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# “Motives of Peculiar Urgency”: Local Diplomacy in Louisiana, 1803–1821

Peter J. Kastor

ROBERT R. Livingston and James Monroe were nothing if not diplomatic. This was true in dealing with their superiors in Washington just as it was in their negotiations with foreign emissaries. No sooner had they signed their names to the Louisiana Purchase in the spring of 1803 than they rushed a letter home explaining their actions. Writing to Secretary of State James Madison, Livingston and Monroe (the American minister to France and the minister plenipotentiary, respectively) acknowledged that “An acquisition of so great an extent was, we well know, not contemplated by our appointment; but we are persuaded that the Circumstances and Considerations which induced us to make it, will justify us.”<sup>1</sup>

Monroe and Livingston had good reason to be concerned. When Madison and President Thomas Jefferson had dispatched Monroe to Paris only two months earlier, they had made clear both the breadth of their strategic outlook and the limits of their territorial ambition. Jefferson and Madison hoped to secure the cession of New Orleans and the Floridas (an ill-defined geography following the Gulf Coast east of the Mississippi River). Instead, Napoleon offered all of France’s holdings in North America, and the Americans soon learned he would sell nothing less.<sup>2</sup>

Most studies that consider the Mississippi Valley as a factor in American foreign policy and domestic politics end here, with the transfer of Louisiana to the United States.<sup>3</sup> But American policymakers hardly stopped worrying

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<sup>1</sup> Monroe and Livingston to James Madison, May 13, 1803, in Mary A. Hackett et al., eds., *The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series*, 5 vols. to date (Charlottesville, 1984–) (hereafter cited as *PJM-SS*), 4:601.

<sup>2</sup> Madison to Livingston and Monroe, Mar. 2, 1803, *ibid.*, 364–78. For the diplomats’ comments on the final form of the Purchase, see Livingston to Madison, May 12, 1803, *ibid.*, 590–94, and Monroe to Jefferson, May 18, 1803, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection, reel 45.

<sup>3</sup> This holds true for most historians of American foreign policy, domestic politics, and political culture. For examples, see Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 202–03; Merrill D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the*

about Louisiana in 1803, for they considered the Louisiana Purchase a flawed document and not just because it failed to deliver the Floridas.<sup>4</sup> With the acquisition of “so great an extent” of land came a corresponding increase in population that the United States had to govern. The boundaries of that land remained in dispute, and the loyalty of that population could not be taken for granted.

In the process of extending American sovereignty to encompass both Louisiana and its residents, American foreign relations acquired a vital—and revealing—domestic component. Although historians of American borderlands have called attention to the diplomatic conditions of the North American interior, other scholars have rarely incorporated their work. Historians of the early American republic have certainly argued for the intersection of foreign policy and domestic affairs, but the linkage they describe usually emphasizes the domestic system that policymakers hoped to preserve through a successful foreign policy, not the way that foreign policy and domestic governance overlapped daily. That interpretations focusing on matters of ideology dominate the field of early American policymaking goes a long way toward explaining this perspective. So, too, does the emphasis on elite negotiations with European powers.<sup>5</sup> And while diplomatic historians have shown little interest in domestic affairs, social and cultural historians have by and large eschewed a detailed consideration of diplomacy because it so often seems the preserve of the policy-making elite.

A focus on the American borderlands reveals a fundamentally different process at work in the early American republic, a process in which diplomacy was inextricably linked to daily life. Nowhere was this more true than in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Instead of acting through officials dedicated exclusively to diplomatic negotiations, policymakers in Washington had to rely on—and contend with—civil and military officials on the periphery charged

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*New Nation: A Biography* (Oxford, 1970), 760–62; and David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill, 1997), 264–65, 275.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander DeConde, *This Affair of Louisiana* (New York, 1976), 213–16; Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford, 1990), 117–56. For studies that have considered the long-term tensions associated with the Louisiana Purchase, see James E. Lewis, Jr., *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783–1829* (Chapel Hill, 1998); Peter S. Onuf, “The Expanding Union,” in David Thomas Konig, ed., *Devising Liberty: Preserving and Creating Freedom in the New American Republic* (Stanford, 1995), 50–80; Peter Onuf and Nicholas G. Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World: The Law of Nations in an Age of Revolutions, 1776–1814* (Madison, 1993), 104–13.

<sup>5</sup> For recent surveys that have examined the problems facing the study of early American foreign relations, see Kinley Brauer, “The Need For a Synthesis of American Foreign Relations, 1815–1861,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 14 (1994), 467–76, and “A Call to Revolution: A Roundtable on Early U. S. Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History*, 22 (1998), 63–120. For studies that consider either borderland diplomacy or domestic issues of foreign relations, see Philip Coolidge Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands: The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819* (Berkeley, 1939); Thomas D. Clark and John D. W. Guice, *Frontiers in Conflict: The Old Southwest, 1795–1830* (Albuquerque, 1989); Lewis, *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*; and Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., and Gene A. Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800–1821* (Tuscaloosa, 1997).

with numerous responsibilities. Although federal leaders never surrendered authority altogether, their delegates enjoyed considerable latitude so long as their own interpretation of national policies coincided with sentiments in the cabinet. Meanwhile, frontier negotiating partners including Indian nations, European colonial officials, and the leaders of the emerging successor states to the disintegrating Spanish empire all attempted to press their own terms on the United States officials stationed on the borderlands. Diplomacy took shape in this confluence of local disputes and international revolution.

