantly, Monroe possessed a reputation as one of the few American political figures who cared for the interests of the west. He had earned this repute as a member of the Confederation Congress during the 1780s controversy over the Jay-Gardoqui Treaty.

Monroe emerged from his apprenticeship to Jefferson as a youthful 26-year-old statesman when John Jay entered into negotiations with the Spanish government in 1784. Jay, first as Minister to Spain and later as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, agreed to surrender American access to the Mississippi in order to secure trade concessions. This infuriated westerners who viewed the free navigation of the river as critical to their economic survival. Monroe, then serving as a member of the Confederation Congress, worked diligently in drumming up opposition to the treaty. He believed that maintaining access to the Mississippi represented a crucial step in keeping the west within the Union. Monroe argued that "if we entered into engagements to the contrary, we separate these people-I mean all those westward of the mountains from the federal government & perhaps throw them into the hands eventually of a foreign power." Monroe became so concerned over the treaty he even suggested that the negotiations be taken out of Jay's hands entirely. His strong stance against the treaty made Monroe a hero to the west and the "strong proofs of the interests he took in the free navigation of that river [the Mississippi]" made him a perfect candidate for the mission to France in 1803. As

Jefferson told Monroe in his letter, "no other man can be found" who possessed all the attributes necessary to pull off the bargain.[5]

In his letter conferring the appointment, Jefferson explained that the very future of the nation depended upon his mission. Monroe, equally determined to head off the French threat, vowed that the United States would "never suffer France or any other power to tamper with our interior." Monroe's second mission to France produced far better results than his first because of the way Monroe conducted himself. His political instincts had matured. When controversy erupted with Livingston Monroe displayed a shrewd political touch not found during his first French Mission. This newfound political skill helped him emerge from the affair as a prominent figure within the Republican Party.[6]

Monroe arrived in France in April of 1803. A breakthrough in the long-stalled negotiations between Livingston and the French occurred after Monroe's arrival. After two years of frustrating negotiations which had prompted Livingston to lament only a few months before that he "saw little use for a minister here" suddenly and seemingly out

[5] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, July 16, 1786,*The Writings of James Monroe,* ed. Stanislaus Murray Hamilton (New York: AMS Press 1902, 1969), 1:140; James Monroe to James Madison, August 10, 1786, *Ibid*, 1:143-151; James Monroe to James Madison, May 31, 1786, *Ibid*, 1:132; James Monroe, *The Autobiography of James Monroe,* ed. Stuart Gerry Brown (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959), 44-45; James Monroe to Arthur St. Clair, August 20, 1786, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 1:343; James E. Lewis, *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 16; Harry Ammon, James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1971), 203-205; Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe Jan. 13, 1803, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Ford Leicester (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), 8:190-192

[6] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, March 7, 1803, *The Writings of James Monroe,* 4:4; James Monroe, *Autobiography*, 153; Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, January 10, 1803, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, 9:416-417.

of nowhere the French finally offered to negotiate.[7] When news arrived in Paris of Monroe's arrival at Havre, French foreign minister Maurice de Talleyrand almost casually asked Livingston if the Americans would be willing to buy the entire Louisiana territory. Livingston hesitated, thereby missing a chance to seal the bargain before Monroe appeared. Once Monroe arrived in Paris, Livingston even tried to exclude Monroe from the negotiations.[8]

Tension between the two diplomats mounted because Livingston feared his work would be overshadowed by Monroe's arrival. He worried that Monroe would take credit for the Purchase, credit Livingston felt he deserved. After all, he spent two years in France before Monroe arrived. Suddenly it appeared that the new minister would reap the rewards of the great victory after years of Livingston's hard work. Most historians of the Purchase agree that Livingston began the battle over who should receive recognition for acquiring Louisiana. In *Negotiating the Louisiana Purchase*, historian Robert Brecher blames Livingston for initiating the feud. In his biography of Livingston, George Dangerfield accuses Livingston of doctoring the record of the negotiations to deprive Monroe of recognition. Monroe's own biographer Harry Ammon asserts that "in this unseemly contest for glory Livingston bears a large share of the blame." Ammon absolves Monroe of almost any culpability in the "unseemly" business, claiming that "Monroe merely asserted that the treaty was a joint work in which administration policy had played a decisive role." Dangerfield waxes eloquent on Monroe's character calling

[7] Robert R. Livingston to James Madison, January 24, 1803, *The Papers of James Madison, Secretary of State Series(SS)* ed. Mary Hackett (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 4: 277-278 ; Brecher, *Negotiating the Louisiana Purchase*, 46.

[8] Ammon, 212; James Monroe to James Madison, April 15, 1803,*The Papers of James Madison* (*SS*), 4:520-522. He used the fact that Monroe had not been officially introduced to the Emperor as a pretext.

him "transparently a good man." These authors miss or omit Monroe's rather deft handling of this potential controversy. In fact, Monroe ensured that he would receive recognition for his part in negotiating the Purchase. He also managed to appear magnanimous by subtly refraining from actively seeking praise for the Purchase while portraying the "facts" in such a way that assumed credit without appearing self-aggrandizing.[9]

Monroe recognized his colleague's scheme mere days after his arrival in France. In fact, immediately upon his arrival in Paris his friend and fellow Virginian Fulwar Skipwith told him of Livingston's plan. Monroe also conveyed to Madison that he knew Livingston feared his arrival took "from[Livingston] the credit of having brought everything to a proper conclusion." Written only a few days after arriving in Paris, this missive set the tone for Monroe's part in the debate over the question of credit. He warned the Secretary of State of Livingston's plan to prove that he "accomplished what was wished for without my aid." He warned Madison that Livingston would try to assume all the recognition for the Purchase. Meanwhile Monroe crafted his own version of the negotiations.[10]

Monroe's account of the negotiations ensured that he received at least some portion of the credit for the Purchase. Monroe wisely credited the administration for their policy in sending him to France. He argued that his arrival in France on April 8, known in Paris on the following day led to Napoleon's offer of April 10 to sell all of Louisiana. In couching the question of credit in this manner Monroe scored points with his superiors

[9] See Brecher, *Negotiating the Louisiana Purchase*, 80-105; George Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York*,(New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960), 376-378; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 215

[10] James Monroe to James Madison, April 15, 1803,*The Writings of James Monroe*, 4:9.

by praising the "wise and firm and moderate measures" of the administration. On the surface, Monroe humbly downplayed his own direct role in the negotiations. He admitted that the offer "was not the effect of any management of mine." Yet Monroe had no qualms about stating that his arrival ultimately induced the French to sell.[11]

While never directly pointing to his own role in the negotiations Monroe nevertheless made indirect statements that he should indeed receive a substantial portion of the accolades for the Purchase. After all, if the negotiations failed, "all responsibility would have been on the government and myself" not Livingston. Further, he praised Jefferson's motives in nominating him and recognizing "the pronounced character which I had in reference to the object in question and a belief that I would bring the affair promptly to an issue." Monroe implied that his very presence in France induced Napoleon and his government to sell. His familiarity and with those in the French government combined with his well known advocacy for American access to the Mississippi went a long way in convincing the French that the administration took the crisis seriously. Both the French and Jefferson knew that Monroe would bring "invariable zeal to promote the object of the cession." Monroe implied that the administration's "wise measures;" specifically sending not simply a new minister but sending him to France made the difference. "If my mission produced any effect it was owing altogether to the motive which induced the President to nominate me, that is, the pronounced character which I had in reference to the object in question, and a belief that I would bring the affair promptly to an issue."[12]

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[11] James Madison to Virginia Senators, May 25, 1803, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 4: 31-33.
[12] Ibid, 4:31-32. The Purchase was carried off largely for reasons external to the actions of either Monroe or Livingston. Napoleon's hopes for a new French empire in the western hemisphere ended after a military

Monroe also made subtle jabs at Livingston's expense. He informed Madison of Livingston's attempt to preclude him from the initial negotiations. He explained that during the early negotiations, when Monroe did not think it proper for him to be there without an official introduction to the Emperor, Livingston met with the French Minister of Finance Francois Barbe-Marbois. According to Monroe, he coached Livingston on how to behave with the French minister. He feared that Livingston would appear too bold and eager in his negotiations and cautioned him to, "hear and not to speak" presumably until he could receive further instructions from Monroe.[13]

Monroe even went so far as to try to sabotage Livingston's future political career. In November 1803, exactly a year before the presidential election, Monroe learned that Livingston wanted to use his newfound popularity from the Louisiana Purchase to replace Aaron Burr as the New Yorker on the 1804 Republican presidential ticket. Livingston planned to return home in the spring of 1804 to capitalize on his reputation from the purchase and make his case for inclusion on the ticket. Upon learning this, Monroe informed Madison of Livingston's plans. He suggested to Madison that the administration request Livingston to stay at his post for another year. This, Monroe believed, would flatter Livingston and induce him to stay. Monroe did not want his colleague returning to the United States trumpeting himself as the sole negotiator of the Louisiana Purchase while Monroe remained in Europe.[14]

Madison instructed Livingston and Monroe in the summer of 1803 that "the bargain will be regarded on the whole as highly advantageous." For the nation this

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disaster in Haiti. This combined with the rumblings of a renewed war with Great Britain induced Napoleon to sell France's possessions in North America.

[13] James Monroe to James Madison, September 17, 1803, *Papers of James Madison* (SS). 5:440;

[14] James Monroe to James Madison, November 25, 1803, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 4:102-103.

obviously rang true. It expanded the realm of Republicanism deep into the American continent and helped validate Jefferson's empire of liberty. "Highly advantageous" also accurately describes the Purchase's impact on Monroe's career. Livingston's political career all but ended after France. His hopes for the presidency, if ever he had any, were dashed when Jefferson selected George Clinton as his Vice President. Afterward Livingston left politics entirely. Monroe meanwhile became Jefferson's "man" in Europe. During the next half decade Monroe shuttled from one European capital to another negotiating on behalf of Jefferson and the U.S. Monroe's second mission to France put him well on his way to capturing high office but before he could achieve the kind of power he sought his political skills would be tested again. This time James Madison himself stood in his way.[15]

The Election of 1808

Monroe did not return home after his success in France. Instead, he stayed in Europe from 1803-1807. When he finally returned to the United States, he challenged Madison for the presidency. Few people remember that James Monroe ran for president in 1808 mostly because he lost, badly. Monroe received only 3,408 votes, all in the state of Virginia. Instead, Madison became America's fourth president, succeeding Thomas Jefferson. The campaign of 1808 eventually caused a complete break between Monroe and Madison. In fact, from 1808 to 1810 they neither spoke nor exchanged a letter. Yet

[15] James Monroe to James Madison, May 18, 1803, *The Writings of James Monroe,* 4:24-27; James Madison to James Monroe and Robert R. Livingston, July 29, 1803, *The Papers of James Madison (SS),* 5:238-240

less than a year later, in 1811, Madison appointed Monroe secretary of state, making him the heir apparent to the Republican Party.[16]

Before delving into this it is critical to understand Monroe's relationship with Madison. Monroe saw Jefferson as the head of the Republican Party. To Monroe's thinking Jefferson steered the Republicans through the crises of the 1790s and led it to victory in 1800. Like Monroe, Madison was merely one of Jefferson's chief lieutenants. Madison was not necessarily the automatic choice to become the next President. Indeed, Monroe saw himself as a better candidate to carry on the legacy of liberal republicanism by accepting the torch from Jefferson when his mentor retired in 1808.[17]

Monroe and Madison's ideological differences trace back as early as 1789. During the first election under the new Constitution Madison and Monroe became rivals in a contest for a seat in the House of Representatives. Madison's role in creating and securing ratification of the Constitution has since made him a celebrated figure, yet not everyone in Virginia supported his actions. Rabid antifederalist, Patrick Henry, only grudgingly accepted the establishment of a more powerful federal government. To keep it in check he determined to fill Congress with as many Virginia antifederalists as

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[16] For a discussion of the election of 1800 see, Harry Ammon, "James Monroe and the election of 1808 in Virginia" *William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Jan 1963) 33-56.

[17] Merrill D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 269; Monroe, *Autobiography*, 32-33. 19; Ammon, *James Monroe,* 43; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 8 May 1784, James Morton Smith, ed., *The Republic of Letters: The Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and James Madison 1776-1826*. (New York: Norton, 1995), 1:316. Jefferson introduced Monroe to Madison just before assuming the position as American minister to France in 1785. As such Jefferson became the tie that Monroe to Madison during the first years of their relationship. It is also important to note that Monroe did not think come to think of Madison as his mentor. Madison was merely a colleague and Jefferson's political ally. This is not to say that Madison and Monroe did not have a good relationship. In fact, Madison and Monroe became friends and collaborators in their own right. The key point is that Monroe did not defer to Madison as he did Jefferson. Traces of this can be seen throughout Monroe's autobiography. While Jefferson, as we have seen in chapter 2, comes in and out of Monroe's narrative, Madison hardly gains notice. Madison does not seem to hold any particular place of honor during Monroe's early years. Monroe does not, for instance, comment on his first meeting with Madison. Instead, Monroe portrays him as just another Virginia politician.

possible. When Madison chose to run for the House of Representatives, Henry turned to Monroe as a suitable alternative.[18] Henry and the Antifederalists questioned Madison's republican credentials. He had, after all, created a strong central government and helped author the *Federalist Papers,* which haunted Madison throughout his career. Many republicans, including Monroe, questioned whether he remained too enamored of federal power to be truly dedicated to the republican cause.[19]

This remained as true in 1803 as it had been in 1789. Monroe, while respecting and admiring Madison, did not see him as an unassailable pillar of republicanism in the same way he did Jefferson. He believed himself a more natural heir to the republican leadership. Monroe held to more radically republican ideals and distrusted strong central government. Madison, a supporter of central government in the past appeared to do the same during Jefferson's presidency. Though many Republicans saw Madison as the natural heir to the Party's leadership because of these weaknesses a faction within the Republican ranks distrusted and disliked him.

This faction, known as the "Old Republicans," made up the radical wing of the Republican Party.[20] They purported to uphold the true principles of republicanism. A

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[18]James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, 27 July. 1787, *The Papers of James Monroe,* 2: 391; Ammon, *James Monroe,* 60; Monroe was already bitter that he had not been chosen to serve on the Virginia delegation to Philadelphia in 1787 and told Jefferson that Madison had entered into efforts to try to "thwart him."

[19] Ammon, *James Monroe,* 69-75; James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, Feb, 15, 1789, *The Papers of James Monroe,* 2: 461. Madison and Monroe remained cordial throughout the election process, traveling throughout the district while speaking to various audiences on key issues. They made these journey's together and even shared lodgings during the campaign. This type of campaign remained common during 18th century elections before the partisan feelings of the 1790s split the political system into two rival factions. Madison won the election and unlike what occurred in 1808 the two men resumed their friendship.

[20] Some historians refer to the "old republicans" as the conservative wing of the Democratic-Republican Party. This is certainly true when considering them in a 21st century light but in the early 19th century conservatism was associated with Monarchy and the old regimes in Great Britain and a powerful central government. As the defenders of "old school" republicanism The Old Republicans positioned themselves

significant portion of these malcontents resided in Virginia. The leaders of this movement, men like John Randolph of Roanoke and John Taylor of Caroline, held Madison responsible for the administration's newfound centralizing tendencies. They distrusted federal power, advocated state's rights, and saw Madison's political philosophy as too similar to the Federalists. Monroe, with his natural republican leanings and national reputation sympathized with the old republican faction and offered them the only viable alternative to Madison.[21]

Initially, Monroe refused to listen to the Old Republicans' overtures but as differences between he and the administration mounted he became more receptive. With pressure mounting from Randolph and Taylor, Monroe gradually came to believe that the administration pushed him aside in favor of Madison. Monroe eventually ran for president to illustrate his importance within the Republican Party and prove that he commanded a significant personal following that included the most rabid of republicans. What better way to appear a champion of republicanism than to represent such people? At the same time Monroe knew that challenging Madison presented a significant risk to his political future so he took steps to ensure that his run for the presidency in 1808 did not end in disaster like his ministry in France a decade before.[22]

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in direct opposition to any form of traditional conservatism. Thus I refer to them as the radical wing of the Party.

