

International Climate and Foreign Policy

By Robert Adam McGill

Monticello High School, Class of 2017



When Monroe ascended to the presidency, turmoil in Europe had reshaped diplomatic relations. “The period has now arrived, when the United States must support their character and station among the nations of the earth, or submit to the most shameful degradation,”¹ a report by the United States Committee on Foreign Relations boldly declared in 1812. Soon after, the United States weathered the War of 1812, and battled Great Britain to a stalemate in order to protest the impressment of American sailors into the British navy and restrictions on American trade. In the midst of these problems, a history of ambassadorial duties was an asset to Monroe, as his experiences guided him through a complicated period of American foreign policy.

An ambassador to France in 1794 and 1803, Monroe had met with the Consul himself on the latter assignment to discuss the Louisiana Purchase and trade between the United States and France. Monroe had been appointed after Gouverneur Morris, the previous American minister to France, had angered the French people by his support for the monarchy. Monroe, whose more radical political views endeared him to the French Republicans, strengthened Franco-American relations in a way few others could. The meetings of Napoleon and Monroe ultimately led to tension with Great Britain, as Monroe was invited to the coronation of Napoleon, Britain’s enemy.

In the decades before 1816, Napoleonic France had fought a series of wars to control Europe, pitting the commercial and military power of France against that of Great Britain. To try to strangle Britain economically, Napoleon had imposed the European System, banning trade with Britain. The British responded in kind. In the midst of such tensions, American ships sought neutrality and trade. Impressment and economic restrictions imposed by Great Britain convinced Monroe that war was the best response. As Secretary of State during the War of 1812, Monroe helped guide the nation to enhanced international prestige, if not clear victory against Great Britain.



Napoléon à Sainte-Hélène by Francois-Joseph Sandmann

Image courtesy of <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

¹ “Proceedings June 25, 1812.” Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, 892.

European tensions ended with Napoleon's exile in to the island of Saint Helena in 1815 after the Battle of Waterloo, leaving Europe to rebuild and the United States to restructure its foreign policy. The subsequent Congress of Vienna carved up much of Europe, strengthening some countries and leaving Great Britain as the foremost power. British imperialism accelerated, with smaller holdings such as Mauritius and Madeira giving way to acquisitions such as Gambia in 1821. As Britain grew in strength, Spain weakened. Latin American colonies rose in rebellion, with Argentina breaking away from a Spanish government shaken by French occupation and economic troubles.² The United States also seized on Spain's weakness, moving towards the possession of Florida, a Spanish colony.

Peace in Europe was a relief to Monroe. As Napoleon had controlled increasing amounts of territory, Monroe had felt that the French Revolution had lost some of the Republicanism which he supported. After seeing many countries during his time as an ambassador, Monroe knew the importance of the balance of power, and how it had served the United States in the past. The protection of the American republic was foremost in Monroe's mind when dealing with foreign affairs, and France under Napoleon had become the specter of imperialism and dictatorship.

European peace altered trade and foreign relations. The end of the Napoleonic Wars meant the resumption of trade with Europe, creating a large demand for American cotton and grain. The eruption of the Tambora volcano on the Iberian Peninsula led to cold temperature and bad harvests in 1816, causing the 'year without a summer,' as some called it.³ Yet southern plantations large and small continued to produce crops such as cotton for sale. Highland itself regularly produced thousands of pounds of tobacco annually. Trade proved both a strong connection to the world outside of the United States and a disadvantage, as the United States imported more than it exported. As European commercial powerhouses flooded countries with cheap imports from companies such as the British East India Company, the United States government passed the Tariff of 1816 as part of the American System of John C. Calhoun and Henry Clay to protect American infant industries, in some ways heeding the warnings of Washington to avoid the "baneful foe of foreign influence" in his 1796 Farewell Address in favor of economic development.⁴ America remained aloof from divisive foreign affairs, instead cultivating commercial and friendly relations whenever possible.

Economy

At the turn of the century, the United States economy began to turn in a new direction as well. The Market Revolution, an expansion of internal and external markets and the beginnings of industrialization fueled by innovation and new transportation technologies, began in 1800. As industry expanded, agriculture also evolved. The economy began to develop along sectional

² Noble Cunningham, *The Presidency of James Monroe* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 23.

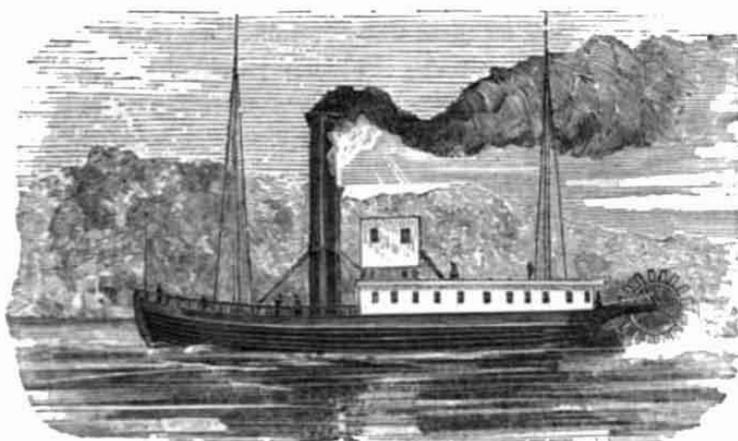
³ "Year Without a Summer: Effects of Tambora Volcanic Eruption on Iberian Peninsula Studied for First Time." *ScienceDaily*. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/02/0902251161422.htm> (accessed April 28, 2016).