This article considers that process by looking at Louisiana (both the State of Louisiana and its jurisdictional predecessor, the Territory of Orleans) during the two decades following the Louisiana Purchase. Louisiana became home to a system that can be labeled "local diplomacy," in which international relations on the borderlands ran parallel to but were never entirely distinct from the elite negotiations that are the familiar stuff of diplomatic history. Foreign policy played itself out on the borderlands, and frontier residents in turn shaped the course of American foreign relations.

Louisiana was surrounded by a European presence, much of it Spanish. Scholars have written social histories of the intercultural contact that abounded on American frontiers and have provided a particularly sophisticated understanding of the dynamics that reigned as people of French, Spanish, British, African, and Native American ancestry came into contact with one another.<sup>6</sup> This study instead explores a subject that has received less scholarly attention: federal policymaking, both foreign and domestic. Louisiana reveals the workings of domestic governance and foreign relations, with diplomatic, political, and cultural forces overlapping in ways that seemed all too apparent to people in the early republic. As a result, the major players in this story are federal policymakers in the United States and the residents of Louisiana.<sup>7</sup>

Critical to an understanding of local diplomacy is a shift away from seeing local negotiation in strictly local terms or referring to domestic pressures only when they limited the options available to federal policymakers. While federal policymakers were often frustrated by the give-and-take that characterized contact on American frontiers, the case of Louisiana shows that they were just as likely to seek ways of exploiting those conditions to realize their national goals. This perspective in turn suited the interests of borderland residents who considered themselves entitled to a diplomatic role.

<sup>6</sup> For studies of intercultural contact, see Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), 814–41; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 1991); and Gregory H. Nobles, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest* (New York, 1997), xii, 3–16. For examples from the Lower Mississippi Valley, see Gary B. Mills, *The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color* (Baton Rouge, 1977), and Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> The sources are likewise rooted in the United States. French and especially Spanish sources provide a wealth of material on borderland dynamics but are of less use for an examination of the federal structure in the U. S.

It was in this broad array of political, racial, and administrative realities that American foreign relations took form. Local diplomacy did not always drive national affairs, but federal leaders did consistently consider local factors in crafting their diplomatic strategies. Members of the Jefferson and Madison administrations believed that local diplomacy provided a viable means to achieve the nation's diplomatic ends, and only when local diplomacy threatened those objectives did Madison and his successor, Monroe, attempt to stop the practice. The task facing officials in Washington and residents on the frontier was to make local diplomacy work to their benefit. This project naturally unleashed tension as numerous groups articulated their own foreign policies. Consequently, United States foreign policy on the Southwestern periphery was anything but tidy. It was also anything but peripheral.

In December 1803 the United States took charge of Louisiana and directed hundreds of Americans with governing and defending the new territory. The central figure in that process was William C. C. Claiborne, the territorial governor. At first glance, Claiborne's goals seemed thoroughly domestic. He attempted to craft a public policy that would stimulate the loyalty and national identity of white Louisianians, foster a republican political culture, and restructure a racial system that in the opinion of many white Americans allowed dangerous liberties for nonwhites.<sup>8</sup> In his efforts to realize these domestic goals, however, Claiborne soon emerged as one of the most important figures in American foreign relations. He negotiated agreements with Spanish officials in West Florida and East Texas; he determined commercial policy with the various European consuls stationed in New Orleans; and he coordinated activities with American consuls in the Spanish Gulf Coast and the Caribbean.<sup>9</sup>

Claiborne's authority did not stem from any personal dynamism or genius. Although a loyal, reliable, and capable appointee who managed to navigate difficult circumstances, he was also a rather thin-skinned individual

<sup>8</sup> "Louisianians" refers to the people who lived in Louisiana before 1803 and whose nationality was transformed by the Louisiana Purchase. Although the largest constituent group consisted of Creoles (people born in Louisiana), Louisiana was also home to thousands of immigrants from other parts of the Americas as well as migrants from France and the French Caribbean who became some of Louisiana's leading entrepreneurs and most vocal politicians. "Americans" refers to people whose citizenship predated the Louisiana Purchase and whose nationality was unaffected by the cession.

<sup>9</sup> Vincente Folch to Claiborne, Mar. 15, 1804, in *Debates and Proceedings of the Congress of the United States*, 42 vols. (Washington, D. C., 1834–1856) (hereafter cited as *Annals of Congress*), 14 (Ninth Congress), 1177–715, 8; Claiborne to Folch, June 1, 1804, in *The Letter Books of William C. C. Claiborne, 1801–1816*, ed. Dunbar Rowland, 6 vols. (Jackson, Miss., 1917) (hereafter cited as *Claiborne Letterbooks*), 2:221; Claiborne to Folch, Apr. 26, 1805, in Clarence Edward Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, 28 vols. (Washington, D. C., 1934–1975) (hereafter cited as *Territorial Papers*), 9:444–45; Claiborne to Madison, Jan. 7, 1806, *ibid.*, 557–58; Folch to Claiborne, Feb. 18, 1807, *ibid.*, 4:138–39; Claiborne to William Savage, Nov. 10, 1809, *ibid.*, 5:3–5; Claiborne to Vincent Gray, Nov. 10, 1809, *ibid.*, 5:5–6. See also Claiborne to David Porter, Nov. 10, 1809, *ibid.*, 5:6–7, and Claiborne to Robert Smith, Nov. 12, 1809, *ibid.*, 5:8–9.

of modest talents and ambitions. Understanding Claiborne demands a structural and contextual approach instead of a biographical one, for his influence was rooted in the functional realities of the territorial system as well as the international situation of the early republic, and he became emblematic of the attitude toward international relations that prevailed on the frontiers of the United States.