[21] On the "Old Republicans" see generally, See Garrett Ward Sheldon and C. William Hull, *The Liberal Republicanism of John Taylor of Caroline* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008) and Norman Risjord, *The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 72-73; For specific reasons why John Randolph disliked Madison see Russell Kirk, *John Randolph of Roanoke* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1951), 87-88.

[22] John Randolph to James Monroe, Sept.16 1806, *Writings of James Monroe*, 4:486-487; Ammon, *James Monroe* 244-245; Norman K. Risjord, *The Old Republicans*, 18-39; James Monroe to John Randolph, June 16, 1806, *Writings of James Monroe*, 4:467.

Problems between Madison and Monroe began with simple disagreements over foreign policy. Monroe traveled from France to Spain in an effort to obtain East and West Florida as part of the Louisiana Purchase. He began to question the administration's decision-making when they did not heed his advice concerning Spanish-American relations. Monroe proposed an aggressive policy against Spain but Jefferson and Madison remained content to make threats with no intention of carrying out any action forcing the Spanish into a settlement. The administration ignored his advice and the region remained under Spanish control. Although a minor incident, this episode represents the first in a series of disagreements that persuaded that the administration no longer trusted his judgment. [23]

The second such incident occurred when Monroe assumed a diplomatic post in Great Britain. Monroe spent only a few months in Spain before he traveled to London to complete a new treaty with Britain. By 1806 Monroe's time in Europe was shaping up to be a tour of redemption for the former disgraced minister of 1797. His second stint in France in 1803 more than made up for his failure during the French Revolution and now he traveled to Great Britain to complete a new treaty with the British and to repair the damage done in 1795 by his old nemesis John Jay.

Monroe's time in Great Britain also mirrored his second stint in France though in a less positive way. He found himself in Robert Livingston's shoes. Jefferson's administration hoped to duplicate their success in France by sending a second diplomat to

[23]Monroe's disagreements with the administration over Spanish policy can be found in the following letters, James Madison to James Monroe, May 18, 1803, *The Papers of James Madison (SS)*, 5:12-13; James Madison to James Monroe, May 23 1803, *Ibid*., 5:24-25; James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, June 15, 1806, *The Writings of Monroe* 4:457. This final letter outlines Monroe's thoughts on Spain but Monroe never sent it and thus Jefferson was not aware of the extent of Monroe's disgruntlement until after 1808; See also, Ammon, *James Monroe* 243-246.

aid Monroe in the negotiations. Monroe requested the administration to allow him to negotiate the treaty by himself. He argued that the arrival of a new diplomat would undermine his position with the British ministry. This line of reasoning provided Monroe with political cover. More importantly, Monroe feared that he would not be credited for his hard work in laying the foundation for a treaty. His successor would, "take the ground at a moment of calm, under auspices more favorable," and he would only be, "concluding a bargain after the opinion of both parties has in some measure been made up." Again, Jefferson and Madison ignored his advice.[24] The administration sent William Pinkney as a special envoy to Great Britain**.** Monroe interpreted Pinkney's arrival as a sign that his voice did not carry the weight it should with his friends in Washington. He could not understand why, after being part of the Republican leadership during its rise to prominence during the 1790s, Madison and Jefferson suddenly no longer heeded his advice.[25]

John Randolph supplied Monroe with an answer. Indeed, he and the other Old Republicans helped turn Monroe against Madison. The Old Republicans had actually began courting Monroe as early as 1804, well before the Pinkney appointment. They complained of Madison, telling Monroe that he made a fitting alternative to succeed Jefferson. Throughout his time in Europe Monroe received warnings from these critics of the administration telling him that Madison damaged the republican cause. Randolph told

[24] James Monroe to James Madison, February 2, 1806, *The Writings of James Monroe, 4:*403; Ammon, *James Monroe,* 251; James Monroe to John Randolph, June 16, 1806, *The Writings of James Monroe*,4: 460. Monroe unloaded his grievances toward the administration in this letter to Randolph.
[25]Ammon, 251-255; As Ammon explains in his biography of the Fifth President, Monroe possessed a tendency to view relatively common place disagreements as personal attacks on his professional abilities. This played a role in exacerbating the situation. Transatlantic communications, notoriously slow during this era, also played a role in the problems between Monroe and his superiors in Washington. An ocean away, Monroe obviously could not meet face to face with his colleagues and receive an explanation for their actions.

Monroe that Madison's poor leadership of the Party hurt republicanism's reputation around the world because any mistakes were "attributed to defects of the system…and shake it in the confidence of mankind in both hemispheres." He informed Monroe that the most "constant and influential of the old republicans…have beheld with immeasurable disgust" Madison's "neutralizing" their republican principles by his "cold and insidious moderation." Such attacks, especially made in Randolph's wonderfully vindictive style, eventually took their toll on Monroe.[26]

Though he initially rebuffed the Old Republicans by telling them that it would be "impossible" for him to run without "tearing up by the roots antient [sic] friendships" they continued to pressure him throughout 1805 and 1806. Monroe enjoyed the attention and remained grateful for their continued support. He felt flattered at the "confidence which you and other friends repose in me, as it is the strongest proof which can be given of yours and their approbation of my past conduct in public life." The attentions of the Old Republicans represented a welcome contrast from the treatment he received from the administration. Where Jefferson and Madison ignored his advice, Randolph made it clear that he and other republican radicals preferred Monroe's ideas over the administrations.' As a result Monroe started to believe that perhaps he could challenge Madison. After all, if "true" republicans such as Randolph and Taylor saw him as the obvious champion of their cause maybe he was a better candidate than Madison to carry the banner in 1808.[27]

Randolph continued recruiting Monroe throughout 1806 and 1807. In a September 1806 letter to Monroe, Randolph told the diplomat that many of the Old

[26] John Randolph to James Monroe, Sept. 16, 1806, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 4:486-488.
[27] John Randolph to James Monroe, Sept. 16, 1806, *Writings of James Monroe,* 4: 486-488; James Monroe to John Randolph, June 16, 1806, *Writings of James Monroe*, 4: 460; See also, Risjord, *The Old Republicans*, 38, 75.

Republicans supported him for the presidency. By then Monroe's disagreements with the administration had begun to take their toll. After Pinkney's appointment, Monroe became less resistant to Randolph's pressuring. He conveyed to Randolph that "circumstances have occurr'd during my service abroad which were calculated to hurt my feelings & actually did hurt them." His sentiments toward "the men now in power on our side of the water" had changed. He concluded ominously that his problems with the administration might, "produce a change in the future relation between some of them and myself." Over the next few months the fallout from the administration's reaction to the Monroe-Pinkney Treaty proved to be the final insult. It produced a rupture that sent Monroe into the arms of the Old Republicans.[28]

Despite Monroe's initial misgivings, he and Pinkney actually worked well together in their negotiations with Great Britain. They determined that the British would never make the types of concessions that Jefferson and Madison required, especially on the issue of impressment of American sailors onto British ships. As such the treaty signed with the British did not deal directly with this troublesome issue. When it reached the United States, the administration rejected it out of hand, refusing even to send it to the Senate for confirmation. For Jefferson and Madison any treaty that did not contain a concession on impressment remained unacceptable. Jefferson told Monroe that "the British commisrs appear to have screwed every article as far as it would bear, to have taken everything, & yielded nothing." The rejection shocked both Monroe and Pinkney. Monroe responded clearly to both Jefferson and Madison that he believed a concession

[28]John Randolph to James Monroe, September 16, 1808, *Writings of James Monroe*, 4:486-488; James Monroe to John Randolph, November 12, 1806, *Writings of James Monroe*, 4:484-494; Risjord, *The Old Republicans*, 87.

on impressments would come in practice if not in the actual wording of the treaty. It appeared to Monroe that the administration put no faith in his abilities as a negotiator or his judgment as a diplomat. News reached Monroe of the treaty's rejection in June of 1807, and feeling angry and betrayed he boarded a ship for home.[29]

Upon his arrival in Washington, D.C. in December of 1807, Jefferson and Madison met with Monroe but failed to include him in their discussions concerning strategy toward Britain. They also failed to mention Monroe's political future. In fact, Monroe came away from the meeting convinced that he had been ostracized from the administration.[30]

The situation Monroe found himself in was fraught with political pitfalls. He needed a strategy to win his way back into power. Taking up the Old Republicans call to run for President seemed like the best way. In a February 1808 letter to Jefferson, Monroe told his mentor that he felt "heavy censure" after completing the treaty which had been "wielded against me" in order to "impeach my character" and "continue to injure me every day in the publick [sic] estimation." It was therefore "impossible for me to be insensible to the effects produced" by the attacks. Monroe explained to Jefferson that "means may be found to do me justice." He decided to allow his name to be brought forward as a candidate for election, which would hopefully help him prove his republican

[29] Thomas Jefferson to the United States Minister to Great Britain (James Monroe), March 21, 1807, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Ed. Paul Leicester Ford. 10:374-377; Ammon, *James Monroe* 261-262; Risjord, *The Old Republicans*, 87-88; On the Treaty itself see generally, Donald Hickey, "The Monroe-Pinkney Treaty: A Reappraisal." *WMQ* 3d ser., 44 (Jan 1987): 65-88. In reality, their conflict probably resulted more from a series of misunderstandings than from any malice on Madison's part. Monroe was forced to deal with certain European diplomatic realities which made a British concession on impressments nearly impossible and Madison had to consider the American political landscape which made a treaty not dedicated to ending impressments unacceptable.

[30] Ammon, "Election of 1808", 42-43; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 270; James Monroe to James Madison, Dec. 13, 1807, *Writings of James Monroe*, 5:20-22; Ammon, *Election of 1808*, 42-43.

bona fides to the administration. But there were risks. If he should fail, which appeared likely considering Madison's position among regular republicans, it might destroy any hope he had of remaining a player within the party. He refused to ride headlong carrying the banner of radical republicanism for men like Randolph and Taylor without a plan. He could not risk another failure like he suffered in France during the 1790s. Coming up with a solution, he told Jefferson that though he would seek "justice" by running for office and that he hoped it would not cause "the slightest injury to you." He assured Jefferson that "I shall never cease to take a deep interest in your political fame." Hoping to prove his standing as a republican by challenging Madison, Monroe hoped to keep Jefferson's support throughout.[31]

Monroe's candidacy did not offer much of a challenge to Madison but the campaign seriously threatened their friendship, resulting in a complete break between the two. From the spring of 1808 until the middle of 1810 they neither spoke nor exchanged a letter. While the campaign nearly ruined Monroe's relationship with Madison, he worked to repair his friendship with Jefferson from the moment he announced his candidacy. Monroe saw the retiring President as the best avenue back into the good graces of the Republican Party and took active steps to preserve his friendship with Jefferson even as he cut off all communication with Madison. The reckless republicanism of his younger days, while not extinguished, had been buttressed by a shrewd political mind. Monroe recognized that he could at once carry the standard for

[31] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, February 27, 1808, *Writings of James Monroe*, 5:24-26; Ammon, "Election of 1808," 46-48, 53; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 277. Monroe also took measures so as not to risk his standing within the Party. He never sought an accommodation with the Federalists. He did not campaign for the office and even restricted his supporters' actions throughout the election

true republicanism by challenging Madison and perhaps even stealing the presidency from him while at the same time retaining a hold on Jefferson.[32]

Jefferson contacted Monroe during the winter of 1808 expressing his concern over the forthcoming election "I see with infinite grief a contest arising between yourself and another, who have been very dear to each other, and especially to me." Jefferson declared his neutrality in the contest and "have ever viewed Mr. Madison and yourself as two principal pillars of my happiness." He also declared his wish to carry into his retirement the "affections of all my friends." Monroe took this as an opening to lay his grievances at Jefferson's feet and take the first steps in re-establishing his close relationship with his former mentor.[33]

Monroe assured Jefferson, "that no occurrences of my whole life ever gave me so much concern as some which took place during my absence abroad, proceeding from the present administration." He assured Jefferson that he did not want to dwell on the subject of their differences. Instead, Monroe declared his commitment to Jefferson. He recounted their early years together, "I have never forgotten the proofs of kindness and friendship which I received from you in early life." He tried to, "support and advance to the utmost of my power your political and personal fame." Monroe also tried to accomplish two things in his letter to Jefferson. First, he wanted to assure his old mentor that his candidacy did not represent a break from the party. Second, he hoped to show Jefferson that he saw himself as a true Jeffersonian republican. He had built his

[32] Ammon, *James Monroe*, 274; Ammon, "Election of 1808," 40; Daniel Preston ed. *A Comprehensive Catalogue of the Correspondence and Papers of James Monroe* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 1:199-204.
[33] Ammon, *James Monroe*, 273; Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, February 18, 1808, *The Works of Jefferson*, 11: 10-11.

candidacy around his devotion to the same principles which animated Jefferson. He told Jefferson that he believed his mentor's legacy intertwined with the nation's fate. "I have seen the national interest, and your advancement and fame so intimately connected, as to constitute essentially the same cause." Monroe believed that the country's future remained tied to Jefferson. He also understood that if he harbored any political ambition Jefferson's continued support remained paramount.[34]

Moved by Monroe's kind words, Jefferson explained away their disagreements. He blamed their misunderstanding on "falsehoods," caused by the "party spirit" affecting the nation. Monroe responded by telling his mentor that losing Jefferson's friendship was his only concern. With Jefferson's assurances that this was not the case, Monroe considered the matter settled. The personal connection between the two helped smooth over their differences. Monroe used this to establish a lifeline back to the regular Republicans when his candidacy failed. This effectively ended the quarrel. Both men agreed, for the sake of friendship, and in Monroe's case political expediency, to chalk up their grievances as misunderstandings; they resumed their regular correspondence. All the while Monroe kept his name in contention for the Presidency and remained estranged from Madison.[35]

Monroe used the renewal of friendship as a way back into power. This began in October 1808 when Monroe prevailed upon Jefferson to allow the publication of their correspondence during the past year in order to prove their close connection still

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[34] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, February 27, 1808, *Writings of James Monroe*, 24-27; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 273-274.

[35]Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, March 10, 1808, *Writings of Jefferson*, 11: 11-14; James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, March 22, 1808, ibid, 5: 27-35; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 274.

flourished. By then it looked to Monroe as if he would lose the election and he wanted to explore possible avenues back to power. He realized that Jefferson's public support remained vital to the future of his political career. He also knew that whatever his problems with Madison, Jefferson still had the power to facilitate his re-assertion into the Republican ranks. He could afford to be seen quarrelling with Madison but not Jefferson, the patriarch of the Republican Party.[36] Though he feared having his name brought into the contest, Jefferson reluctantly agreed. Jefferson realized that Monroe had little chance to win the election and that publishing the correspondence could only help speed Monroe's return to the ranks of the Republican Party. By trumpeting his relationship to Jefferson, Monroe took a major step in silencing his critics within the Republican establishment.[37]

The connection to Jefferson also gave Monroe a back channel to Madison. After Madison's election Jefferson took steps to reconcile the new President and Monroe. Jefferson met with Monroe during March of 1809 and relayed the results of the meeting

[36] The early republic represented a transitional period for American politics. The political system had not yet evolved into the mass democracy of the Jacksonian era. Most Americans distrusted political parties and vestiges of traditional Eighteenth Century deferential politics remained dominant. The emerging factions did not yet represent permanent institutions instead coalescing around prominent national figures. The republican "proto-party" as James Sharp calls it was led by James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, who according to at least one historian, together formed a co-equal partnership at the head of the new oppositional faction. As the events surrounding the election of 1808 show that Monroe saw the Democratic-Republicans as a Jeffersonian rather than a Madisonian Party. Ultimately, Monroe deferred to Jefferson in ways that he did not with Madison. For Monroe, "Little Jemmy" served as a respected colleague and a friend but also sometimes as a political rival. Jefferson, on the other hand, always figured as his mentor and the central figure of the Republican Party; For a discussion of deferential Politics in the Early Republic see Ronald Formisano, "Deferential Participant Politics: The Early Republic's Political Culture 1789-1840 American Political Science Review Vol. 68, No.2 (June 1974), 473-487; For a discussion of "proto-parties" see James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 1-14; For the view that Madison was equal to Jefferson as the central figure in the Republican Party see Noble Cunningham, *The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization*, 1789-1801 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press).

