

**History 282 US Diplomatic  
Discussion Transcript for September 8, 2020  
Jacksonian Diplomacy**

**Main Reading: Chapter 4, Herring**

The story of American diplomacy in the 1820s and 1830s is not a simple one. There was certainly exuberance and some hubris following the “victory” in the War of 1812. But there was also plenty of lingering fear and anxiety. The United States was expanding, but it was not secure –at least not according to the statesmen who ran it. Perhaps their paranoia was just a cover for greed or racism, but Herring’s deep study of episodes like the Monroe Doctrine or even the foreign policy of Andrew Jackson’s two presidential terms illustrate how multi-dimensional and fast-moving these events appeared to the participants. It could feel bewildering. And yet there were strategic architects like John Quincy Adams or even Henry Clay who appeared more than capable of forging consistency out of the chaos of early nineteenth-century world affairs.

The following selections come from student comments & questions.

**SPIRIT OF THE AGE –EXPANSION OF TRADE OR SAFETY FROM THREATS?**

STUDENT COMMENT: “The “spirit of the age” (pg. 157) of 1817-1831 was one of a triumphant American pride, in the national development, expansion, and commercial success. America entered the post-Napoleonic-war world with a rapidly growing population, a robust economy, and ready to take its place as a “second-rank power” (pg. 136). The Madison and John Quincy Adams administrations emphasized a more traditional foreign policy, at least in décor (pg. 140) while maintaining a strong, active commitment to protecting American commerce. Fleets were dispersed to areas of US interest, and “defended U.S. shipping” and “looked for new commercial opportunities,” while also taking on an activist role fighting the slave trade (pg. 141). The passage of reciprocal trade legislation was designed to allow American merchants to penetrate new markets, where, under “anything like fair and equal terms,” they would be able to “secure a monopoly” through skill (pg. 142). The expansion of trade and commerce were one of the cornerstones of the diplomacy of John Quincy Adams, molding the United States’ relationship with France (pg. 142), Latin America and Britain (pg. 143), and even with Russia (pg. 157).”

STUDENT COMMENT: “One phrase of this chapter really stuck with me because I think it explains the main diplomatic goals of the expansionism that was rampant in the late 1700s and the 1800s. The phrase is as follows, “U.S leaders continued to pursue security though expansion.” (144-145). Reading Herring’s book so far, expansion, from a diplomatic perspective, was about keeping the influence of European countries away from U.S borders. In early years of the nation, U.S feared foreign intervention in Indian affairs and did everything they could to secure the land up to the Mississippi river. During the Louisiana crisis that led to the Louisiana purchase, the “tense situation” in New Orleans along with the threat of French presence right on their western border was why Jefferson to acted (104). Lastly, with the Monroe Doctrine, Monroe saw the reemergence of Europe in Latin American affairs as a “threat” and took

what he saw was the necessary steps to stop it (154). This understanding that security is behind a lot of the expansionist efforts is, for me, only truly seen so predominantly when looking through a diplomatic lens. In high school, when we were taught about expansion, we were told it was “manifest destiny”, that moving west was part of an ideology that Americans were destined to civilize the new frontier and its people. In that classroom setting, the international factors were barely discussed. Finally, I wonder if the “manifest destiny” ideology sprang out of the need for people to move into the newly annexed areas or if it was too part of the want to annex them in the first place.”

### **THE MONROE DOCTRINE (1823)**

STUDENT COMMENT: “Another goal of Adams’s was to cement U.S. identity and to further its reach. As the Monroe Doctrine put forth its “non-colonization” and “non-intervention” principles, it not only addressed the threats of imperialism by Russia or colonial regimes in South America by other European powers, but expressed what Herring called “America’s ambitions in the Pacific Northwest and its renewed concerns for its security” (157). This contributed to Adams’s desire to separate the United States from Europe’s influence, since the Monroe Doctrine warned against European interference in the Western Hemisphere and was a statement made without British involvement. Additionally, in regard to the doctrine’s implied commitment to expansion, Adams later sought to extend U.S. influence to Latin America through the spread of the American ideology and its institutions, a progression of his former goal of “our proper dominion to be the continent of North America” (139). Overall, the Monroe Doctrine is an important proponent of Adams’s policy goals, a statement of U.S. policy that would set an independent course for the nation and claim a new role as protector of the Western Hemisphere.”

STUDENT COMMENT: “The Monroe Doctrine was one of the most significant policies adopted in the early infancy of the new nation. Monroe asserted that the political systems of the Old and New Worlds should not meddle in the affairs of each other; that the American continents were not to be subject to European colonization; and that the U.S. would not interfere with the internal affairs of Europe. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams used the Monroe Doctrine’s emphasis on neutrality to capitalize on the commercial and territorial expansion of the United States. For example, despite the temptations of meddling in the internal affairs of Greece and Latin America when those regions fomented with rebellion, Adams adopted a cautious policy of “impartial neutrality” to insure economic advantage in the case of Greece and to obtain hoped for territorial expansion (Florida), in the case of Latin America.”