When Claiborne took charge (first in 1803 as one of the two commissioners assigned to oversee the transfer of Louisiana from France and then in 1804 as governor of the Territory of Orleans), Louisiana was at the confluence of international affairs. The war in Europe, more than a decade old by 1803, seemed close at hand as commercial vessels and warships passed through the Gulf Coast and the mouth of the Mississippi River. With the Louisiana Purchase guaranteeing special commercial provisions for France, a series of French consuls demanded the governor's attention. The greatest danger remained the proximity of Spanish forces and the ongoing dispute over the extent of the Louisiana Purchase. Spanish soldiers and civil officials, the residue of a regime that had governed Louisiana from 1768 until 1803, left New Orleans slowly and only after repeated demands from the American government. With Louisiana pinched between the Spanish colonies of Texas and West Florida, American officials considered Louisiana a precarious holding. It was this sense of insecurity that made the acquisition of West Florida such a high priority in the Jefferson and Madison administrations.

Meanwhile, the Louisiana Purchase created new domestic demands. The United States was hardly the first empire in the Americas. At the same time, the novelty of the federal regime, the explicit rejection of European colonial models, and the implicit strains between an expansive empire and a republican polity combined to make governing Louisiana a daunting task for the United States. Louisiana's population only complicated this process. White Louisianians seemed at best unfamiliar with republican government and at worst potentially disloyal. People of color, whether enslaved or free, constituted a majority of the population, and when the new cadre of public officials in Louisiana was not worrying about the political attachment of white Louisianians, they were concerned about the control of nonwhites.

Rather than see domestic and international tasks in conflict, Claiborne believed they were complementary and mutually beneficial, given Louisiana's multinational circumstances. Why would he have seen things otherwise? After all, Claiborne's superior was none other than the nation's chief diplomat, the secretary of state. That simple relationship between the territorial government and the State Department was critical, because it created an inseparable linkage between frontier governance and foreign policy.

This perspective—one that saw foreign policy and domestic governance bound together—was hardly limited to the territorial governors who, like Claiborne, reported to the secretary of state. It was equally prevalent in Washington. Historians have usually described the State Department in ways that ignore its considerable domestic powers (the case with most scholars of American foreign relations) or with little regard to diplomatic context (often

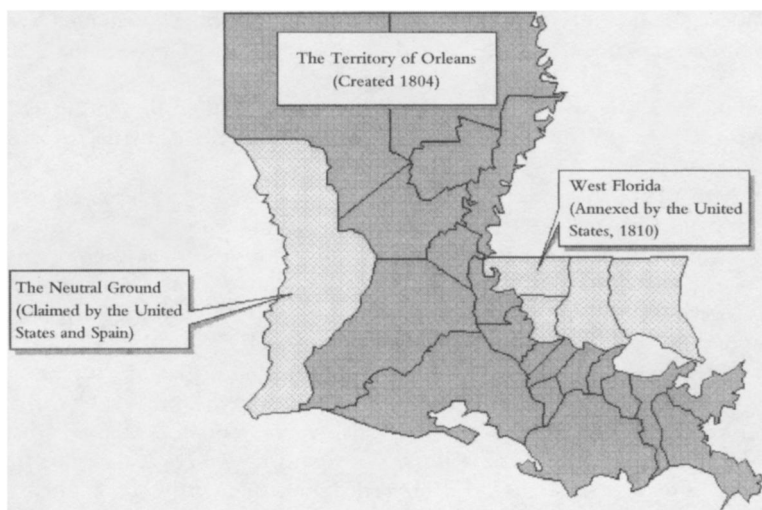


FIGURE I  
LOUISIANA, INCLUDING CONTESTED CLAIMS.

The dark portion shows areas of unchallenged American sovereignty. The internal divisions indicate individual parishes, the seats of local administration.

the case for historians of the federal territories), rarely considering how these two realms of policymaking came together.<sup>10</sup> American secretaries of state (Madison from 1801 to 1808, Robert Smith from 1809 to 1811, and Monroe from 1811 through Louisiana statehood in 1812) could not afford the luxury of such a distinction. When Presidents Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe argued that foreign policy needed to promote domestic ends, they did so from their own experiences as secretaries of state, when they had doubled as civil administrators with direct charge over the nation's far-flung territories. The vast majority of civil officials—from governor to coroner—reported to the secretary of state, and all of them became potential instruments of foreign policy. The State Department's expansive bureaucracy on the territorial periphery stood in marked contrast to its diminutive staff at the political center of Washington, D. C., consisting of only a few clerks and couriers to assist the secretary.<sup>11</sup> The territorial bureaucracy filled a role similar to that of the young republic's consuls and overseas ministers, implementing national policy through direct contact with representatives of foreign powers.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to the tendency of diplomatic historians to ignore the State Department's domestic role, historians of American domestic governance have followed suit. Leonard D. White, whose work remains the point of reference for most studies of public administration, discussed the State Department in depth without once addressing territorial administration. See White, *The Jeffersonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1801–1829* (New York, 1951), 187–202.