[37] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, September 13, 1808, *James Monroe Papers*, (Library of Congress (hereinafter LC), Washington D.C.); Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, October 13, 1808, Ibid;

in a letter to Madison. Jefferson commented that Monroe felt "sincerely cordial" to Madison's administration. Monroe's unfortunate connection to the Old Republicans meanwhile had come to an end. Jefferson explained that Monroe, "has quite separated himself from the junto which had got possession of him." Jefferson also hinted that the Old Republicans duped Monroe, "he is sensible that they used him for purposes not respecting himself always." Monroe removed himself from the Old Republicans and, "he and J.R. (John Randolph) now avoid seeing each other." Jefferson even reported that Monroe gave up his residence in Richmond in order to distance himself from the radical faction. In all, Jefferson remained hopeful that Monroe would find his way back into the Republican Party. "I have no doubt that his strong and candid mind will bring him a cordial return to his old friends." Jefferson laid the foundation for Monroe but before he returned to the ranks of the Republican Party, Jefferson made a public show that he and Monroe remained close friends and colleagues.[38]

The first public show of reconciliation between Monroe and the regular Republicans occurred in Richmond during an October 1809 banquet in Jefferson's honor. It sent a signal to the Party that Monroe still held Jefferson's trust and friendship. A month later, Jefferson once again met with Monroe, this time concerning a position within Madison's government and Jefferson engaged him in a "frank conversation" concerning his future in politics.[39]

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[38] Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, March 30, 1809, *The Republic of Letters*, 3: 1580. His own dispute with Monroe settled, Jefferson began the process of reconciling his two republican friends. He assured Monroe that, "Mr. Madison has appeared to be governed by the most cordial friendship for you." He then told Monroe that Madison regarded him, "As a brother." While Jefferson and Monroe's relationship mended fairly quickly Madison and Monroe's rift took some time longer to heal.

[39] Ammon, *James Monroe*, 280; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, November 30, 1809, *Republic of Letters*, 3: 1610.

While the topic of Madison raised tension this November meeting remained friendly. Jefferson succeeded in mending his two friends' relationship. Monroe felt comfortable enough to reject Madison's offer of the governorship of Louisiana, expressing his wish to only rejoin the ranks of the regular republicans on certain terms. By now Monroe set his sights firmly on the presidency and refused to accept a position which did not put him in a position to achieve it. Jefferson reported to Madison that Monroe refused to "act in any office where he should be subordinate to anybody but the President himself." Soon just such a position became available.[40]

Monroe continued maneuvering himself back into the good graces of the regular Republicans. During the spring of 1810 he made a public show of support for Madison's administration. On Election Day in April, Monroe delivered a speech in Charlottesville in which he took the opportunity to "lay open my political mind." Monroe claimed to be astonished by the need to do so because, as he claimed, "I have always been a Republican." He thought it incredible that anyone would think he might abandon the party "when a Republican sits at the helm of state." He supported the Republican cause and claimed to be, "ready to support the administration whilst I think it acts with propriety." While Monroe supported the party, he qualified his support of Madison. "I

[40]James Monroe, "Account of a Conversation with Thomas Jefferson," November 30, 1809, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Retirement Series* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 2:44-46; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Nov. 30, 1809. Ibid, 42-44; James Monroe to Richard Brent, Fed. 25, 1810, *Writings of James Monroe*, V:110-111; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 280 On Madison's behalf, Jefferson offered Monroe the governorship of either New Orleans or Louisiana. Monroe declined. Jefferson also suggested a military command. Monroe responded that he would "sooner be shot than take a command under Wilkinson" the erstwhile commanding General of the U.S. army and, later revealed, agent for the Spanish empire. Monroe's instincts on Wilkinson proved to be spot-on. It has since been revealed that while serving as a general in the U.S. army he was also an agent in the pay of the Spanish empire. Monroe told Jefferson that, "Mr. Madison had had it in his power, when he came into office to avail himself and the publick of my services."

am confident that you would not wish me to support [the Administration] when it acts improperly." Monroe hoped to work with Madison's Administration, but only if his conscience allowed. "Mr. Madison is a Republican and so am I. As long as he acts in consistence [sic] with the interests of his country I will go along with him." Monroe hoped to couch his break with Madison on ideological grounds by stressing his devotion to republicanism. Still, the two men moved closer to a reconciliation. A face-to-face meeting with Madison represented the final step.[41]

Jefferson arranged just such a meeting in the spring of 1810. Monroe arrived in Washington in May and Madison received him warmly. After talking with Monroe, Jefferson reported the good effect of the meeting to Madison, "I have been delighted to see the effect of Monroe's late visit to Washington on his mind. There appears to be the most perfect reconciliation & cordiality established towards yourself. I think him now inclined to rejoin us with zeal." [42] Rejoin them he did. Within a year Monroe found himself thrust into the most powerful position in Madison's administration.[43]

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[41]Quoted in Ammon, *James Monroe*, 282.

[42] Ammon, *James Monroe*, 283; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, May 25, 1810, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* 2: 416-417.

[43]Brant, *Madison*, 300-309; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 274-275, 285; James Monroe to James Madison, March 29, 1811, *Writings of James Monroe*, 5: 181-184; James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, April 3, 1811, Ibid, 5: 184-185 ; *James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson Jan. 21,* 1811 *Writings of James Monroe, 5:160-161.* Throughout the remainder of 1810 and into early 1811 Madison continued to search for a way to get Monroe back into a major political office. An opportunity arose when Cyrus Griffin died opening up a federal judgeship. Madison quickly moved to appoint John Tyler, then Governor of Virginia. This left the Governorship open for Monroe's election. By rallying his own personal following and with the backing of Madison's administration, in January 1811 Monroe once again became Governor of Virginia. He served only a short time as the state's chief executive because in the spring of 1811 Madison found himself in need of his old friend in Washington.

By March of 1811 Madison had decided to remove his Secretary of State Robert Smith.[44] Monroe, with his experience in foreign affairs, national reputation, and personal following offered the ideal replacement. Having shored up his status with the party during the past two years, Monroe could help Madison win the support of the more radical factions within Republican ranks. Madison first ordered Senator Richard Brent to query Monroe on the idea. Shortly thereafter he sent a letter of his own offering the position and Monroe accepted, becoming Secretary of State in April of 1811. The appointment completed the reconciliation.[45]

Upon learning of Monroe's reconciliation with the administration John Randolph became incensed. His diary entry for the day reads, "James Monroe, Traitor." Later Randolph chalked up Monroe's treachery to an "insatiable thirst for office." Randolph's usual penchant for the melodramatic belies a keen observation on the Roanoke politician's part. While it is certainly too much to call Monroe a traitor to the republican cause, his back channel move into the cabinet does illustrate Monroe's lust for and improved ability to attain power. He desperately wanted to be at the heart of political affairs and the only way to accomplish this was to first achieve high office. He learned the hard way in France that mere ideological exuberance alone would not ensure his

[44]On Robert Smith's removal see, John S. Pancacke, "The Invisibles: A Chapter in the Opposition to Madison" *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 21, No.1 February, 1955, 17-37 and Ammon, *James Monroe,* 285. Madison's administration came under fire during the early months of 1811. Many of the President's problems stemmed from the so-called "Invisibles," a nebulous group of influential Washington politicians with Maryland Senator Samuel Smith at their head. They opposed many of Madison's measures throughout his early term in office and even blocked the nomination of Albert Gallatin as Secretary of State in favor of Samuel Smith's younger brother Robert, who proved wildly ineffective as the nation's chief diplomat.

[45] Ammon, *James Monroe*, 286-288; James Monroe to Richard Brent, March 18, 1811, *Writings of James Monroe*, 5:178-180; James Madison to James Monroe, March 20, 1811, *Ibid*, 181; James Monroe to James Madison, March 23, 1811, *Ibid*, 5:181-183; James Monroe to James Madison, March 29, 1811, ibid 5:183-184

legacy. One had to compromise to attain the kind of power needed to become a champion of the republican cause. Monroe had learned that ideological purity was a sure way to obscurity. After all, few remember disgraced ambassadors as champions of republicanism. That title belongs to secretaries of state or, better still, presidents.[46]

The War of 1812

The third and final example of Monroe's political transformation occurred shortly after his re-entry into the republican hierarchy. As the United States blundered into another war with Great Britain in June 1812 Monroe found himself in an altogether different kind of fight to ensure his place as Madison's successor. The same issues which caused the rift over the Monroe-Pinckney Treaty eventually led the U.S. and Britain down a path to war. Britain remained locked in a life and death struggle with Napoleonic France and paid little attention to how its seemingly draconian maritime policies affected the United States. Such actions hurt American pride. Republicans like Madison and Monroe yearned for a final break with Great Britain, and while they no longer supported the French, they remained hostile to the British monarchy. In many ways Republicans wanted to re-assert their autonomy from Great Britain with a second war of independence and end the threat the former mother country posed to the new republic, once and for all.[47] While the Revolutionary War secured political independence, republicans like

[46] Quoted in Ammon, *James Monroe*, 285; See also, James Monroe to John Taylor Jan 23 1811, *Writings of James Monroe*, 5:161-169 for Monroe's explanations for taking the post; No one was better respected as a thinker than John Taylor and contemporaries certainly admired his Atticus-like existence away from the pressures of politics but of course almost no one outside the history profession remembers the man Colonel Taylor of Caroline.

[47] See Thomas Jefferson to William Duane, April 20, 1812, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, 4:632-633. Jefferson was particularly ready to end American dependence on Great Britain. He told

Madison, Monroe and Jefferson wanted to U.S. to sever the final emotional ties to Great Britain.[48]

When war finally erupted on June 18, 1812 Monroe became marginalized in his role as Secretary of State. His personal battle to succeed Madison began when Secretary of War William Eustis proved incapable of guiding the nation through a war with a major European power. Eustis left the cabinet and Monroe became acting Secretary of War for the next few months. The Senate refused to confirm him, fearing the Virginia Dynasty's growing dominance over the federal government. Instead, Monroe returned to his position as Secretary of State and Madison eventually settled on John Armstrong to head the War Department.[49]

Madison essentially chose Armstrong by default. Initially he offered the post to both William Crawford and Henry Dearborn but they both turned him down. With no

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William Duane that "this second weaning from British principles, British attachments, British manners and manufactures, will be salutary" and hoped the war would end the "continued subordination to the interests of England."

[48] See generally, Smith, *The Republic of Letters*, 3:1681; Ralph Ketcham, *James Madison: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 508-509; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 289-301. Madison and Monroe's record during the War of 1812 is mixed. Republican ideology limited the kind of war leadership Madison could provide. Throughout the war he and Monroe did not see the British military as the only threat to the United States. They also feared all of the things traditionally associated with war such as taxes and standing armies. These were potentially as damaging to a republic as any invading enemy. As a result, Monroe and Madison tried to fight the war without taking many of the measures necessary to do so. As Secretary of State, Madison attempted to carry out Jefferson's policy of non-importation and an embargo of British goods as means of dealing with British insults. With his move to the executive mansion and the addition of Monroe, who knew full well from his familiarity with European politics that such soft measures were destined to fail, Madison decided to adopt a harder line against the British. New elements within the government aided the administration. Younger, more aggressive members of Congress began pushing for war. These so-called "war hawks" led by Henry Clay, Felix Grundy and John C. Calhoun supported a tougher stance against British obstinence. Eventually Madison called on Congress to declare war. In his war message the President highlighted the impressment of U.S. sailors as a primary cause, "Thousands of American citizens...have been torn from their country and everything dear to them and have been dragged on board ships of war of a foreign nation to risk...their lives in battles of their oppressors." Congress quickly moved to adopt Madison's resolution and the United States entered its second war with Great Britain on June 18, 1812.

[49] James Monroe to William Crawford, December 3, 1812, *Writings of James Monroe*, 5:227 Ketcham, *James Madison*,542-546.

other obvious choices available Madison determined to find a New Yorker. This would reaffirm the New York-Virginia Republican alliance and allay fears of Virginian Supremacy within the cabinet. Armstrong came to the cabinet with a healthy dislike for the Virginia Dynasty. During his term as minister to France he had run afoul of Jefferson's administration. He also opposed Monroe's appointment as Secretary of War in 1811. The best example of the questionable nature of this choice was the Senate confirming his appointment by only an 18-15 vote.[50]

A case can be made that Monroe would have set his sights on bringing Armstrong down no matter the man's background and dedication to republicanism but full credit must also be given to Monroe's ideological objections to his War Department rival. Monroe distrusted Armstrong at least in part because he did not see him as a true republican. He thought the New Yorker unworthy for a public trust as important as the War Department. Monroe was not alone in his suspicions. Armstrong's past condemned him in the eyes of many other republicans. Over the years he developed a reputation for intrigue because of a famous incident during the Revolutionary War when Armstrong joined a conspiracy which tried to use the military against the fledgling republic.[51]

The Newburgh conspiracy, shrouded in controversy and mystery, nevertheless remains one of the most fascinating incidents of the Revolutionary War. Though best known for Washington's famous reaction to the plot, Armstrong's role in the affair, usually reserved for a footnote in history books, did not go unnoticed by his

[50] C. Edward Skeen, *John Armstrong Jr*. (Syracuse N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 58-112, 120, 123, 124; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 317.
[51] Skeen, *John Armstrong Jr*., 202 states that Armstrong had virtually no defenders within the city of Washington. Thus, when it was time to look for a scapegoat for the Washington fiasco he was the obvious target. Ammon, *James Monroe*, 317-318.

contemporaries. During the war Armstrong served as an adjutant to General Horatio Gates. Following the 1781 victory at Yorktown the War of American Independence had effectively ended with only mopping up action remaining. The Continental Army, 10,000 strong in late 1782, went to winter quarters at Newburgh awaiting demobilization. Meanwhile the Confederation Congress, bereft of funds and deeply in debt, 1found it could not pay the army everything it had promised. Specifically, Congress refused to pay the promised half-pay for life to the officer corps. Along with the considerable financial burden Congress also did not want to set a precedent for creating a permanent class of officers on the federal payroll because it smacked of aristocracy and corruption.[52]

A group of politicians within the Continental Congress at Philadelphia saw this controversy as an opportunity. Alexander Hamilton, Robert Morris and Gouverneur Morris all wanted to strengthen the power of the federal government and encouraged the officers to press their claims. At Newburgh, a cabal of officers, including General Horatio Gates and Armstrong, met in secret with a Hamilton contact and they decided to renew their demands. This time they threatened that if the Congress did not acquiesce, "the army has its alternative." Armstrong wrote a series of letters to be published amongst the soldiery urging them to support the officers. Exactly what constituted the army's "alternative" remains unclear. At the least the officers hinted that they might refuse to disband without their pay. At the worst, the deliberately vague language, led some to

[52] Skeen, *John Armstrong Jr*, 9-10,13; Ammon, *James Monro*e, 317-318; See also Richard H. Kohn, "The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy: America and the Coup-de-tat" *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series 27 (1970), 187-220;

view the letters as a veiled threat to use the army against Congress and possibly set up military rule.[53]

Whatever the motivations of Armstrong and his fellow conspirators, most contemporaries did not look on their actions favorable. The Addresses particularly alarmed General George Washington. The plotters decided not to bring Washington into their scheme because they realized he would oppose using the army for any political purpose. During the crisis, Hamilton, Washington's former aide, tried to coach the general into tacitly supporting the scheme. Hamilton told Washington that his refusal to use his clout to assert the officer's interests made the conspirators reluctant to include him. In addition, Washington received word from his friend, and James Monroe's uncle, Joseph Jones, that the conspirators planned to, "lessen your reputation in the army in the hopes ultimately that the weight of your opposition will prove no obstacle to their designs."[54] However the officers meant the Newburgh Addresses, Washington took them both as a personal insult and a direct attack on his influence within the army. He also saw it as serious threat to the American republic. It certainly did not help the situation that one of the prime movers, Horatio Gates, had previously intrigued against Washington during the winter of 1777-78. He took immediate steps to crush the conspiracy. What resulted only added to Washington's growing legend.[55]

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[53] Skeen, *John Armstrong*, 13; Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 603-605; In *The Critical Period of American History*, 1783-1789 Boston (1888), 110, John Fiske writes about the Newburgh letters that, "Better English has seldom been wasted in a worse cause."