STUDENT COMMENT: “The Monroe Doctrine declared that the US would defend the independence of Latin America against foreign powers, shutting doors for European powers, but opening more for American presence in the western hemisphere. "Implicit in the Monroe Doctrine was a commitment to the extension of the ideology and institutions of the United States" (158) which Adams strove for both while serving Monroe and during his own presidency. He supported religious initiatives as a major extension of American ideals, wherein religious missions were an important part of Adams and Clay's foreign policy (159). They also wanted to encourage republicanism in Latin

America in efforts to prevent countries from falling back under European influence or threatening US interests. This, Herring asserts, often led to interfering with Latin American countries' internal affairs, rather than encouraging change (160). For example, US influence over Bolivar's power. Despite claiming to come to the defense of Latin America in the event of foreign interference when it came to Latin American domestic affairs, Adams "never permitted the cause of freedom to interfere with important interests ... [and] stuck to a policy of 'strict and impartial neutrality'" (161). The United States promoted relations within the hemisphere out of own self-interest, rejecting requests for alliances and only securing relations so long as it benefited America, such as ports being open to US trade. The Monroe Doctrine enabled Adams to strengthen US presence and power in Latin America."

### **ASSESSING JOHN QUINCY ADAMS**

STUDENT COMMENT: "John Quincy Adams' goals when serving as Secretary of State and later as President were manifold, but often shared a common thread in searching to advance either US expansionist or commercial interests. Herring notes at various points in this chapter that Adams' ultimate goals included gaining control of Spanish Florida as well as Texas, asserting US claims to the Pacific Northwest, opening the British West Indies to American ships, establishing reciprocity of trade with other large nations, preventing newborn Latin American nations from falling back under the control of a monarchy (either domestic or European in origin), and accomplishing these objectives without confrontation with the European powers that sought to prevent the United States from doing so. In essence, Adams aimed to take without giving affront. While the Monroe Doctrine had little to do with the more trade-oriented of these goals, articulating and perpetuating the Doctrine served both to defend US national security by seeking to prevent European powers reestablishing colonies on America's doorstep, and to assert the United States as a preeminent power in the Western Hemisphere, which would later allow for more aggressive expansion. Thus, the Monroe Doctrine, while of little consequence to US commercial goals under Adams, was critical to his objectives of providing for future expansion and distinguishing the Old World from the New."

STUDENT COMMENT: "After the War of 1812, the United States was in a precious position, facing multiple threats around its periphery (Herring, 144), not only the rising power vacuum in Latin America that arose from Spain's weakness but also the interest of Old-World colonizers in newly-independent Latin American states. John Quincy Adams' role as Secretary of State and later President, and his responses to unexpected events in this period, truly amazed me. Adams' artful diplomacy turned unforeseeable Andrew Jackson's military success into a huge territorial change, as defined in the Adams-Onís Treaty (Herring, 148-149), and more importantly, consolidates America's heartland from foreign threats. With the heartland secured, America's interest shifted outwards, and once again, Adams' skillful diplomacy laid out the Monroe Doctrine, the country's first claim to a sphere of influence. This policy was of significant importance, as it defined "the spirit of the age", in which the U.S. expressed a new level of assertiveness in international relations (Herring, 157). I believe it was a turning point in

American's diplomatic history, as Monroe Doctrine marked the country's shift in psychological orientation away from Europe and towards the Americas.”

### **ASSESSING ANDREW JACKSON**

STUDENT COMMENT: “Andrew Jackson, after he took office, was also very much interested in expanding territories and US power abroad like his predecessors. He had similar ideas of expanding trade and keeping foreign countries away from the American continent. Although he had never served as a diplomat or secretary of state, he rightly understood "foreign policy as essential to domestic well-being and gave it high priority" (p.165). However, his style of pursuing the goals was different from Adams' and Madison's. Knowing his unique career as general from the Southwest and his bold and brutal characteristics, his style of implementing foreign policies was more aggressive and assertive. To the American West, ignoring earlier treaties with Native Americans, Jackson robustly removed the Indians and pushed them further away into the West in 1830. He also wanted to acquire Texas from Mexico, yet his attempts in 1829, the Poinsett Mission and Butler Mission, to negotiate for Texas aggravated the relationship with Mexico. To the American East, Jackson, the man of action, did not fear using force against European empires when he felt American national interests and pride were being assaulted. He "ordered the navy to prepare for war" when France refused to pay the claims that it agreed to compensate in 1831 and Jackson lost his patience (p. 167). He also successfully settled down the issue in the British West Indies and signed the treaty "providing for reciprocity in direct trade and access to the Black Sea" with Russia (p. 168). On the other hand, Jackson's foreign policies were sometimes ironically contrary to the Monroe Doctrine. He secretly assisted in rebuilding the Turkish navy and established diplomatic relations with Turkey. Moreover, Jackson did nothing when England occupied the Falkland, obvious violation of the doctrine, and Argentine "asked for U.S. support under the Monroe Doctrine" (p. 171).”

STUDENT COMMENT: “Before winning the election of 1828, Andrew Jackson was an army general known for his impulsivity. During the Monroe presidency, Jackson was directed “to invade Florida and ‘pacify’ the Seminoles” (Herring 146). It was during this mission that he destroyed the Seminole village and had two British men executed, after accusing them of “barbarity” for assisting the Seminoles. This aggression was common during his presidency as well. He focused on the expansion of U.S. commerce and hoped to gain respect for the United States abroad. Like Jefferson, Jackson was not afraid to threaten violence when he felt America had been wronged, such as in his dealings with the Malayan pirates in 1831. Herring also says that Jackson was “committed to extending American influence into remote areas” (Herring 169), a goal of Manifest Destiny that began with Jefferson. He accomplished this by signing into effect ten treaties during his presidency and establishing trade relations in the Middle East and Asia. Though defending the Monroe Doctrine was not one of Jackson's priorities while president, as seen in his dealings with Argentina in 1833 when they asked for support against the British in the Falkland/Malvinas “under the Monroe Doctrine” (Herring 171), he still attempted to extend U.S. ideals throughout North America, which is seen during the forcible removal of the Native Americans and his attempted purchase of Texas.