<sup>11</sup> *PJM-SS*, 1:xxiii; White, *Jeffersonians*, 187.

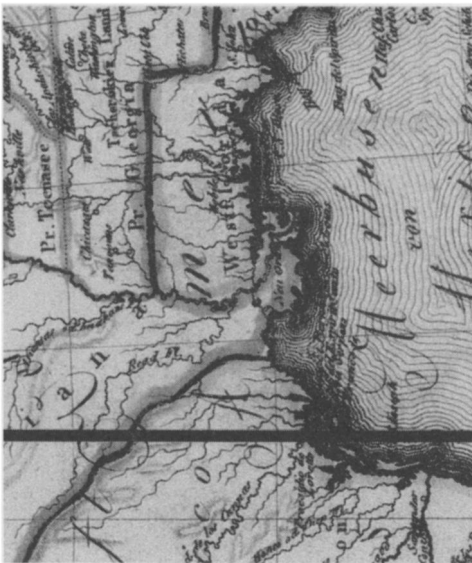


FIGURE II(b)

JOSEPH MARX LIECHTENSTERN, NORD AMERICA MIT BENÜTZUNG DER NEUESTEN UND ZUVERLÄSSIGSTEN QUELLEN UND HÜLFSMITTEL (1804), COURTESY OF GEOGRAPHY AND MAP DIVISION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

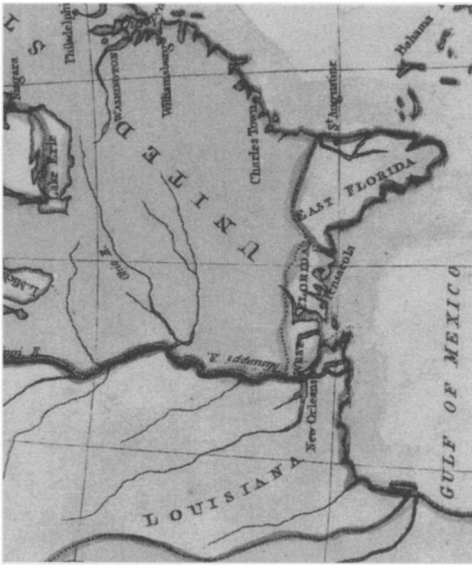


FIGURE II(a)

JOHN LUFFEMAN, A MAP OF NORTH AMERICA (LONDON, 1803), COURTESY OF GEOGRAPHY AND MAP DIVISIONS, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Competing Definitions of Louisiana. These maps, both created at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, indicate not only the disputed western boundary of Louisiana, but also the clear distinction between Louisiana and the Floridas, a distinction that American policymakers accepted with the greatest reluctance.



Granted, the mixed responsibilities of the State Department were not the only reason why American leaders saw connections between foreign and domestic affairs. Americans consistently argued that foreign policy should satisfy domestic goals. Nonetheless, the absence of any clear administrative distinction between domestic and foreign policy reinforced the philosophical connection that many Americans saw between a vigorous foreign policy and a harmonious union.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time that secretaries of state acted through the civil officials who populated the territorial government, the heads of the Treasury, War, and Navy Departments created their own networks in the Southwest. While these federal leaders exercised only limited influence in the states, they faced the daily challenges of governance in the territories. Disputed land claims as well as abundant unclaimed land employed numerous Treasury Department commissioners. The majority of the United States army was stationed on the western frontier, with the largest concentration serving in Louisiana alongside a sizable naval presence operating from the port of New Orleans.<sup>13</sup> The problem these federal authorities faced was how to meet their constitutional responsibility to govern the territories given the considerable delays in communication. With a transit time between Washington and New Orleans of almost a month, correspondence to the periphery of the United States took almost as long as diplomatic correspondence with Europe, a more than ironic similarity between transatlantic and transcontinental diplomatic affairs.

The problem of communication had bedeviled every power that had attempted to govern large portions of the Americas, but the administration's anemic diplomatic resources reinforced the need for civil officials to perform diplomatic roles. The absence of a permanent diplomatic corps further demanded that domestic officials handle foreign relations. Members of the Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe administrations eventually decided that making the federal structure work required not only considerable latitude but also a necessary blurring of the lines between domestic and diplomatic authority.<sup>14</sup>

Public officials serving the territorial regime responded to these conditions by implementing their own foreign policies, which they believed would

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, *American Union and Problem of Neighborhood*, 17, 218; Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World*.

<sup>13</sup> For examples of the administration's involvement in local affairs, see Albert Gallatin to Hore Browse Trist, Feb. 27, 1804, *Territorial Papers*, 9:192–97; Henry Dearborn to Constant Freeman, Apr. 23, 1804, *ibid.*, 229–31; Dearborn to John Sibley, Dec. 13, 1804, *ibid.*, 352–53; Gallatin to Samuel Mitchill, Jan. 3, 1805, Thomas Jefferson Papers, reel 51; and Gallatin to Allan B. Magruder, James Brown, and Felix Grundy, July 8, 1805, *Territorial Papers*, 9:468–69. For studies examining dynamics within territorial administration, see also Brian W. Beltman, "Territorial Commands of the Army: The System Refined but Not Perfected, 1815–1821," *J. Early Republic*, 11 (1991), 185–218.