[54] Alexander Hamilton to George Washington February 13, 1783. *Papers of Alexander Hamilton,* Ed. Harold Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 3:253-255; Joseph Jones to George Washington, Feb, 27, 1783, *The Letters of Joseph Jones of Virginia*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford, New York: Arno Press 1971),97-102.

[55] Skeen, *John Armstrong*, 5; For the Conway Cabal see, Harry M. Ward, *The American Revolution: Nationhood Achieved* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 115-118.

Washington confronted his troops and bade them not to heed the Newburgh letters and to exercise patience with Congress. During the speech Washington revealed Jones's letter and as he fumbled for his glasses to read it, he apologized to his men with the now famous phrase that having "grown gray in their service" Washington "now found himself growing blind." This display subsequently quelled whatever revolt might have been brewing. Washington's personal prestige crushed whatever conspiracy existed then and there. Yet the Newburgh conspiracy had branded Armstrong as an intriguer. Nearly thirty years later Armstrong still could not shake this reputation as he entered Madison's cabinet. [56]Armstrong began his term as Secretary of War fully aware of the strikes against him. He claimed to be surrounded on all sides by "personal and party malevolence." This comment, likely aimed at Monroe, contains more than a hint of truth.[57]

The appointment of Armstrong initiated a second kind of war for Monroe. While the United States fought the British, Monroe fought Armstrong. While ample reasons existed for him to distrust Armstrong, clearly some other motive beyond ideological opposition drove Monroe. As Monroe's biographer Harry Ammon remarked, this was one of the few times when Monroe "displayed none of his usual tolerance." In fact, Monroe instead exhibited open hostility to Armstrong from the moment he entered the cabinet. Admitting that Armstrong provided energy and intelligence to the war department he did not trust the new Secretary.[58]

[56] Quoted in Skeen, *John Armstrong*, 14
[57] Skeen, *John Armstrong*, 124.
[58] Ammon, *James Monroe*, 317-318; Skeen, *John Armstrong*, 1, 115-123; Personal issues also divided Armstrong and Monroe. Armstrong married Robert R. Livingston's sister, Alida and shared the family's dislike of Monroe.

Time and again Monroe opposed Armstrong. Monroe knew that both of them aspired to the Presidency and as John Randolph remarked, this shared ambition put them in a "deadly feud." After his years as a diplomat in Europe, his feud with Livingston and Madison, and his return to the Republican Party, Armstrong represented but the final obstacle to the presidency.[59] Monroe determined to do anything to avoid being cheated out of the prize. He used all of Armstrong's mistakes as secretary of war to alienate him from Madison and eventually force his ouster. In fact, from the moment Armstrong entered the cabinet, Monroe laid the foundation for Armstrong to become the scapegoat for military failure.

One point of contention between Monroe and Armstrong occurred over the command of the invasion of Canada. Armstrong planned to take personal command of the northern army while maintaining his post as secretary of war. Monroe couched his argument against this scheme on constitutional grounds. He called it dangerous to send the sitting secretary of war to the front. He told the president that Armstrong would wield too much power if he commanded an army. It would take all executive power out of Madison's hands and put it in the commanding general at the front. He argued that "executive power as known to the Constitution is destroyed" and all power transfers "from the executive to the General at the head of the army."[60] He left unsaid the obvious fear that Armstrong might move against the rightful government. While a risky proposition to place such power in any man's hands Armstrong's past made it unthinkable. He asked Madison rhetorically, and a touch sarcastically, "Does [Armstrong] possess in a prominent degree the public confidence for that trust?" The secretary of war

[59] Quoted in Ammon, *James Monroe*, 323.
[60] James Monroe to James Madison, February 25, 1813, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 5:245.

belonged in the capital advising the president and communicating his orders to commanders in the field. Monroe argued that if Armstrong wanted a command he should leave the War Department altogether. Monroe also told Madison that he feared the scheme made up part of Armstrong's plan to take control over the entire war effort. In private, Monroe accused Armstrong of wanting to "keep the whole in his hands" but he "knows that here [in Washington] he cannot direct the army." While Monroe's ideological objections to the scheme appear reasonable, personal concerns played the greater part in his objections to this plan.[61]

Actually, Monroe bristled because the invasion had been his idea. He concocted the idea during his time spent as Secretary of War. After making plans to invade Canada, Monroe hoped to take command of the expedition himself (Monroe at least had the sense not to suggest he take command in his role as Secretary of War). Madison refused to appoint him because he did not want to place him above officers who possessed more extensive Revolutionary War service than Monroe. Thus, Armstrong not only sat in Monroe's former seat as Secretary of War, but he also planned to command the very invasion Monroe once hoped to lead. He appeared, in Monroe's mind, to be usurping Monroe's chances of achieving glory. It made for a bitter pill to swallow. A victory in Canada would gain for Armstrong the kind of laurels that might elevate him to the presidency in Monroe's place. Madison overruled Monroe and Armstrong went to the front to command the army. Luckily for Monroe's political chances, if not for the country, Armstrong's northern campaign proved a failure.[62]

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[61] James Monroe to James Madison, February 25, 1813, Ibid, 5: 244-250; James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, June 7, 1813, Ibid, 266.
[62] James Monroe "Notes on a Plan of Campaign for the Year 1813" Ibid, 5: 235-241.

Armstrong also ran afoul of Monroe on the use of conscription. Again, Monroe couched his opposition on republican ideology, specifically his abhorrence of conscription and standing armies. He told the president that, "the mere project of a conscription adopted and acted upon without your approbation is sufficient reason" to dismiss the secretary of war. Monroe still tried to convince Madison to dismiss Armstrong throughout the war. His constant complaining did force Madison to rebuke Armstrong. The president wrote to his secretary of war in an attempt to "lay down some rules for the conducting of the business of the department" but he did not fire him. [63]

Monroe continued to complain of Armstrong to the president. Monroe claimed that several American generals at the front told Monroe that Armstrong tried "seducing" officers within the army so as to win their loyalty away from the president and the administration. By the end of 1813 Monroe pleaded with Madison that Armstrong would, "ruin not you and the administration only, but the whole republican party and cause." Monroe laid the foundation so that when a true military disaster struck Armstrong paid the price.[64]

Throughout the summer and fall of 1814, Monroe and Madison both came to fear that the arrival of a British force near the Potomac might lead to an attack on the capital. Monroe became particularly alarmed and requested the militia be called up. He also wanted to establish an intelligence network that could serve as an early warning system should the British march on Washington. Armstrong dismissed these reports as rumors and insisted that Baltimore represented the true British target. Washington, he claimed,

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[63] James Madison to John Armstrong, August 13, 1814, *James Madison: Writings*, 697-698.
[64] James Monroe to James Madison, December, 1813(Specific date unknown), *Writings of Monroe*, 5:275-277.

remained secure. Monroe described Armstrong's actions to Jefferson sometime afterward. He claimed that "an infatuation seemed to have taken possession of General Armstrong relating to the danger of this place. He could never be made to believe that it was in any danger." As a result of Armstrong's inaction when the British did march on Washington the militia could not be mustered in time and the city's defenses remained woefully inadequate.[65]

Eventually the British army defeated the paltry American force sent against them and they easily captured the city. The cabinet escaped and Armstrong received much of the blame for the debacle. One soldier told Madison that, "every officer would tear off his epaulettes if General Armstrong was to have anything to do with them." The disaster did what Monroe could not, it forced Armstrong to resign as Secretary of War and James Monroe positioned himself to be Madison's successor.[66]

Monroe, while a tireless and fiercely loyal lieutenant during the war, in effect, ran for president during Madison's second term. He viewed Armstrong as a threat and feared that a potentially strong war leader like Armstrong might swoop in and steal the presidency from under him. While Monroe does not deserve all the blame for Armstrong's dismissal the secretary of war certainly blamed Monroe for his ouster.

Like John Randolph before him Armstrong blamed Monroe's boundless ambition. When in 1816 Monroe emerged as the front runner to succeed Madison as president, Armstrong wrote a scathing attack on his former rival. His exposition blamed Monroe

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[65] James Monroe to The President (James Madison), August 21 1814, *Writings of James Monroe*, 5: 289-290; James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, December 21 1814, *ibid*, 303-304; Ketcham, *James Madison*, 573-574; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 323, 330.

[66] James Madison "Memorandum on the Battle of Bladensburg," August 24, 1814, *James Madison: Writings.* ed. Jack Rakove (New York: The Library of America, 1999), 700-706.

for nearly all the problems Armstrong experienced as Secretary of War.[67] The "perpetual embarrassments" his department suffered resulted from the "unusual interference of a great civil officer of the state viz Colonel Monroe." His removal as Secretary of War came after the "capture of the metropolis," which was "adroitly seized upon as a pretext for denouncing him." He blamed Monroe for using this incident to land the "fatal blow to his reputation." Armstrong believed that Monroe maneuvered Madison into making him "the scapegoat." [68]

Armstrong chalked all of Monroe's posturing to his hunger to achieve the presidency. He decried Monroe's Machiavellian scheming to remove potential rivals. He also mentioned Monroe's feud with Madison and juxtaposed the treatment Monroe received from the administration with another challenger to the presidency in 1808 George Clinton, "one pardoned and taken into favor and the other has labored under the weight of court proscription and denunciation." He then listed all the various ways in which Clinton's qualifications outshone Monroe. Finally, he ended with a particularly telling parting shot, "thus ordinarily gifted Col. Monroe has furnished unequivocal evidence that his lust for power is insatiable." Again, like Randolph, Armstrong strikes upon at least a half truth.[69]

With Armstrong's dismissal Madison required a new secretary of war. Monroe immediately became acting Secretary but Madison hesitated to make him the permanent head of the War Department. Madison continued to worry that critics would point to the overwhelming Virginia influence within his administration. Monroe effectively

[67] John Armstrong Jr., "Exposition of the Motives for Opposing the Nomination of Mr. Monroe for the Office of President of the United States" (Washington D.C.: Early American Imprints Series 2 No. 37552)
[68] Ibid, 3
[69] Ibid, 6-7.

convinced Madison to make the position permanent with a letter telling him quite directly that, "the Department of war ought to be immediately filled. I think also, that I ought to take charge of it." He explained to Madison that, "by taking charge of the Dept. twice and withdrawing from it a second time, it may be inferred that I shrink from the responsibility, from a fear of injuring my reputation." He did not want the public to believe, "that the removal of the other[Armstrong] was an affair of intrigue." He informed Madison that "it seems due therefore to my own reputation, to go thro' with the undertaking." Monroe worried that it would look like he was now afraid to take over the War Department after having orchestrated Armstrong's downfall. In the end, Monroe got his wish. In fact, not only did Monroe direct the War Department but also managed to remain at the head of the State Department when Daniel Tomkins refused the job and Rufus King was objected to by Monroe and others because he was a Federalist. Thus, Monroe had no real challengers to his succession as president.[70]

The sixteen-year period of James Monroe's career from Jefferson's election in 1800 to Monroe's own in 1816 represents a clinic in political maneuvering. Monroe slowly climbed the republican hierarchy during this period. His success in negotiating the Louisiana Purchase made him one of the most prominent political figures in the Republican Party. His star rose so high that many in the republican camp favored his nomination over Madison in 1808. Similarly, after the election of 1808 Monroe managed to maintain his position within the Party by attaching himself to Jefferson. That he was successful can easily be seen in his ascension to the position of secretary of state in 1811. Finally, while in Madison's cabinet Monroe neatly eliminated a potential rival and

[70] James Monroe to James Madison, Sept. 25, 1814, *Writings of Monroe*, 293-295.

secured his succession to the presidency. Thus, after nearly destroying his career in 1796 through an excessive exuberance for the republican cause Monroe became a much more adept and one might even say devious politician on his way to the presidency. During his presidency Monroe used these skills not for his own political survival alone but in order to accomplish a final act which, he hoped, would cement his legacy as a champion of republicanism… The Monroe Doctrine.

Chapter 5

"A Bolder Attitude" or Republicans of the World Unite: James Monroe, John Quincy Adams and the Making of the Monroe Doctrine

On an autumn day in Washington City, President James Monroe sat in the White House surrounded by perhaps the greatest cabinet in American history. The least illustrious of the men at the table, William Wirt and Benjamin Crowninshield, occupied the lesser positions of attorney general and secretary of the navy respectively. The true luminaries in Monroe's cabinet, John C. Calhoun, William Crawford and John Quincy Adams, held the three most critical positions in the administration. Calhoun, a former War Hawk, current nationalist and future champion of southern slavery directed the War Department. Crawford, Monroe's only Republican rival during the election of 1816, and acknowledged as the most likely successor to the presidency, occupied the top job at the Treasury Department. Finally, and most importantly, John Quincy Adams held the prestigious post of secretary of state and during the next eight years proved himself among the best ever to run the department.[1]

The meeting took place on October 25, 1817, and it marked the first time that Monroe's entire cabinet convened. The president had recently returned from a summer tour of the Northeast, during which a Boston newspaper proclaimed the beginning of an

[1] John Quincy Adams Oct. 25, 1817, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams: Comprising Portions of his Diary from 1795-1848*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1875), 4: 13; Monroe proved an excellent judge of talent. Before settling on John C. Calhoun he offered the job at the war department to Henry Clay. Clay declined. He set his sights on Secretary of State and when Monroe did not select him to head the State Department he proceeded to act as the de-facto head of the opposition to the government as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

"Era of Good Feelings," a phrase forever linked to Monroe's administration.[2] Adams meanwhile had only recently arrived in the capital after a stint as the American minister to Great Britain. Monroe began the proceedings, as he did many of his cabinet meetings, with a series of questions facing the government. The problem during this initial gathering involved the Spanish empire, or rather what remained of it. Monroe asked two sets of independent but related questions concerning the mounting chaos in Spanish Florida as well as the possible American response to the independence movements sweeping through Latin America. During this meeting Monroe took the first steps down a path toward the creation of a doctrine, which today bears his name.[3]

The Monroe Doctrine's legacy goes hand-in-hand with the U.S. government's policy of isolation and the rise of American hegemony in the western hemisphere. During the late 19th and early 20th century as the United States emerged as a world power, Monroe's Doctrine took on a nationalist tone with "Roosevelt's Corollary." Theodore Roosevelt declared that the United States could intervene in the domestic affairs of Latin American nations. Many historians argue that the importance of the doctrine therefore lies in its dual role as a statement of American hegemony in the western hemisphere and isolation from Europe. This interpretation greatly influences the historiography of doctrine's actual creation. Reading from Roosevelt's era backward, historians often interpret the Doctrine as if these 20th century ideas alone shaped its creation in 1823. Scholars contend that America's isolationist policy and its desire to dominate the western

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[2] "Columbia Centinel," Boston, Massachusetts, 12 July 1817, *The Papers of James Monroe: A Documentary History of the Presidential Tours of James Monroe, 1817, 1818, 1819*, Daniel Preston ed. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003), 1:226.