⁴ "Washington's Farewell Address, 1796." The Avalon Project. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washington.asp (accessed June 6, 2016).

lines, with the budding industrial revolution taking shape in the North while agricultural demand fueled the rural Southern states.

The War of 1812 left the United States deep in debt and aware of the need for expansion in economy and infrastructure. Seeking to protect domestic industry, the government adopted the American System in 1816, which both imposed a tariff and organized the Second Bank of the United States. The war had revealed the need for a uniform currency, and the bank was designed to both produce a common currency and ensure that common bank-notes were backed by specie. The bank was chartered on April 10th, 1816 as a private, profit-seeking corporation that collected taxes for the government and could pay government debt. Tax collection quickly made the bank hated, and the participation of the national bank in a speculative fever after the end of the Napoleonic Wars led to a distrust of the bank, eventually brought forward in the years of Andrew Jackson. In its early years, the bank served an important role in helping dispense loans for people to buy western lands, contributing to the ever-expanding movement of people there.

In the North, industry expanded rapidly --the construction of canals and roads such as the National Road from Cumberland to the Old Northwest brought many isolated farmers into larger markets, creating demand for manufactured goods. In 1815, the first American railroad charter was granted to John Stephens of New Jersey, the beginning of the revolutionary change railroads brought. Massachusetts became the most industrious and wealthy state, with the highest number of wealthy corporations in 1816. New York was also commercialized, with ports benefiting from the skill of American ship builders. Canals contributed to the invention of the steamboat, which allowed crops from the rapidly expanding West to be brought to urban centers.



ENTERPRISE ON HER FAST TRIP TO LOUISVILLE, 1815.

The jet propulsion powered steamboat Enterprise
Image courtesy of <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

The *Enterprise*, a steamboat which served in the defense of New Orleans as the first steamboat used in combat, was one of many ships traversing American canals in Monroe's time. The *Enterprise* ferried goods and passengers, part of the steady flow of people into the West, including new states such as Alabama and Georgia. Western settlement brought a new market for goods and source of crops.

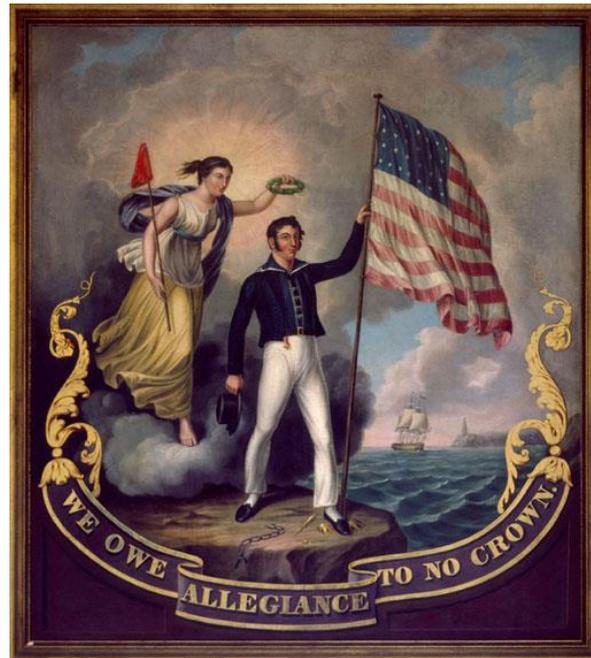
The "outwork" system developed in the North, by which many people manufactured in their own homes, diffusing technical skills throughout the North. However, the Market Revolution pushed businessmen to increase efficiency and reduce cost, leading to the subdivision of work and the consolidation of the manufacturing process into factories. These developments changed the nature of work and supplanted traditional crafts. Amidst the new economic landscape, mill girls went to work, people dreamed of opportunity, and the image of the self-made man became popular. Companies such as E. Remington and Sons and the Boston Gaslight Company emerged in 1816, pioneering advances in firearms and city lighting, respectively. After suffering from debt after the War of 1812, the United States economy rebounded, profiting from demand resulting from the destruction in Europe after Napoleon. Despite new advances, the United States still lagged behind Europe in manufacturing. Agriculture, however, was a different story.