<sup>14</sup> For the contested process of determining how the federal regime would operate, see Brian J. Cook, *Bureaucracy and Self-Government: Reconsidering the Role of Public Administration in American Politics* (Baltimore, 1996), 24–48.

satisfy the priorities and objectives established by their superiors in Washington. They were not alone in this activity, for private citizens had their own diplomatic objectives, which proved more likely to clash with federal priorities. In four circumstances from 1803 through 1815—policymaking on the Mississippi River, negotiating the disputed boundary between Texas and Louisiana, settling the nebulous status of West Florida, and conducting war with Great Britain—people in Washington and Louisiana together determined the structure of American foreign policy. This does not mean that these different constituencies were always in accord. Far from it: foreign policy fueled angry disagreements. Nonetheless, the character of American foreign relations took shape through the activities of numerous people. These circumstances indicated not only the latitude that could prevail on the frontiers of the union but also the specific circumstances that would lead federal officials to endorse or curtail local diplomacy.

As the major entrepôt near the Gulf Coast, New Orleans was a center of international contact and controversy, which in turn spread throughout the mouth of the Mississippi. European privateers and warships in search of prey in the Gulf of Mexico often came to New Orleans for supplies. Meanwhile, as French rule collapsed in revolutionary St. Domingue, thousands of refugees (both whites and free people of color) fled to Louisiana. The largest group of refugees came in the summer of 1809 by way of Cuba, where St. Domingue refugees initially found a familiar plantation system and a friendly welcome before facing outright hostility when Napoleon invaded the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>15</sup> When more than 9,000 people (free and enslaved) reached New Orleans, planter James Sterrett concluded that “we are in a fair way of being over run with french people.”<sup>16</sup> As refugees demanded to be let ashore with their slaves, public officials vacillated, constrained by the prohibition on the importation of slaves in the 1804 Governance Act (which had created the Territory of Orleans) as well as the 1808 federal ban on the foreign slave trade.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Carl A. Brasseaux and Glenn R. Conrad, eds., *The Road to Louisiana: The Saint Domingue Refugees* (Lafayette, La., 1992); Paul F. Lachance, “The Foreign French,” in Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, eds., *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge, 1992), 104–05; Lachance, “The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration, and Impact,” *Louisiana History*, 29 (1988), 109–41. For an account of the mounting anti-French sentiment in Cuba, see [*Natchez, Miss.*] *Weekly Chronicle*, Sept. 7, 1808.

<sup>16</sup> Sterrett to Nathaniel Evans, June 24, 1809, Nathaniel Evans and Family Papers, in Kenneth M. Stampf et al., eds., *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations* (Bethesda, Md., 1985– ), H, reel 1:315. For similar concerns, see anonymous letter to Hugues de la Vergne, June 24, 1803, box 1, folder 1, de la Verne Papers, Special Collections, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University (hereafter cited as Tulane).

<sup>17</sup> Claiborne to Lt. Walsh, May 12, 1809, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 4:351; Claiborne to Smith, May 15, 1809, *ibid.*, 354–55; Claiborne to Capt. Sam Davis and to the commander at Plaquemines (two letters), May 16, 1809, *ibid.*, 355; James Mather to the City Council, May 17, 1809, *Messages from the Mayor to the Conseil de Ville*, New Orleans Public Library Microfilm Collection (hereafter cited as *Messages from the Mayor*), 1:130–34; Mather to the City Council, June 7, 1809, *ibid.*, 138–39.

Refugees and their allies among Louisiana Creoles mobilized—apparently with considerable success—to demand that Congress make an exception in federal policy. In June 1809, Congress decided to allow the refugees to enter with their slaves. The following month, but *before* receiving news of the federal legislation, Claiborne implemented an identical policy. It was a difficult decision for Claiborne, one testifying to his own ambivalence about asserting policymaking independence. Nonetheless, his conclusion that circumstances demanded such latitude attested to the belief that diplomatic contingency demanded policymaking autonomy. That Claiborne acted before receiving approval from Washington indicated the policymaking role he assumed for himself. That he chose the same policy as members of Congress and the administration protected him from any rebuke.<sup>18</sup>

In their dealings with the St. Domingue immigrants, civil officials believed that foreign policy in Louisiana had to contribute to their chief domestic goal: fixing the loyalty and national identity of a population composed primarily of people born under French or Spanish colonial rule. In 1809, that meant allowing the refugees to enter with their slaves, a decision that public officials considered essential to mollify both the refugees and other Louisianians. This remained the case even though many officials would have preferred to exclude slaves, whom they considered likely to foster revolt. The policy with regard to the refugees was entirely consistent with territorial policy in Louisiana. Federal leaders often made concessions—whether creating new elective offices, instituting a legal system that preserved procedures from the colonial past, or providing additional resources for commercial development—to white Louisianians because they were convinced that domestic unrest would open the door for foreign intervention.