[3] James Monroe's Questions for the Cabinet, October 25, 1817, *Writings of James Monroe*, 6: 31; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 413; John Quincy Adams, Oct. 25, 1817, *Memoirs*, 4: 13; The term Monroe Doctrine did not come into use until the Civil War when Napoleon III authorized a French invasion of Mexico but I will use the term so as to avoid confusion.

hemisphere formed the doctrine's primary goals at its inception. This line of thinking naturally leads historians to emphasize John Quincy Adams's role in creating it. Adams, with his strong record as a nationalist and isolationist, often receives the bulk of the credit for building this new pillar upon which so much of subsequent American foreign policy stands. Meanwhile, James Monroe's original goal for the Doctrine remains largely forgotten. [4]

James Monroe did not see either isolationism or the projection of American power as the Doctrine's most important legacies. Instead he hoped to outline a message to the world that the United States supported the cause of republican revolution. Monroe saw it as his last, best chance to cement his legacy as a champion of the republican cause. The Doctrine represents Monroe's final expression of his devotion to the liberal republican movement. Where his mentor Jefferson emerged as the Revolution's great scribe, and his friend Madison its governmental architect, Monroe hoped to craft his legacy as the Revolution's diplomat by helping to spread the republican cause across the world.[5]

Historians often fail to appreciate how much control Monroe exerted over his administration's foreign policy. Two of the most important works relating to the

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[4] For evaluations of the Doctrine's legacy see Luis Quintanilla "A Latin American View: Machiavellian Due to Corollaries" and Gaston Nerval, "Egoistic from Its Pronouncement"; For a discussion of the purpose of the Doctrine see Dexter Perkins, "To Deter the Continental Allies in the Western Hemisphere" and Arthur P. Whitaker, To Frustrate France's Plans in South America; For discussions on who formulated the Doctrine see Worthington C. Ford "The Work of John Quincy Adams"; All of the above can be found in Armin Rappaport ed, *The Monroe Doctrine*, (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1964); Dexter Perkins The Monroe Doctrine: 1823-1826. (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 100-103. While Perkins book, perhaps still the most important work on the Monroe Doctrine, highlights Adams's contribution to what he believes are the more important parts of the Doctrine he does reserve credit for Monroe on the question of Latin American Independence.

[5] See, James Monroe, *The Autobiography of James Monroe,* ed. Stuart Gerry Brown. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959).Monroe was, for all intents and purposes, a foreign policy specialist and his autobiography reflects this. Of the books' seven finished chapters six relate directly to U.S. Foreign affairs. Monroe's account of his life only reaches 1805 and his ministry in Spain. The seven chapters: 1. Soldier in the Revolution. 2. Lawyer and Legislator 3. Minister from America to the French Revolution 4. Vindication(justifying his actions in France. 5. Minister to Napoleon 6. At the Court of St. James 7. Minister to Spain.

diplomacy of the Monroe Administration, written almost a half century apart, come to strikingly similar conclusions concerning Adams's preeminence over foreign affairs. The first, written by one of the giants of American diplomatic history, won the Pulitzer Prize. In this classic work, Samuel Flagg Bemis credits Adams with laying the groundwork for American foreign policy. Bemis places Adams's contributions to the American republic behind only Abraham Lincoln.[6]

Forty-three years later William Earl Weeks wrote a similarly important work on the same subject. Weeks agrees with Bemis on Adams's importance to American diplomacy. Weeks takes the analysis a step further by emphasizing Quincy Adams's "dominance" over Monroe' administration. This analysis of Monrovian foreign policy, as primarily the work of John Quincy Adams, helps shape the historiography of the Monroe Doctrine. Therefore in order to understand Monroe's role in creating the Doctrine it is necessary to recognize how he steered the country's diplomacy as it faced the most important event of Monroe's presidency: the dissolution of the Spanish American Empire.[7]

Florida emerged as the first region where Spain's crumbling empire caught the attention of Monroe's administration. Florida's post-1812 anarchy presented Monroe with a particularly vexing foreign policy crisis. During the war, the British used the area to recruit runaway slaves to fight the United States, while Creek refugees from Jackson's Indian campaign flooded into the region and united with the Seminole tribes of Florida. The Spanish proved incapable of controlling the area and the resulting instability

[6] See generally, Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956).
[7] See generally, William Earl Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and the American Global Empire* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992).

attracted all manner of pirates, smugglers, and adventurers hoping to profit from the chaos.[8]

Amelia Island, a Spanish possession situated off the coast of Georgia and Florida between several major trade routes, presented an ideal target for anyone hoping to raid international shipping. Eventually a Scottish mercenary named Gregor MacGregor set his sights on the island. After gathering men in Philadelphia and Baltimore, Macgregor and his band of 55 adventurers captured it on June 28, 1817. During the almost four months between Macgregor's capture of the island and when Monroe's cabinet sat to discuss the crisis during the fall of 1817, the Amelia's new owners engaged in smuggling, privateering and illegal slave trading, which brought the little island to the attention of the U.S. government.[9]

During his first cabinet meeting Monroe posed the question: "Is it expedient to break up the establishments at Amelia Island… it being evident that they were made for smuggling, if not for piratical purposes, and already perverted to very mischievous purposes to the U States." The cabinet unanimously agreed to send troops to the island. A month later, Monroe provided his reasons for ordering the assault in a letter to James Madison, "the establishments at Amelia Island & Galveston have done us great injury, in smuggling of every kind, & particularly in introducing Africans as slaves into the United States." Monroe announced the plan in a message to Congress on December 2 and

[8] Frank Owsley Jr. and Gene A. Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press. 1997), 118-119; Weeks, *JQA and the American Global Empire*, 57.

[9] Don Luis de Onis to the Secretary of State James Monroe, July 9, 1817, *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, ed. Walter Lowrie and Mathew St. Clair Clark (Washington D.C., 1832-1859), 4:442; Owsley Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 140.

ordered General Edmund Gaines to seize the island. The mercenaries surrendered without firing a shot but this only marked the beginning of the controversy for Monroe.[10]

In January of 1818, after news arrived of Amelia's capture, the cabinet met to decide the island's fate. Adams reported in his diary that Monroe arrived at the meeting of January 6 with a prepared note ready to announce to Congress his intent to return the island to the Spanish. According to Adams, he and Secretary of State John C. Calhoun alone among the cabinet members voted for retaining the island. This meeting adjourned without an agreement. Three days later the cabinet met again without reaching an agreement. When considering major foreign policy questions Monroe always sought consensus within his cabinet. Adams often took such delays as a sign of indecision and even weakness. Monroe instead valued his subordinates' opinions, especially within their respective realms' of expertise. Often when his cabinet could not agree on a course of action Monroe adjourned to find an alternative that might satisfy all parties. He also moved deliberately in such cases without committing the United States to a course of action in the hopes that more information would become available. By January 12th, Monroe found his new information. Adams reported that the president arrived at that cabinet meeting having "modified [the message to Congress] to the purpose of retaining [Amelia Island] for the present." Weeks argues that Adams forced the drastic change in policy, "the president's first instincts had been overturned by the powerful arguments of his Secretary of State." While Monroe certainly took Adams's argument into

[10]James Monroe to the Cabinet, October 25, 30 1817, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 6: 31-32; John Quincy Adams, October 30, 1817, *Memoirs*, 4: 14-16; James Monroe to James Madison, November 24, 1817, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 6:32-33; James Monroe "First Annual Message to Congress," December 2, 1817, Ibid., 6:36; John C. Calhoun to James Monroe, January 12, 1817, *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, ed. W. Edwin Hemphill (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina, 1963), 2:69; James Monroe to the Senate and House of Representatives, January 13, 1817, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 6:71.

consideration other information changed the President's mind on the Amelia Island question.[11]

Geopolitical circumstances rather than Adams's "powerful arguments" precipitated Monroe's seemingly abrupt change of mind. When Monroe came to the presidency Spain was a relatively weak power in the European world. Their crumbling American empire, much of which bordered the United States, provided the young republic with new opportunities for expansion. Yet Monroe feared that this crisis might eventually involve other European powers. Great Britain emerged as the world's preeminent nation at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. They wanted to maintain trade with Latin America and viewed the United States as their primary economic rival in the region. Monroe believed that the British had good reason to interfere in the Spanish controversy. Rumors swirled that the Spanish might sell Florida to the British. Even before he became President, Monroe recognized this potential threat. In 1815 Monroe, then Secretary of State, wrote a letter to then Minister to Great Britain, John Quincy Adams telling him that, "reports continue to circulate that the Spanish Government has ceded to Great Britain the Floridas… East Florida in itself is comparatively nothing but as a post in the hands of Great Britain it is of the highest importance." Four years later Monroe feared that the British might try to interject themselves into this controversy. Monroe believed that Spain might use American aggression as a reason to sell Florida to the British. He explained in a letter to Jefferson that Britain and France offered to arbitrate the differences between Spain and the United States. Monroe believed that this offer implied that Britain would move against the United States should he push Spain too

[11] John Quincy Adams, January 12, 1818, *Memoirs*, 4:39; Weeks, *JQA* and the *American Global Empire*, 65-66.

hard. These concerns shaped Monroe's initial response to the Amelia affair. This marked only the first time Monroe and Adams adopted different attitudes on a major foreign policy question.[12]

Monroe showed patience when dealing with the Spanish. Little would be gained and much could be lost by pressing them. Monroe's change in attitude did not come after hearing Adams's arguments on the matter; indeed he heard Adams's position twice without altering his own. He abruptly changed his mind when on January 10, Nicholas Biddle, of future Bank of the United States fame and Monroe's personal friend, visited the White House. Monroe received word from Biddle that Don Luis de Onis, the Spanish minister to the United States, desperately wanted to sell Florida. Monroe immediately sent his Secretary of State to discuss the matter with Onis. When Adams returned, Monroe decided to "modify his message to the House of Representatives in consequence of it." After receiving word from Biddle that Onis might be ready to come to terms over Florida, Monroe believed that seizing the island broke the deadlock in negotiations over Florida going back to the Louisiana Purchase. Now, keeping Amelia seemed a calculated risk worth taking. Monroe sensed Spanish panic and this changed his mind. He therefore altered his message so that it made no mention of returning the island to Spain. As this controversy died, events unfolded on the Spanish border that put Monroe in another tight

[12] James E. Lewis, *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 75; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 409-412; James Monroe to John Quincy Adams, December 10, 1815, *The Writings of James Monroe,* 5:381-2; James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, December 23 1817, Ibid, 6:46-47.

situation and again, he and Adams differed on how best to respond to Spain's collapsing American empire.[13]

During the months before Monroe sent Edmund Gaines to capture Amelia Island the general led American forces on the Florida border in a series of engagements against hostile Indian tribes. This culminated with Gaines's attack on an Indian village at Fowltown. The natives responded with a retaliatory raid on a contingent of American troops.[14] This mayhem prompted Monroe to send troops across the border into Spanish Florida. On December 16, 1817 a dispatch sent from the War Department ordered Gaines to "march across the Florida line, and to attack them [the natives] within its limits, should it be found necessary unless they should shelter themselves under a Spanish post. In the last event you will notify this department." Monroe also directed Andrew Jackson to travel to the front and take command of the forces under Gaines's command. Thus Gaines's orders applied to the Tennessee General as well.[15]

At this point versions of events begin to differ. Monroe and Secretary of War John C. Calhoun later claimed that this represented the extent of Jackson's orders, while Jackson insisted that he received "secret authorization" to conquer the rest of Florida for the United States. Historians cannot agree on which side is lying. Not surprisingly, sympathetic Jackson biographers argue that Monroe did indeed provide such authorization while Monroe biographers, and Jackson critics, claim that the controversial

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[13] John Quincy Adams, January 10, 1818, *Memoirs*, 4:37-38; Don Luis de Onis to Secretary of State James Monroe, January 2, 1816, *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, 4:424; The Secretary of State James Monroe to the Chevalier De Onis, January 19, 1816, *Ibid*, 4:424-426; James Monroe, "Special Message to the House of Representatives," January 13, 1818, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 6:36-39.
[14] Owsley Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 150-151.
[15] John C. Calhoun to General Edmund P. Gaines, December 16, 1817, *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, 2:20; John Quincy Adams, December 26, 1817, *Memoirs, 30-31;* John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, December 26, 1817, *Calhoun Papers*, 2:38-40.

Rhea letter, from which Jackson claimed this secret authority, was a complete fabrication on the part of "Old Hickory."[16]

For the purposes of this work the question of whether Monroe did indeed send a secret letter to Jackson is irrelevant. Monroe, an experienced soldier, politician and diplomat would not have sent a man like Andrew Jackson into a chaotic situation like Florida without some idea as to the possible repercussions. Monroe knew from experience what to expect from the general. He witnessed it during the War of 1812. During the war, American troops under the command of General James Wilkinson seized Mobile, Alabama and ousted the Spanish garrison at Fort Charlotte. In response the Spanish created an alliance with the Creek Indians. Upon formation of this alliance the Creeks attacked Fort Mims, an American post on the border, thus sparking the Creek War and precipitating General Andrew Jackson's involvement in the conflict. Events during the Creek War are important to understanding Monroe's subsequent actions as President. On October 21, 1814, Monroe, in his role as acting Secretary of War, ordered Jackson not to take action against the Spanish outposts. James Madison's Administration hoped to avoid bringing a second European power into the conflict. Jackson did not receive these orders in time and after defeating the Creeks at Horseshoe Bend captured the Spanish city of Pensacola. Later, Jackson sent a letter to Monroe explaining his reasons for capturing Pensacola without orders to do so. Four years later Monroe sent this same man into a

[16] Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson & His Indian Wars* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2001), 130-162; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 412-417; See also, David and Jeanne Heidler, *Old Hickory's War: Andrew Jackson and the Quest for Empire* (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Press, 1996), 121.

chaotic situation in Florida. Certainly Monroe did not expect anything different from Jackson this time around.[17]

Jackson did not disappoint. Calling up many of his Tennessee veterans from the War of 1812, he departed in January 1818 with more than a thousand men under his command. In April, Jackson tracked a group of Indians to the Spanish town of St. Marks, which he took, and during the operation he captured, tried and executed two British subjects, Robert Ambrister and Alexander Arbuthnot, for inciting the Indians to violence. The execution of two of the King's subjects alarmed the British, but hardly compared to the outcry over Jackson's next move. On May 28 the General, just as he had during the War of 1812 again captured the city of Pensacola, giving the United States *de facto* control of Spanish Florida and in essence committing an act of war against Spain.[18]

With the general's actions the impetus shifted to the Administration as to what should be done with the territory. Many factors weighed on Monroe. While the President understood that Jackson's activities might push the Spanish towards a settlement over Florida he also realized that the Tennessee General's actions put the United States in a precarious position.[19]

Word of Jackson's capture of Pensacola reached Washington in June 1818 and the administration received a strongly worded protest from Onis on June 25. In July the

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[17] James Madison to Andrew Jackson, October 21, 1814, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, ed. Harold Moser et al. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 3:170; Andrew Jackson to James Madison, October 26, 1814, *Ibid*, 3:173; Andrew Jackson to John Coffee, August 10, 1814, *Ibid* 3:112; Frank Owsley Jr., *The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans 1812-1815* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2000), 88-89.

[18] Remini, *Andrew Jackson and his Indian Wars*, 143-162; Owsley Jr. and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 153-160.