Beneath the Mason-Dixon Line, America was rural, commercial, and focused on agriculture. There was a huge demand in Europe for American cotton. The cotton gin, invented in 1793, drove Southern plantations, facilitated by a growing internal slave trade. Though large plantations dominated the South, many Southerners owned only a small number of slaves or none at all. According to the 1810 census, Monroe owned forty-nine slaves at Highland. Planters in cotton-growing climates seized the best land and began cultivating cotton, making the Cotton Kingdom the most dynamic feature of the 19th century American economy. The Carolinas became rich in cotton, while other states cultivated hemp, tobacco, and flax. Since not all Americans practiced proper crop rotation, tobacco crops declined in the poor soil, supplanted by cotton. Most of the South was rich in natural resources, and many of the small farmers of the South were self-sufficient, creating less of a desire for industry within the South. The Market Revolution and Cotton Kingdom created different but profitable economic systems in the North and South, and fueled the international trade of the United States as well as domestic development.

Social Nationalism

Economic opportunity and the availability of land became part of the way citizens perceived America. After the War of 1812 and General Andrew Jackson's rout of British troops in New Orleans in 1815, a pride in the country and what America symbolized to many people arose within America, a Social Nationalism based on passion and anticipation for the future rather than the true experiences or conditions of the nation. Unifying victories in the War of 1812 and the survival of the American form of government created a confidence in national symbols and belief in divine right and destiny.

Monroe participated in the patriotic fervor and sweeping rhetoric of the time. In his inaugural address of 1817, Monroe claimed that no government had ever commenced under “auspices so favorable,” and that individuals should look on the “proud spectacle” of the Union with happiness.⁵ Monroe, who had served under George Washington in 1776, shared confidence in new national symbols and hope. Monroe’s optimism may also have been a result of the Era of Good Feelings in politics, categorized by the eminence of the old Republican Party over the Federalists and a desire for cooperation.



A painting by John Archibald Woodside c. 1814 stressed the symbolism of America’s struggles with Britain. Culture reflected the romanticized view of America. In this instance, the descending lady of liberty and the laurel wreath signify divine right and victory, while broken chains at the soldier’s feet capture the vision of America held by some Americans.

Image courtesy of <http://npg.si.edu/exhibit/1812/pop-ups/05-06.html>

Westward expansion embodied opportunity for many American citizens. The self-confidence of the people led a flood of people over the Appalachians and even into areas not belonging to America, such as the seizure of Baton Rouge in West Florida in 1810. Land became inextricably linked with the idea of freedom and independence. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803, negotiated in part by Monroe and roughly doubling the amount of American land, brought a flood of settlers. Rapidly growing newspapers spread patriotic messages. National pride lay in the perception of the flag, a “lovely messenger of death” for the enemies of freedom in the words of poet Joseph Rodman Drake in his early 19th century poem, *The American Flag*.⁶ In 1816, Monroe rose to the presidency amidst a changing economy, increasing foreign involvement, and optimism.

⁵ “First Inaugural Address of James Monroe,” The Avalon Project. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/monroe1.asp (accessed April 28, 2016).

⁶ “The American Flag, by Joseph Rodman Drake.” *Poetry Archive*. http://www.poetry-archive.com/d/the_american_flag.html (accessed April 28, 2016).

Works Cited

"America's Best History – U.S. History Timeline: The 1810's – The War of 1812."
<http://americasbesthistory.com/abhtimeline1810.html> (accessed April 28, 2016).

"The Avalon Project – Washington's Farewell Address 1796." http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washington.asp (accessed June 6, 2016).

"The Avalon Project – First Inaugural Address of James Monroe."
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/monroe1.asp (accessed April 28, 2016).

"Biographies of the Secretaries of State: James Monroe (1758-1831)."
<https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/monroe-james> (accessed April 28, 2016).

British Empire: Entering and Exiting the Empire.
<http://www.britishempire.co.uk/timeline/colonies.htm> (accessed June 6, 2016).

Drake, Joseph Rodman. "The American Flag" *Poetry Archive*. http://www.poetry-archive.com/d/the_american_flag.html (accessed April 28, 2016).

"Early Corporate America: The Largest Industries and Companies in Corporate America." *The Finance Professionals' Post*. <http://post.nyssa-news/2012/09/early-corporate-america-the-largest-industries-before-1860.html>. (accessed June 6, 2016).

Foner, Eric. *Give me Liberty! An American History*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2011.

"James Monroe and Napoleon," Shannon Selin. 2015. <http://shannonselin.com/2015/09/james-monroe-and-napoleon> (accessed April 28, 2016).

John, Russell. *The history of the war...[of] 1812*. Hartford, Connecticut: B. & J. Russell, 1815.

Kohn, Hans. "Nationalism." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*.
<http://www.britannica.com/topic/nationalism#ref539449> (accessed April 28, 2016).

"The Second Bank of the United States." *Boundless Open Textbook*.
<https://www.boundless.com/u-s-history/textbooks/boundless-u-s-history-textbook/democracy-in-america-1815-1840-12/economic-nationalism-104/the-second-bank-of-the-united-states-561-9446/> (accessed April 28, 2016).

"Year Without a Summer: Effects of Tambora Volcanic Eruption on Iberian Peninsula Studied for First Time." *ScienceDaily*. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/02/0902251161422.htm> (accessed April 28, 2016).