This policy clashed with the objectives of naval officers, who believed that placating white Louisianians and white refugees from St. Domingue impeded foreign policy. They specifically rejected any concessions which seemed to waver from a strict implementation of federal law. When it came to pirates and smugglers, civil officials and naval officers alike bemoaned the lawbreakers and their allies in Louisiana's white population. During the Embargo, for example, naval officers and civil officials both had condemned local residents who attempted to circumvent federal law.

But the treatment of European vessels was another matter, which by 1810 generated considerable disagreements within the federal apparatus as naval officers, civil officials, and private citizens argued over the meaning of neutrality. Operating in the port of New Orleans, the mouth of the Mississippi, and the Gulf Coast, naval officers pursued an aggressive policy that included seizing European vessels that they suspected of smuggling or of breaking the federal laws prohibiting foreign warships from operating from

<sup>18</sup> Chevalier Lejeune Malherbe and others to Madison, Sept. 5, 1809, in Robert A. Rutland et al., eds., *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series*, 4 vols. to date (Charlottesville, 1986–) (hereafter cited as *PJM-PS*), 1:352–53; Tench Cox to Madison, June 3, 1809, *ibid.*, 222–25 (see also n. 2); Lachance, “1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans,” 118–19.

American ports.<sup>19</sup> When naval officers were not condemning European mariners, they were blaming the Louisianians themselves for undermining American diplomatic goals. Many officers shared the opinion of Master Commandant David Porter, commander of the New Orleans naval station, who on New Year's Day 1810 wrote to Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton that "information . . . I have collected enables me to state that . . . illicit commerce engaged the attention of many merchants at this place." Porter claimed that Louisianians who held public office were in collusion with private citizens. He aimed particular scorn at the federal marshal, Michael Fortier, complaining that so long as "the Marshall is a frenchman there will be allways a large Majority of frenchmen on the Juries and a frenchman can never be convicted however heinous his crime."<sup>20</sup> That Porter considered all Louisianians Frenchmen indicates his own belief that they remained foreign although all white residents of Louisiana had been instantly naturalized in 1803 by the specific provisions of the Louisiana Purchase. Naval officers concluded that Louisianians in league with the captains of foreign vessels constituted an international threat.

Worse still, naval officers believed civil officials failed to appreciate the situation or to respond appropriately. A gathering of Porter's officers later charged that implementing the nation's commercial policy was all the more difficult "amidst all the clamour and opposition it excited among a particular class of persons."<sup>21</sup> The "particular class of persons" to which they referred consisted of white Louisianians, St. Domingue immigrants, merchant masters, and European consuls, all of whom complained about the navy's foreign policy. When the navy seized the French vessel *Franchise*, for example, white Louisianians defended the vessel's captain in the *Louisiana Gazette*, stating that "Capt. Chevalier is . . . an honorable man, perhaps a member of the *Legion of honor*, and of course, could nor would not be connected in any *illicit trade*, nor commit any depredations on the commerce of the United States."<sup>22</sup> When the *Franchise's* captain charged Porter with stealing a crucifix from his cabin, the French minister to the United States demanded that Hamilton remove Porter from his post.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> David Porter to Samuel Hambleton, July 18, 1810 (incorrectly attributed in letterbook to 1809), Letterbook I, David D. Porter Papers, Library of Congress; Hamilton to Trippe, July 20, 1810, *Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers* (Washington, D. C., National Archives Record Group 45, Microfilm 149) (hereafter cited as *Letters to Officers*), 9:140; Hamilton to Madison, July 23, 1810, *PJM-PS*, 2:432; [*Washington, D. C.*] *National Intelligencer*, July 23, 1810; Hamilton to Madison, Aug. 3, 1810, *PJM-PS*, 2:458–59; [*New Orleans*] *Louisiana Gazette*, July 12, 1811. For an overview of Porter's tenure in New Orleans, see David F. Long, *Nothing Too Daring: A Biography of Commodore David Porter, 1780–1843* (Annapolis, Md., 1970), 36–56.

<sup>20</sup> Porter to Madison, Sept. 21, 1810, *PJM-PS*, 4:621.

<sup>21</sup> Porter to Hamilton, Jan. 1, 1810, *Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanders* (Washington, D. C., National Archives Record Group 45, Microfilm Copy), M147, 4:1; Officers of the New Orleans naval station to Porter, June 16, 1810, *Nat'l Intelligencer*, July 27, 1810. See also Porter to Hamilton, Mar. 10, 1810, *Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanders*, 4:35; Porter to Hambleton, July 18, 1810, Letterbook I, David D. Porter Papers.

<sup>22</sup> *La. Gaz.*, June 28, 1811.

<sup>23</sup> Smith to Juan Baptiste Bernabue, Jan. 19, 1810, *Domestic Letters of the Department of State* (National Archives Record Group 59, Microfilm Copy M-40) (hereafter cited as *Domestic*

Civil officials certainly agreed that Louisianians undermined American neutrality and commercial law.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, they hesitated to antagonize the local population or foreign representatives. Surrounded by these constituencies, they opted for a more flexible policy than the navy would accept. Claiborne made his opinion known in 1810 when the navy seized another French ship, this time a suspected privateer, the *Duc de Montebello*. Pierre Derbigny, an aspiring politician and outspoken critic of the federal regime, rushed an angry letter to the governor on behalf of the *Duc de Montebello*'s captain, who held Porter responsible for \$10,000 in damages.<sup>25</sup> Speaking in the role he assumed for himself as the senior diplomat in the region, Claiborne apologized to the French consul at New Orleans: "Porter being rendered entirely independent of my orders or Controul, it only remains for me to lay your Communications before the President of the United States."<sup>26</sup>

Claiborne's statement testified to the possibilities as well as the limitations of local diplomacy. Although quite comfortable issuing orders to naval officers when both civil and military personnel were in accord, he sought resolution in Washington at moments of conflict. Well aware of the time required for a reply, Claiborne continued to express his opposition to the actions of Porter, and his officers and different branches of the federal government continued to pursue radically different actions in their attempts to implement federal policy.