[19] James Monroe to James Madison, February 13, 1818, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 6: 47-49; Noble Cunningham, *The Presidency of James Monroe* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 59-60. If we take it for granted that Monroe sent Jackson to Florida knowing that the General might take aggressive action against the Spanish he almost certainly did not anticipate Jackson's execution of two British subjects.

cabinet met and planned a response to Jackson's exploits. Weeks claims that the eventual response illustrates Adams's "dominant influence" over the cabinet. Yet Adams's own memoirs and the administration's final decision make it clear that Monroe again found a middle course.[20]

Within the cabinet, two extreme positions emerged in response to Jackson's Florida adventure. Adams reports that the entire cabinet, save himself, believed Jackson guilty of defying his orders. Calhoun appeared personally affronted that Jackson ignored him. Meanwhile an alarmed William Crawford, secretary of the treasury, argued that "if the Administration did not immediately declare itself and restore Pensacola it would be held responsible for Jackson's having taken it." Adams argued that Jackson's "proceedings were justified by the necessity of the case." In his diary Adams assumed that Monroe opposed him as well and historians take this as the sole interpretation of Monroe's position. A closer look at Monroe's position provides an alternative conclusion.[21]

In his memoirs Adams makes an important point concerning Monroe's thoughts on the situation. "The President supposes there might be cases which would have justified Jackson's measures but he has not made out his case." Monroe never actually sided with Calhoun's position on Jackson. He simply did not make his thoughts known to Adams. Instead, he looked to his old revolutionary colleagues for guidance. When studying Monroe's correspondence with Thomas Jefferson and James Madison during this crisis it becomes clear that the president sought a middle course between the

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[20] Don Luis de Onis to the Secretary of State, June 25 and July 8, 1818, *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, 4:478-497; Weeks, *JQA and the American Global Empire*, 117.
[21] John Quincy Adams, July 15th 1818, *Memoirs*, 4:108; John Quincy Adams, July 16th 1818, Ibid.

extremes of the Adams position and that of Calhoun and Crawford. In fact, Monroe came to the meeting with a clear vision that neither of the extreme positions, keeping Florida or disavowing Jackson, appeared feasible. On July 10, five days before the first cabinet meeting, Monroe wrote to Madison describing the situation. He explained that Jackson blamed the war on "Spanish authorities" and "foreign adventurers." More significantly, Monroe admitted, "I have no doubt that his opinion is correct." Already, before hearing Adams's arguments in favor of Jackson, Monroe believed the General's actions to have been justified.[22]

This did not end the debate. As Monroe maintained, "there are serious difficulties in this business, on whichever side we view it." He explained that with the United States in control of the Mississippi River and Florida the reasons for pressing Spain were "not urgent." The United States gained nothing by putting further pressure on Spain and doing so involved unnecessary risk. Monroe feared that retaining Florida might foster "a sense of injury from her and of insult." Pressuring Spain could no longer help the United States position in Florida and might only serve to bring about a war. Monroe recognized that with patience and tact he could gain Florida without further bloodshed.[23]

After the cabinet meetings the president sent a letter to Jackson in which Monroe made clear that while he believed that the general exceeded his orders he understood Jackson's reasons for doing so. Monroe also explained his reasons for giving Florida back to Spain. He believed that the recent events would "show the incompetency of

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[22] *Ibid*; James Monroe to James Madison, July 10, 1818, *The Writings of James Monroe, 6:53-56*. Like Washington, Monroe tried to stay above the political infighting that occurred during his cabinet meeting and helps explain why he did not dive too deeply into the debate. This became especially important after his re-election and the years before 1824 when practically every member of his entire administration had his eye on the presidency. Monroe took pains to stay neutral.
[23] Ibid.

Spain to maintain her authority" in Florida. Now that Spain recognized this fact, Monroe believed that "there is much reason to presume that this act will furnish a strong inducement to Spain to cede this territory, provided we do not wound too deeply her pride by holding it." At this point Monroe believed that Spain could only retain Florida by involving other European powers in the struggle, "the policy of Europe respecting South America is not yet settled." They could only push for "war with the United States, in the hope of making it general, and uniting Europe against us and her colonies." This represents the crux of Monroe's caution. The Spanish Empire itself represented no great threat but the prospect of sparking a war with other European powers gave the President pause.[24]

A note to Onis laid out the government's official response on July 23, 1818. The product of the July cabinet meetings and largely the president's creation, the missive illustrates his ability to find an alternative path that maintained peace and eventually led to the American acquisition of Florida only six months later. According to Adams, "the language only is mine." Adams felt frustrated that his point of view had, in his opinion, been ignored. Yet in the text of the note Jackson's actions are justified throughout, blaming the crisis largely on the governor of Pensacola and citing Spain's inability to maintain control over Florida. This bears traces of Adams's own reasoning. Only at the end does Monroe mention returning St. Marks and Pensacola to the Spanish. Monroe designed this to appease the Spanish for the time being and hopefully coax them back to the negotiating table. Even here Monroe and Adams included a requirement that St. Marks only be given back to a force that could protect it from Indian incursion. While the language bears the stamp of Adams's bellicose defense of Jackson, the substance of

[24] James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, July 19, 1818, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 6:54-61.

the note speaks to Monroe's influence over national policy and highlights his ability to steer through the pitfalls of national and international politics.[25]

Monroe explained in his Message to Congress during November 1818 that returning the posts immediately to Spain "preserved" relations between the two countries and allowed the Spanish to review their relations with the United States "particularly in respect to the territory in question, with the dangers inseparable from it." This pressured the Spanish to come to a quick decision concerning Florida and over the next few months Adams negotiated with the Spanish under the parameters Monroe created. This resulted in the Transcontinental Treaty, signed in February 1819, in which Spain ceded Florida to the United States. The speed with which this occurred owed as much to Monroe's ability to steer the United States through the various pitfalls of international geopolitics as it did Adams's ample negotiating powers.[26]

Adams and Monroe adopted very different approaches to the Florida crisis and these differences highlight their opposing foreign policy philosophies. Adams wanted to expand into Florida and to use the situation to strengthen his hand in negotiating with Onis on the issue of the western border of the United States. He wanted access to the Pacific Ocean and thought that pressuring Spain would help achieve this. Adams saw territorial expansion as crucial for the United States to become a great power. In fact, Monroe's secretary of state can best be described as an early agent of Manifest Destiny. He laid the foundations for what historian William Earl Weeks called the "American

[25] John Quincy Adams, July 18, 1818, *Memoirs*, 6:112; John Quincy Adams to Don Luis de Onis, July 23 1818, *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, 4:497-499.

[26] James Monroe "Second Annual Message," November 16, 1818, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 6:80.

Global Empire." American expansion provided the key motivation for Adams and he believed the United States would naturally come into possession of all North America.[27]

Monroe approached foreign policy questions much differently. He spent his youth throwing off the chains of monarchy. Nearly a half century later he still believed the European monarchs were looking for any excuse to destroy the American republic. Thus, During the Florida crisis Monroe proceeded cautiously. While Monroe certainly hoped the United States would eventually acquire Florida he did not think the territory was worth a war with Spain and certainly not worth the possible involvement of the British. As his presidency continued into a second term, however, world politics shifted to provide him with another opportunity to champion the republican cause and he behaved far more aggressively than he had during the Florida crisis.

Napoleon's defeat in 1815 effectively stifled republican government on the European continent. After the Congress of Vienna the European powers worked in concert, united by their system of monarchial government, their distrust of republicanism and their fear of revolution.[28] After their victory England, Prussia, Russia, and Austria created the "Quadruple Alliance." Another "Holy Alliance" led by the Russian Czar, and including Austria and Prussia, emerged in this era. Too conservative for Great Britain, which did not join, the Holy Alliance developed two principles upon which it operated. First, like the Quadruple Alliance they hoped to preserve the settlement reached at the Congress of Vienna and maintain peace in Europe. Second, they wanted to prevent the

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[27] John Quincy Adams, "Speech to The U.S. House of Representatives" July 4, 1821, in the The University of Virginia: Miller Center online database, http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3484 (accessed, July 2, 2012)**;** See also, Weeks, *JQA and the American Global Empire,* 19-21; Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* , 341-342.

[28]Armin Rappaport, *The Monroe Doctrine*, 2-8; James Lewis, *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood, 1783-1829*, 75.

spread of revolution. France, once again under Bourbon rule, eventually joined this alliance and together the European powers tried to repress revolutions throughout Europe.[29]

Meanwhile the Spanish colonies began revolting in 1808 during the Napoleonic wars. By the time Monroe came to office many of these colonies had earned some measure of independence. Monroe feared that the Holy Alliance considered reasserting Spanish power in the colonies. He envisioned Europe's war against revolution spreading to America's doorstep.[30]

Like the Florida crisis Monroe's cabinet discussed the Latin American independence movements during their first meeting. Unlike Florida, the republican revolutionary movements inspired Monroe to adopt an aggressive position while Adams remained cautious. The meeting focused on potential support for the rebelling colonies. Monroe asked whether the President had the power to recognize officially the independence of certain Latin American colonies. He also asked, if he in fact did have that power, whether it would be expedient for him to do so. Specifically, he questioned whether or not such a statement would lead the United States into a war with Spain.[31]

Monroe's interest in Latin American independence went back some years. As Secretary of State, he discussed the possibility of recognizing the independence of the rebelling Spanish provinces as early as 1811. He told Joel Barlow, then U.S. minister to France, that the United States made a "very friendly answer" to the colonies request for

[29]Rappaport, *The Monroe Doctrine*, 2-8; Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (New York: Harper Perenniel, 1996), 762-763.
[30] For information on the United States and the revolutions in Latin America see, A.P. Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1941).
[31] James Monroe's Questions for the Cabinet, October 25, 1817, *Writings of James Monroe*, 6: 31. Monroe wrote asked his cabinet "Had the executive power to acknowledge the independence has not been acknowledged by the parent country, and between which parties a war actually exists on that account."; See also, Ammon, *James Monroe*, 413.

recognition. He believed that Americans could not possibly remain "indifferent" to the "just claims of our Southern Brethren." His interest in the progress of the Latin American revolutions continued into his presidency.[32] Throughout his first term Monroe gradually progressed toward official recognition of the Latin American republics as independent states. In his first Annual Message to Congress, Monroe called it "natural" for Americans to sympathize with their southern neighbors. Though he did not deem it the right time for recognition he did allow their ships entry into U.S. ports by designating the conflict a civil war rather than a mere rebellion.[33]

By his third year in office Monroe moved towards recognition of the various republics. His third Annual Message declared that "the steadiness, consistency and success with which they have pursued their object… give them a strong claim to the favorable consideration of other nations." In his fourth message Monroe alluded to a sense of inevitability concerning the Colonies independence. He declared that soon "an adjustment will finally take place on the basis proposed by the Colonies." In other words, he believed that soon Spain would be forced to listen to the Colonies demands for independence and that "to promote that result…has always been the uniform policy of the government." While Monroe slowly brought the United States closer in line with the independence movements, he waited until after his reelection to take a bolder approach.[34]

Despite Monroe's fervent support of revolution, his hardened political instincts kept him from bringing the United States more firmly on the side of the Latin American

[32] James Monroe to Joel Barlow, November 27, 1811, *Writings of James Monroe*, 5: 364.
[33] James Monroe "First Annual Message to Congress," December 2, 1817, *Writings of Monroe*, 6: 33-35; In the following year he expressed similar thoughts concerning American sympathy for the Revolution; See, James Monroe's Second Annual Message to Congress, November 16, 1818, *Ibid*., 6: 81-82.
[34] James Monroe, "Third Annual Message to Congress," December 7, 1819, *Ibid., 6:112*; James Monroe "Fourth Annual Message to Congress," November 14, 1820, *Ibid*., 6: 158-159.

republics. Threats from Europe forced Monroe to tread carefully for fear of bringing one or all of the European Allies into the conflict. In an 1820 letter to Andrew Jackson, Monroe explained his reasoning. He claimed that his goal had always been for the United States to throw its "moral weight in the scale of the Colonies," while not involving itself in the war. Monroe believed that his decision kept Europe on the sideline during the Latin American revolutions. "Europe has remained tranquil spectators of the conflict, whereas had we joined the Colonies, it is presumable that several powers would have united with Spain." In Monroe's mind, active American support and aid to the revolutions would prove counter-productive to the cause because it might precipitate a more powerful European nation entering the war on Spain's side. [35]

Monroe explained his strategy to other colleagues. He told Albert Gallatin that he hoped to "throw in their [Latin America] scale, in a moral sense, the weight of the United States." The U.S. did not possess great armies to aid their republican brethren but as the inventors of the liberal republic their support lent ideological weight to the Latin American cause. At the same time, the U.S. could ill afford to join the cause militarily. He wanted to support the movements "without…mak[ing] us a party to the contest."[36] Monroe also recognized that the independence movements needed recognition from European powers, which would give them legitimacy. A premature announcement of recognition from the United States might "alarm" the European powers and "defeat our own objects."[37]

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[35] James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, May 23, 1820, *Ibid*., 6: 128.
[36] James Monroe to Albert Gallatin, May 26, 1820 Ibid., 6:132-133.
[37] James Monroe to Jonathon Russell, March 12, 1822 Ibid., 6:211-212; See also, James Monroe to James Madison May 10, 1822. Ibid., 284-285. Monroe lays out his thinking to Madison on the subject in the first two pages of this letter.

The United States officially recognized the Latin America republics in a special message to Congress in 1822. Monroe called the revolution "manifestly settled" and claimed that the "new governments have a claim to recognition." [38] Once he made up his mind to support the republics Monroe wanted to ensure that American recognition made a serious impact. When Virginia Congressman Robert Garnett remained the lone vote against recognition, Monroe sent a letter urging the young politician to change his mind. He stressed the need for unanimity to put the full moral weight of the United States behind the declaration of support.[39]

After officially recognizing the Latin American republics in March of 1822, Monroe contemplated a stronger step in favor of the liberal republican cause over the next year. The question stirred up Monroe's long cherished support of republicanism. During his first term the European allies, with Great Britain leading the way, remained content to simply maintain the balance of power. After 1820 the Holy Allies began moving beyond what the British had in mind for the concert of Europe. Despite Britain's opposition, the Holy Allies voted to give the Austrians a mandate to crush republican revolutions' underway in nearby Naples and Piedmont. The Allies did the same in Verona the next year, again despite Britain's dissent. Finally, with a restored Bourbon King on the French throne, the Holy Alliance authorized French intervention against the newly created republican regime in Spain. This time the Alliance even announced their intention to move against Britain if she stood in the way. In 1822 King Louis XVIII launched a 60,000 man army into Spain to quell the liberal regime in place there and

[38] James Monroe "Special Message to Congress Concerning South American Affairs," March 8, 1822, *Ibid*., 6: 204.
[39] James Monroe to Robert Garnett March 29, 1822. Ibid., 6:214-215.

restore Ferdinand VII to the throne. These events startled Monroe but he also held out hope that perhaps the reactionaries had overextended themselves.[40]

Monroe believed that a Bourbon military disaster might "put at issue its own future…perhaps its existence." He thought a setback would undermine the restored Bourbon regime. He even held out hope that another round of revolution might spark if the French were defeated. Monroe told Jefferson that he refused to "believe that the revolutionary spirit has become extinct" in France. The president still held to the same ideals of the Revolutionary era. He still believed in the righteousness of the 1790s version of the French Revolution, though he deplored what it later became. The remainder of Monroe's letter to his former mentor exhibits an almost regretful tone. Monroe believed that in the past the United States squandered opportunities to advance the revolutionary cause. Now, fate granted him a chance to rectify those mistakes. The United States faced another critical period in its history eerily similar to his own time in France thirty years earlier. "Such is the state of Europe, and our relation to it is pretty much the same, as it was, in the commencement of the French Revolution." The United States meanwhile maintained the same policy of neutrality and isolation. Monroe, now in a position to direct America's foreign affairs, questioned this strategy. He began to contemplate a more powerful statement in favor of republicanism. By now safely re-elected, Monroe put his political battles behind him and began looking to his legacy. He asked his longtime mentor, "Can we, in any form, take a bolder attitude in regard to it [revolution], in favor of liberty, than we then did? Can we afford greater aid to that