There was no love lost between Claiborne and Derbigny, who had openly criticized the governor since 1804. Nor were white residents of Louisiana united in their opposition to the navy's policy. To the contrary, they split over foreign policy and splintered in their political allegiances. Not only did individuals reach their own conclusions, but Creoles, Frenchmen, and St. Domingue refugees were often at odds. The immigrant populations even acted differently depending on whether they reached Louisiana before or after the Purchase. Those who arrived before 1803 became citizens by virtue of the Louisiana Purchase, while those who came later underwent the lengthy process of naturalization. These local dynamics only made Claiborne more steadfast in advocating a conciliatory stance. In this complex ethnic and political environment, co-opting men like Derbigny was a matter of vital importance to civil officials like Claiborne. Claiborne was actively seeking Louisianians for civil appointments, the very appointments that proved so irritating to Porter. This cadre of local officials

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*Letters*), 13:406; Caesar Rodney to Smith, Apr. 4, 1810, *ibid.*, 433–34; Porter to Hambleton, July 18, 1810, Letterbook I, David D. Porter Papers; Porter to Madison, Sept. 21, 1810, *PJM-PS*, 4:621.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Robertson to Smith, Apr. 8, 1810, *Territorial Papers*, 9:881; Robertson to Smith, July 6, 1810, *ibid.*, 888; Robertson Circular, Sept. 6, 1810, quoted in Charles E. A. Gayarré, *History of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1903), 4:228–29.

<sup>25</sup> Joshua Lewis to the sheriff of New Orleans, Mar. 26, 1810, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:28; Petition of Pierre Derbigny, Mar. 26, 1810, *ibid.*, 26–28; Robertson to Smith, Apr. 8, 1810, *Territorial Papers*, 9:880–81.

<sup>26</sup> Claiborne to Deforgues, Mar. 30, 1810, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:28–29; Claiborne to Mather, Jan. 27, 1810, *ibid.*, 29–30. For a similar disagreement between Claiborne and Porter from 1808, see Claiborne to Porter, Oct. 21, 1808, *ibid.*, 4:229.

included Claiborne's own brother-in-law, a Creole named Martin Duralde, who eventually succeeded Fortier as the marshal in New Orleans. Claiborne's distribution of patronage is less important here than the fact that civil appointments were never free from diplomatic import. Civil officials were convinced that if they failed to cultivate the attachment of white Louisianians, foreign nations might be able to build influence in Louisiana's population and, eventually, foment a separatist movement or establish allies that would make seizing Louisiana by force an attractive option. Only three years before the *Duc de Montebello* came to New Orleans, the Burr Conspiracy had presented public officials such as Claiborne with what seemed like the imminent possibility of disunion. Even when Louisianians rejected Burr, the public outcry against the overzealous pursuit of suspected conspirators indicated that law enforcement could be no less dangerous than separatist schemes. Claiborne was willing to risk disputes with naval officers as the cost of mollifying or at least neutralizing ambitious Louisianians such as Derbigny.<sup>27</sup>

Secretary of State Robert Smith, who had been Jefferson's secretary of the navy, apparently did not attempt to resolve the dispute in New Orleans through negotiations with his successor at the Navy Department, Paul Hamilton. Nor did Madison—who had little respect for either Smith or Hamilton—settle affairs by overriding his subordinates.<sup>28</sup> Their silence on the matter may be frustrating, but it is also telling. Although members of the administration lamented the international controversies, they seemed to accept a bifurcated diplomatic system in which the navy suppressed illegal commerce while civil officials promoted domestic loyalty. With only silence from Washington, local diplomacy filled the vacuum; in the absence of explicit instructions or prohibitions, naval officers and civil officials continued to collide as they pursued two different policies.

Whether it was the influx of St. Domingue refugees or the dispute over commercial and strategic policy in the port, settling these *local* matters proved crucial to creating *federal* policies. Both controversies forced federal officials to reconsider the implementation of their diplomatic objectives. Although Jefferson and Madison hoped to isolate the regime of former slaves in the newly independent republic of Haiti, they had taken few steps toward determining exactly how to realize that objective beyond a decision against formal recognition.<sup>29</sup> Demands from Louisiana for a resolution of the

<sup>27</sup> For Derbigny's early political career, see George Dargo, *Jefferson's Louisiana: Politics and the Clash of Legal Traditions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), 121–23, 151. For later activities, see Joseph G. Dawson, ed., *The Louisiana Governors: From Iberville to Edwards* (Baton Rouge, 1990), 103–04. For other forms of consensus among Louisianians and Americans, see Sarah Russell, "Ethnicity, Commerce, and Community on Lower Louisiana's Plantation Frontier, 1803–1828," *La. Hist.*, 40 (1999), 389–405.