[40] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 369-371.

cause, by assuming any such attitude, than we now do?" In the coming months events provided Monroe with an opportunity to announce America's new "bolder attitude."[41]

During the summer and fall of 1823 Monroe learned that the French succeeded in suppressing the Spanish revolutionary government. Rumors also swirled that the Holy Alliance, in addition to their adventures against republicanism in Europe, might re-assert Spanish control over the Latin American colonies. Great Britain viewed this proposal suspiciously. As the preeminent maritime power they wanted free access to Latin American markets. By 1823 Foreign Minister George Canning realized that the British lost control over the concert of Europe. The Russian Czar now led the more conservative Holy Alliance and directed the actions against revolutionary regimes. Canning looked upon the U.S. as a potential ally in preventing European interference in Latin America. In October of 1823 Canning sent a letter to the United States government suggesting cooperation between the two countries to achieve such a goal. He asked the United States to agree to the following:

1. We conceive the recovery of the colonies by Spain to be hopeless
2. We conceive the recognition of them, as independent states, to be one of time and circumstance.
3. We are, however, by no means disposed to throw any impediment in the way of an arrangement between them and the mother country by amicable negotiations
4. We aim not at the possession of any portion of them ourselves
5. We could not see any portion of them transferred to any power with indifference.[42]

Canning's offer struck a chord with Monroe, who sent another letter to Jefferson asking his advice in how to answer this proposal. Monroe posed a startling idea, "Shall we entangle ourselves, at all, in European politics?" This joint proclamation would, after

[41] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, June 2, 1823 *Writings of Monroe*, 6: 310; Noble Cunningham, *The Presidency of James Monroe* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 61.
[42] Mr. Canning to Mr. Rush, Aug 23, 1823, *Writings of James Monroe*, 6:365.

all, force the United States to abandon the most sacred principle of American foreign policy. Canning effectively wanted the United States to enter into an alliance with Great Britain against the Holy Allies. Of course, Monroe recognized the country's long standing policy of neutrality toward the European powers. Washington had enunciated American neutrality during the 1790s and had also made it the key theme in his famous farewell address. Jefferson himself continued the principle during his presidency. Suggesting an agreement with the British would amount to a reversal of the major pillar of America foreign policy. Monroe deemed this opportunity sufficiently important for the country to break that policy. He told Jefferson that "if a case can exist" where the American policy of non-entangling alliances could be "departed from, is not the present instance precisely that case?" This proposal offered a chance to detach the most powerful nation in the world from the other monarchial powers all while preserving Latin American republicanism.[43]

Since Napoleon's rise, republicans like Monroe and Jefferson watched the promise of the French Revolution disappear. With Napoleon's defeat the Europe monarchs worked in concert to preserve monarchy and snuff out republicanism. Now a potential rift between Britain and the Holy Allies appeared possible. Monroe saw an opportunity in the split between Napoleon's former enemies. The British had been France's most implacable enemy since 1789 but now, as Monroe had told Jefferson, "I think a change has since been wrought" in Great Britain. The Holy Allies moved in a more conservative direction, while British liberals looked askance at their activities. The British Constitutional monarchy increasingly had far more in common with the American

[43] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, October 17, 1823, *Writings of James Monroe*, 6:323-325.

republic than it did autocrats like the Russian Czar.[44] Monroe wanted to force Great Britain either to stand with the "monarchs of Europe" and despotism or with the "U States and liberty." He thought the opportunity great enough to take the risk, and potentially to reverse nearly half a century of American foreign policy. "My own impression is that we ought to meet the proposal of the British government and to make it known that we would view interference on the part of the European powers and especially an attack on the Colonies by them as an attack on ourselves." Jefferson's response only added to Monroe's fervor.[45]

Jefferson weighed Monroe's concerns carefully. Canning's offer presented questions "the most momentous which has ever been offered to my contemplation since that of Independence." Jefferson believed that Monroe's decision would shape the future of liberal republicanism. While he reiterated that the United States must never "entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe" Canning's offer provided an opportunity too enticing to ignore. Jefferson saw Europe increasingly transforming back into the "domain of despotism" but he hoped that by accepting Canning's offer that Monroe might "draw to our side" the "most powerful member" of the European alliance and ultimately, "bring her into the scale of free government." Doing this would land a critical blow in the war for liberal republicanism. And after all, by bringing them into the fight to secure republicanism in the western hemisphere they would not be fighting Britain's war "but ours."[46]

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[44] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, June 2, 1823, *Writings of Monroe*, 6: 309.
[45] Ammon, *James Monroe*, 476-477; Davies, *Europe*, 762-763; James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, October 17, 1823, *Writings of James Monroe*, 6: 323-325.
[46] Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, October 24, 1823, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: G.P. Putnam sons 1905) 12:381-319.

Monroe also wrote to James Madison. Though the former President refused to trust the British, he nevertheless responded as eagerly as Jefferson. After reading Monroe's letter on the subject Madison told Jefferson that "in the great struggle of the Epoch between liberty and despotism we owe it to ourselves to sustain the former, in this hemisphere at least." Madison even suggested that they ask the British to extend their efforts not only to Latin American but also to "the French invasion of Spain and to make Greece an object of some favorable attention."[47] Madison wanted to press the British to support the cause of liberty in their own backyard as well as the western hemisphere. Monroe took his suggestion to heart. After conferring with the old guard of the revolutionary generation, Monroe proposed to discard one of the bedrock principles of American foreign policy in order to support the republican cause.

Canning's proposal provided Monroe with an opportunity to accomplish exactly what he considered the preceding summer. He wanted to grasp this chance to force the United States to take a stronger stance in favor of republicanism and to take its place as the defender of the cause. He also hoped that by leading the country in this he might secure his legacy as republicanism's great diplomat. With his old colleagues thoughts ringing in his mind Monroe convened the cabinet in November 1823 to discuss Canning's proposal. There he received an entirely different perspective from Adams. The Secretary of State agreed with the general idea of warning the European powers against re-establishing colonies in the new world but thought that by accepting Canning's proposal the United States would "come in as a cock-boat in the wake of the British man-

[47] James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Nov. 1, 1823**,** *The Republics of Letters: Correspondence of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison* Ed. James Morton Smith (New York: Norton, 1995) 3:1879; James Madison to James Monroe Oct. 30, 1823, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 6: 394-396.

of-war."[48] In other words, he believed that the United States needed to make a unilateral statement. He did not see the world locked in a life and death struggle between the proponents of monarchy and republicanism in the same way Monroe did. To him the United States, and the United States alone, stood as the last bastion of freedom in the world. In his famous July 4, 1821 speech to Congress in response to the calls for American aid to the revolutionary regimes in Latin America, Adams declared that the U.S. "goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy…She is the well-wisher to freedom and independence of all but she is the champion and vindicator only of her own."[49] He saw Great Britain as another rival for power in the New World and did not think bringing them on the side of liberty important in the least. He wanted the U.S. to assert itself in the Western hemisphere as the dominant power. Accepting Canning's proposal would open a back door for Britain to Latin America and deprive the United States of prestige within the region.[50]

Hearing his Secretary of State's blunt opinion on the matter gave the President pause. On November 13 Adams confided to his journal that the President appeared "unsettled in his own mind as to the answer to be given to Mr. Canning's proposals." Added to his Secretary of State's reservations, Monroe also feared the Holy Alliance's reaction to such a declaration even with Britain's aid. Adams, who favored a unilateral statement, scoffed at his chief's fears, calling Monroe terrified "far beyond anything that I could have conceived possible with the fear that the Holy Alliance are about to restore

[48] John Quincy Adams, November 7, 1823, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, 6: 179.*
[49] John Quincy Adams, "Speech to The U.S. House of Representatives" July 4, 1821, in the The University of Virginia: Miller Center online database, http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3484 (accessed, July 2, 2012); See also, Weeks, *JQA and American Global Empire*, 19-21; Bemis, *JQA and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, 341-342.
[50] John Quincy Adams, November 7, 1823, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, 6: 176-177.*

immediately S. America to Spain." Adams disagreed. "I no more believe that the Holy Allies will restore the Spanish dominion upon the American continent than that the Chimborazo will sink beneath the Ocean." Adams proved correct in his thinking. The Holy Allies never sent expeditions against the Latin American revolutionaries. Adams did not see things through the liberal republican revolutionary lens. Monroe was programmed to see monarchial conspiracies wherever he looked. The entire revolutionary movement focused on kingly conspiracies. American Monarchists conspired to destroy the American Colonies in the years preceding the Revolution. British monarchists conspired to destroy the French Revolution while their allies in the Federalist Party tried to overthrow the American republic. Now the princes of Europe linked arms to crush revolutionary movements in Europe. It did not take great leap of imagination for Monroe to think them capable of doing the same in the western hemisphere. This made Monroe move cautiously, especially when he received word that Britain might not support the cause as strongly as Canning's letter initially indicated.[51]

Monroe's perspective changed on November 16 when he learned from Richard Rush, minister to Great Britain, that Canning had received assurances from France that the Holy Alliance would not interfere in the Western Hemisphere. Rush also reported that Canning and the British were now uninterested in pursuing a joint venture. According to Adams, Monroe still appeared "to be in an extraordinary degree of dejection. There must be something that affects him beside the European news." Adams could not understand why these events caused Monroe such consternation. He failed to realize just how important this moment was for Monroe as a former revolutionary himself. He did not see

[51] John Quincy Adams, Nov. 13,15 1823, *Memoirs*, 185-186; James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, June 2, 1823, *Writings of James Monroe*, 309.

the question in the same way. For Monroe and the other revolutionaries like Jefferson and Madison the chance to pull the old enemy Great Britain away from the Holy Allies while securing republicanism in the New World represented an opportunity nearly as great as the American Revolution. For Monroe it afforded a personal opportunity not seen since he became Minister to France in 1794. The following days illustrated how seriously Monroe took this question. Without British support Monroe contemplated committing the United States to a unilateral support of republicanism around the globe. He hoped this statement would still force Great Britain to choose whether or not they supported liberty.[52]

On November 21 at another cabinet meeting, Adams learned exactly what "affected" the President. Monroe read his initial outline of what became the Monroe Doctrine to the cabinet. It struck Adams like a bolt of lightning. The President began by warning of the "formidable dangers" which "menaced" the country. Monroe wanted Americans to prepare themselves to defend the cause of liberty against its enemies. Monroe included passages criticizing the French government and condemning their invasion of Spain. He also wanted to officially recognize the Greek independence movement and their "heroic revolutionary struggle." Taking Jefferson and Madison's suggestions to heart Monroe declared the U.S. the champion of republicanism, not only in the west but around the world. Alarmed, Adams called Monroe's draft, "a summons to arms-to arms against all Europe." He warned the President that his message might enrage the nations of Europe and drive the United States to war. Europe, he claimed, had always gone through "convulsions" including revolutions and counter-revolutions. The

[52] John Quincy Adams, Nov. 17 and 18, 1823, *Memoirs*, 187, 190.

United States meanwhile looked upon these "safe in our distance" and wisely maintained a "forbearance to interfere." With this message Monroe, in his zeal for the revolutionary movement, would "buckle the harness and throw down the gauntlet." In other words, this tied the United States to Europe and entangled them in that continent's constant wars. Worse it did so "for objects of policy exclusively European." Adams prevailed upon the president to soften his message. It would, Adams cried "be as new to in our policy as it would be surprising." [53] Adams argued for a message that stated the government's "earnest remonstrance against the interference of the European powers by force with South America, but to disclaim all interference on our part with Europe." Adams's suggestions made an impression on the president.[54]

As usual Monroe wanted to find unanimity within his cabinet and he took Adams's comments into consideration. Monroe again looked for a middle course between his initial aggressive message of support for the republican cause and John Quincy Adams's safer approach. He chose to, as Madison suggested, preserve the cause of republicanism in the western hemisphere at least but he also kept strong support for budding European republicanism. Monroe's unwavering support for the movement comes through in the words of the actual Doctrine. He believed that the heart of the Annual Message of 1823 was his support of the republican cause. He hoped that his statement would still be seen as a great blow for republicanism, carving out a space for it in the western hemisphere.

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[53] Quotes are from John Quincy Adams, November 21,22, 1823, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* Ed. Charles Francis Adams (New York: AMS Press, 1970-Reprinted from 1874) 6:195-197; Ammon, 481-482; James Monroe's 7th Annual Message to Congress, December 2 1823, *Writings of Monroe*, 325-341; Quotes are from John Quincy Adams, November 24, 1824, *Memoirs*, 6: 199.
[54] Adams, November 22, 1823, *Memoirs*, 198.

Monroe began the Message by harkening back to the halcyon days of the revolution. He opened with a warning for his fellow citizens. "Never was a period since the establishment of our Revolution when" more was required of Americans. While he softened the language preparing the United States for a war against Europe he stressed the need for Americans to practice "virtue and patriotism." He wanted 1820s Americans to live up to the example set by his generation. While the final enunciation of the Monroe Doctrine focused primarily on Latin America, Monroe nevertheless declared a kind of tacit American support for the revolutionary struggle in Europe.[55]

Monroe continued a theme from his message of the previous year in which he declared that Greece "fills the mind with the most exalted sentiments" and lamented that "such a country should have been overwhelmed and so long hidden, as it were, from the world under a gloomy despotism." He claimed that the fate of the Greeks filled Americans with "unceasing and deep anger." Now that the birthplace of Democracy "contend[ed] in favor of their liberties" to "recover their independence" just as the U.S. had done in 1776 it could not help but elicit "sympathy and excitement" from Americans. [56] Monroe claimed that the "whole civilized world takes a deep interest" in the welfare of the Greek revolution. Monroe also set his sights on the European monarchs.

Though Monroe removed the passages which Adams called a "summons to arms" and chose not to "throw down the gauntlet" he did criticize the Holy Allies. After mentioning in his message of 1822 that Spain and Portugal were taking steps to "improve

[55] James Monroe, "Seventh Annual Message to Congress," December 2, 1823, *Writings of James Monroe*, 6: 3.
[56] James Monroe, "Sixth Annual Message to Congress," December 3, 1822, *Writings of James Monroe*, 6:298-299.

the condition of the people" a year later he lamented the course things had taken. [57] Americans kept an eye on the cause of liberty in Europe, "The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly in favor of the liberty and happiness of their fellow men on that side of the Atlantic." This signaled to Europe that the United States supported the revolutionary cause in Europe.[58] The President claimed that "Europe is still unsettled." Monroe still held out hope for Revolution in Europe. He believed Europe would eventually go republican and the monarchists' measures throughout the continent amounted to nothing more than a feeble attempt to hold back the tide. Proof of this lay in Allied powers decision to "interpose by force in the internal concerns of Spain." He even alluded to his fears when questioning "to what extent such interposition may be carried." [59] Monroe wanted the Holy Allies to know that the United States did not approve of their attempts to force the Spanish to accept a restored monarchy in place of the liberal regime. Of more imminent concern to the United States was the state of republicanism in the Western Hemisphere.

The spread of republicanism in Latin America interested Americans more closely, "With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers." These "causes" were the Latin American revolutions. Republicanism had won in the western hemisphere. The Latin American governments not only "declared but maintained independence" and the United States recognized these new states on "just principles." Those just principles primarily concerned the inherent differences between

[57] Ibid.
[58] James Monroe, "Seventh Annual Message to Congress," December 2, 1823, *Writings of James Monroe*, 6: 339.
[59] Ibid.

the governments of Europe and the United States. "The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America." Latin America's choice of government, as much as proximity, made the region peculiarly important to the United States. With republicanism taking root in Latin America the United States refused to stand idly by while the allied powers forced their style of government on the Western Hemisphere. To allow that would threaten America's "peace and happiness." Monroe also criticized the quality of monarchial government. He claimed that no nation would ever knowingly choose monarchy over republicanism. No one believed, "that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it [monarchy] of their own accord." The Latin American republics shared a connection to the United States and, "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." The republican connection spurred the United States to make a vigorous show of support for Latin America.[60]

Finally, Monroe outlined the words that helped define American foreign policy for the rest of the century. "We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the U.S. and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their [Europe's] part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." This, the most famous part of the doctrine,

[60] *Ibid*., 339-341; Half a year later Monroe gave some indication of what he hoped accomplish with the Doctrine in a letter to Jefferson. He wrote to his old mentor in alarm when word reached him that the French government sent an envoy to Colombia offering the new nation recognition in exchange for a promise that Colombians created a monarchy. Monroe wrote that the "attitude" the U.S., took in this crisis was "in the highest degree important to the whole civilized world" primarily because the U.S. stood alone against the monarchs of Europe. Monroe became alarmed that such an act might lead the U.S. to war. The French were willing to leave a monarchial Latin America alone but this did not satisfy Monroe. Latin American independence meant little without Latin American republicanism. See, James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson July, 12, 1824, *Writings of James Monroe*, 7:29-30; See also, James Monroe to James Madison, August 2, 1824, Ibid 7:31.

keeping the European powers out of the western hemisphere, had its origins in Monroe's dedication to republicanism.[61]

In the years that followed Monroe saw the championing of republicanism as perhaps the greatest achievement of his presidency. A month after creating the document Monroe beamed with pride when he told James Madison of a letter from Lafayette. In this letter the old French hero of Yorktown commented on the positive effect Monroe's Doctrine made in Europe. Lafayette told him that throughout Europe all the "friends of liberty" lauded his message.[62] Even Monroe's subordinates realized how important he regarded the creation of the Doctrine. Caesar A. Rodney, a diplomat in Buenos Aires and son of one of Monroe's fellow Revolutionaries, congratulated the President on his message telling Monroe that, "the state of the world required this frank and manly avowal of you patriotic sentiments." Rodney even hearkened back to his father's days during the revolution when he told the President, "you breathe a spirit worthy of the purest and proudest days of the Revolution." Finally, he expected the Doctrine to have a powerful effect because the "weight of the moral character" of the United States was worth "armies in the field." Such praise convinced Monroe that his message made an important contribution to republicanism.[63]

During the last months of Monroe's presidency, exactly one year after creating the doctrine, he sat down to compose his final message to Congress. In this last statement to the country Monroe spoke with pride at his accomplishment. Monroe again linked the cause of revolution around the world. He referred to both the revolutions in Latin

[61] James Monroe, "Seventh Annual Message to Congress," December 2, 1823, *Writings of James Monroe* , 340.
[62] James Monroe to James Madison, March 22, 1824, *Writings of James Monroe*, 7:12.
[63] Casear A. Rodney to James Monroe, February 10, 1824, *Writings of James Monroe*, 7:3.

America as well as Greece claiming that the cause of "liberty and humanity "continues to prevail" throughout the world. Latin America, in part because of his doctrine was "settling down under governments elective and representative, in every branch, similar to our own." The "deep interest" the United States took in that region "especially in the very important one of instituting their own government…has been declared and is known to the world." Monroe left the presidency believing that his doctrine had secured his legacy as a champion of the republican cause in Latin America. [64]

From the day at the beginning of his presidency Monroe first met with his cabinet in 1817 until his final annual message to the American people Monroe dealt constantly with the dissolution of the Spanish Empire. It took on such an important role in his presidency because the crisis combined perhaps the two most important aspects of Monroe's career, foreign policy and the republican cause. It made a fitting cap to a career dedicated to spreading the republican cause abroad and Monroe hoped that the Doctrine would cap his legacy as the Revolution's greatest diplomat.

[64] James Monroe's Eight Annual Message, December 7, 1824, *Writings of James Monroe* 7:46-47.

Conclusion

"This is a big *fucking* deal"

-Joe Biden to Barack Obama
March 23, 2010[1]

James Monroe's political career ended after he left the presidency in 1825. His six-year retirement from public life offers a sad conclusion to one of the great political careers in American history. Suffering from poor finances after a life ignoring his private affairs in favor of public service, Monroe spent his final years attempting to convince Congress to compensate him for the massive debts he accrued while serving in various diplomatic posts. It made for a humiliating task for the former president. Worse, after his wife Elizabeth's death, health concerns forced the former president to leave his beloved Virginia to live with his daughter in New York. Yet events in France managed once again to arouse Monroe from his malaise. A renewed revolutionary movement sparked the ailing ex-President. In 1830 a new generation of French citizens rebelled against the restoration Bourbon crown.[2] Showing the same enthusiasm he had exhibited half a century earlier, Monroe allowed himself to believe that this new revolution would finally sweep away monarchism forever. In January of 1831 Monroe wrote to his former Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, with the same passion for the republican cause he had shown time and again. He believed the news from France would open "a new epoch to that country and to the world." Ever the optimist, Monroe convinced himself

[1] David Herszenhorn, *New York Times*, March 23, 2010.
[2] T.C.W. Blanning, *The Short Oxford History of Europe: Nineteenth-Century* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2000), 162-163.

that this round of revolution would succeed where the others failed because it "occurred under much more favorable circumstances." He believed that his Doctrine had changed the climate allowing republicanism a more favorable hearing. With his health deteriorating Monroe comforted himself with the thought that the movement he had spent his life promoting would "extend its influence…to other people, to Spain and Italy and even to the North." Monroe died six months later on July 4, 1831-the 55th birthday of the liberal republic he had done so much to create.[3]

Monroe never entertained doubts about the justice of the American cause. He believed whole-heartedly in liberal republicanism with a consistency rarely seen in politicians. For half a century nearly every key moment in Monroe's life surrounded the cause. On the cold Christmas day in 1776 as a teenaged soldier when Monroe suffered a bullet wound at Trenton it was in defense of republicanism. When he returned to the United States in 1797 after his humiliating recall from France the presence of his fellow republicans reminded Monroe that his struggles in Paris served the republican cause. During his ascent from disgraced envoy in 1797 to the Presidency in 1817 Monroe convinced himself that each political maneuver put him in a better position to support, defend, and promote the American cause. When Monroe discussed the Latin American Revolutions with his cabinet he tried to turn American foreign policy toward a defense of that republicanism. Finally, at the end of his life Monroe watched a new revolution in France, desperately hoping that it would prove his life had not been spent in vain and that his legacy had been fulfilled.

[3] James Monroe to John Quincy Adams, January 25, 1831, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 7:216-218. Monroe believed that the "sanction promptly given to it by England" would prove a major factor in helping Monroe credited his gamble from 1823 with helping bring the British more closely to the side of republicanism.

Monroe's lifelong search to create his legacy hearkens to the same scene from the modern film "The Special Relationship" in which Bill Clinton tells Tony Blair to consider his legacy. Hillary Clinton, played by Hope Davis, nods her agreement with her husband's comment and adds, "Legacy is reductive. You tend to be remembered for one thing." The first lady's comment offers a shrewd assessment of presidential legacy. Most presidents are remembered, for good or ill, for one event during their term in office. This is as true for Abraham Lincoln who is revered for "freeing the slaves" as it is for Richard Nixon who is reviled for the Watergate scandal.[4]

American presidents belong to perhaps the most exclusive fraternity in the history of the world.[5] By reaching the office they have achieved something countless ambitious politicians have failed to accomplish and ensured for themselves an almost unmatched level of Adair's version of "fame."[6] Yet even after achieving the highest American political office presidents want to be remembered for some great accomplishment during their term.

From Monroe's day until the present presidents have understood this point. George Washington demonstrated time and again that he understood his legacy. At the end of the Revolutionary War a Colonel Lewis Nicola urged Washington to seize power and proclaim himself king. Washington denounced the idea. Affirming his dedication to republicanism, Washington informed Nicola that he had presented his schemes to the worst possible person. He urged Nicola that if he had "any regard for your country, for yourself, or for posterity" to refrain from suggesting such a thing ever again. Weeks

[4] *The Special Relationship*, directed by Richard Loncraine, (Rainmark Films, 2010).
[5] Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy, *The Presidents Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012).
[6] See Chapter 1.

later, Washington did much the same in heading off the Newburgh Crisis and also when he resigned his commission at the conclusion of the war. Each time he confirmed his own personal dedication to the republican cause. His aide David Cobb gave Washington the greatest praise imaginable when he wrote that "the United States are indebted for their republican form of government solely to the firm and determined republicanism of General Washington." Washington consistently protected and cultivated his legacy.[7]

Of course the interest in historical legacy is not unique to Monroe's revolutionary generation. Most American presidents have recognized the impact of history on their actions. Abraham Lincoln, almost unanimously credited as America's greatest president, became keenly aware that history would judge the way he handled the Civil War and the all important question of slavery. A popular Lincoln anecdote illustrates the 16th President's concern for his legacy. On January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation sat on Lincoln's desk. Before signing, the President twice placed his pen back on the desk. In explanation, he turned to William Seward and told his Secretary of State, "I have been shaking hands all morning….If my name ever goes into history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it. If my hand trembles when I sign the proclamation, all who examine the document after will say: 'he hesitated'." Lincoln then took a moment and signed. He understood that everything else in his political life would pale beside his decision to sign the Emancipation Proclamation and make the war finally, definitively, a

[7] George Washington to Lewis Nicola, May 22, 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938), 24:272-273; Paul F. Boller, "George Washington and Civilian Supremacy, *Southwest Review,* XXXIX (Winter, 1954), 14-16; Paul F. Boller, *Presidential Anecdotes* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981),13-16; See also, Chapter 4 above for the Newburgh Crisis.

conflict over slavery. Lincoln acknowledged that even an aching hand could influence his legacy for centuries to come.[8]

Modern presidents are no different. President George W. Bush recognized that he would be remembered one way or another for his response to the events of September 11, 2001. Though he faced staunch opposition and low approval numbers for his actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, Bush maintained that history would judge his actions less harshly than his contemporary critics.[9] Similarly, after President Obama passed his controversial healthcare reform bill in 2010 the microphone picked up Vice President Joseph Biden telling his boss, "This is a big *fucking* deal." [10] Biden's off-color comment, embarrassing though it might have been for the administration, nevertheless underscores that a moment like the reformation of the American healthcare system would go a long way in shaping Barack Obama's legacy. Presidents are not remembered for the hundreds of decisions they make on a day-by-day basis. They are remembered for defining moments and a president without such a moment can easily be forgotten.

After his term as America's thirteenth president ended, Millard Fillmore traveled to Oxford University in England. The school offered the former President an honorary degree but Fillmore declined fearing that the students might ask, "Who's Fillmore? What's he done?"[11] Even presidents need to accomplish something to leave a lasting legacy. In fact, Hillary Clinton's comment on the nature of legacy hints at the ultimate limitation of her husband's presidency. Despite the fact that the country saw an era of

[8] Frank Donovan, *Mr. Lincoln's Proclamation* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1964), 118-119.Boller, *Presidential Anecdotes,* 143.
[9] George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Random House, 2010 Large Print), 580-583.
[10] David Herszenhorn, *New York Times,* March 23, 2010.
[11] Robert J. Scarry, *Millard Fillmore* (London: McFarland & Co., 2001), 270-271. Boller, *Presidential Anecdotes,* 112.

relative peace and economic prosperity during Clinton's presidency, he lacked a great achievement to secure his place in history.[12] In this he was not unlike James Monroe who before 1823 and the creation of the Monroe Doctrine had not yet found that one moment to ensure his legacy.[13]

Monroe also faced the added pressure of living up to his predecessor. Other presidents have suffered from having to follow great predecessors. William Howard Taft followed the dynamic Teddy Roosevelt. Andrew Johnson succeeded the martyred Abraham Lincoln, Martin Van Buren and George H.W. Bush followed wildly popular leaders Andrew Jackson and Ronald Reagan respectively. The lack of success for these particular members of the presidential fraternity speaks to how difficult it is to follow a "great" leader. Monroe faced a slightly different but perhaps even more daunting challenge when he began his term of office. The four men who preceded Monroe, while not always considered great presidents, remain amongst the most celebrated leaders in American history. Further, each of the first four presidents built his legacy on service to the liberal republic. George Washington was called "the father of his country" and eulogized by Henry Lee as "the first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen." Even if his presidency was less successful than the rest John Adams did more than almost any other man to push the cause of independence and help establish the republic during the Revolution.

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[12] Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2004), 911-916, 923-927. At the end of his Presidency Clinton seemed to be searching for something upon which he might build a legacy that would eclipse the Monica Lewinsky scandal. He tried to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East.

[13] His eight years were called an era of good feelings. Party strife had ended after the death of the federalists. The "victory" over Great Britain at the Battle of New Orleans buoyed American morale but Monroe had no great moment during his presidency.

Even more pressure came from Monroe's immediate predecessors. Monroe's contemporaries viewed him as the fourth of the Virginian Dynasty in every conceivable way. After all, Jefferson was the Revolution's most revered scribe as author of the Declaration of Independence and James Madison was "the father of the Constitution." His two best friends had literally created America's two most important founding documents. Monroe achieved nothing like that during his service to the Revolution nor had his presidency offered a chance to match their feats before 1823. Thus, the creation of the Monroe Doctrine loomed large for Monroe. He knew it was his last chance to stand beside the republican champions who preceded him.

Monroe and his Doctrine highlight the difference between republican legacy and Adair's version of "fame" during the 18th century. After his long life, serving in almost every conceivable important public office and playing a key role in nearly every major event of the founding era, the Doctrine capped Monroe's brilliant career. It made sure that succeeding generations would remember Monroe and his presidency. But while it ensured Monroe's fame it did not provide him with the legacy he hoped to create when he set it down in 1823.

Monroe wanted the Doctrine to place him beside his mentor Jefferson and his friend Madison as the man who helped spread republicanism around the world. Monroe's hope that his Doctrine would shine as a beacon of republicanism in Latin America and around the world never materialized. In many respects the Doctrine did not spread republican ideals but served as a vehicle through which the United States exerted a softer kind of imperialism. Ironically the Monroe Doctrine became a tool to advance American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere which in many ways replaced the old

Monarchial imperialism that Monroe dedicated his life to defeating. Monroe's failed quest to become a champion of liberal republicanism ultimately shows how even the most famous political figures cannot always control their legacy.

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ABSTRACT

JAMES MONROE AND

HISTORICAL LEGACY

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This work examines James Monroe's attempt to craft his historical legacy. The American founders believed that they had created a new form of government dedicated to the protection of liberty. They dedicated their political lives to the promotion of this new kind of liberal republicanism. Thomas Jefferson taught James Monroe that his personal legacy would be inexorably tied to the American experiment. Monroe dedicated his life to championing the republican cause.

Monroe believed that his particular part in the promotion of the cause would be to help spread republican ideas around the globe. As a young minister to France during that nation's Revolution in the 1790s, Monroe's first attempt to spread republicanism nearly destroyed his career. For the rest of his life Monroe believed that the United States had not done enough to support the republican cause in France. During the next two decades as Monroe made his way up the political ladder he came to understand that only by first achieving high political office could he acquire the power to cement his legacy as a republican champion.

Monroe finally tried to make up for his and the country's failure in Revolutionary France and secure his legacy with the Monroe Doctrine. Monroe saw the Doctrine as his last, best chance to cement his legacy as a champion of the republican cause. He hoped to use it as a signal

to the world that the United States would support any people who hoped to throw off the shackles of monarchy and follow in the footsteps of the United States by embracing the republican experiment. He hoped that championing the republican experiment in the west would be his legacy to the world. It would allow him to stand beside men like his mentor Jefferson and be remembered as the Revolution's greatest diplomat helping to spread republicanism around the globe.