<sup>28</sup> J.C.A. Stagg, "James Madison and the 'Malcontents': The Political Origins of the War of 1812," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 33 (1976), 561–63, 570–71.

<sup>29</sup> Tim Matthewson, "Jefferson and Haiti," *Journal of Southern History*, 61 (1995), 209–48; Peter S. Onuf, "'To Declare Them a Free and Independent People': Race, Slavery, and National Identity in Jefferson's Thought," *J. Early Republic*, 18 (1998), 1–46; Robert L. Paquette, "Revolutionary Saint Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana," in David B. Gaspar

refugee issue created the circumstances in which federal policymakers began to define the American relationship to Haiti, and officials in Louisiana helped cement this policy through their own diplomatic actions. In the summer of 1809, for example, territorial secretary Thomas Bolling Robertson and New Orleans mayor James Mather both negotiated with the French consul to settle the disposition of refugees. When British naval officers detained a vessel carrying the last French troops from St. Domingue, Mather even positioned himself as a broker between the British and the French consul.<sup>30</sup> While his subordinates conducted these diplomatic activities, Claiborne wrote to American consuls in the Caribbean instructing them what they should tell prospective immigrants. Territorial officials in Louisiana did not fail to recognize the diplomatic import of their actions. They considered the diplomatic situation too pressing to await a decision in Washington.<sup>31</sup>

These disputes between civil officials and naval officers constituted more than petty bureaucratic squabbles. Although there was ample recalcitrance to go around, the struggle in New Orleans existed in a specific structural and diplomatic context. Commercial policy remained at the core of American foreign policy. In addition, scrapes between American and European vessels fueled international hostility, undoing the work of American diplomats overseas while convincing members of the Jefferson and Madison administrations of European belligerence. Given the uncertain boundaries of administrative capacities in the early republic and the ambiguous line between domestic policymaking and foreign relations, the disputes in the port of New Orleans constituted an attempt to settle how the federal regime would operate. European consuls and merchants responded in kind. They recognized that trade on the Gulf Coast meant dealing with officials in Louisiana. The questions in New Orleans were which foreign policy would rule and how would the policymakers in Washington balance conditions on the frontier with its broader diplomatic strategy.

That men outside the administration and Congress could develop and implement their own foreign policies proved equally evident on the Texas-

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and David Patrick Geggus, eds., *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997), 204–25. While Jefferson's policy toward Haiti has been the subject of considerable scholarly interest, Madison's policy has not. Historians of American foreign relations have situated revolutionary St. Domingue within a context of Madison's plans for the acquisition of Louisiana, but few have considered the way Madison constructed a policy toward the independent Haiti. For examples, see Ralph Ketcham, *James Madison: A Biography* (Charlottesville, 1990 [1971]), and McCoy, *The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy* (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>30</sup> Robertson to Smith, July 8, 1809, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 4:380; Mather to the City Council, Oct. 14, 1809, in *Messages from the Mayor*, 3:161; Mather to the City Council, Oct. 25, 1809, *ibid.*, 164.

<sup>31</sup> Claiborne to Smith, May 15, 1809, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 4:354–55; Claiborne to the commander at Plaquemines, May 15, 1809, *ibid.*, 355; Claiborne to Captain Many, May 18, 1809 (4 letters), *ibid.*, 358–60; Claiborne to Michael Walsh, May 12, 1809, *ibid.*, 351; Claiborne to Porter, Nov. 10, 1809, *ibid.*, 5:6–7; Claiborne to William Savage, Nov. 10, 1809, *ibid.*, 3–5; Claiborne to Smith, Nov. 12, 1809, *ibid.*, 8–9.

Louisiana border, but with very different results. Unlike the port of New Orleans, where competing diplomatic agendas both within and among nations created no end of controversy, the western borderlands became the home to a diplomatic consensus that crossed national and racial lines. The accord emerged despite the abundant reasons that Spanish, American, and Indian leaders had to distrust one another.

The immediate problem was the boundary between Spanish Texas and American Louisiana, a border that the Louisiana Purchase did not define and that negotiators from Spain, France, and the United States continued to dispute after 1803. Escalating tensions between the United States and Spain further reduced the possibility of a resolution. The Spanish interpreted the Louisiana Purchase as part of a broader effort to extend American influence throughout the Southwest.<sup>32</sup> Americans considered Spain an unreliable power driven by the corrupt principles of the European imperial system.<sup>33</sup> As the situation worsened, observers in Louisiana, Spanish America, and Washington considered a military conflict on the Southwestern frontier to be an imminent possibility so long as accredited diplomats from Washington and Madrid remained locked in unsuccessful deliberations.<sup>34</sup>

The Caddo Indians who occupied that borderland further recognized that a war between their neighbors would inevitably consume their villages. The region was home to approximately 3,700 Indians, who were undergoing their own political and diplomatic turmoil. In the same way the United States reconstituted itself in the wake of Independence, in the second half of the eighteenth century the Caddos had gone from a loose association of villages to a cohesive organization. After 1803, foreign policy and domestic poli-

<sup>32</sup> Carlos Martínez de Yrujo to Pedro Cevallos, Dec. 2, 1802, in Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, with Related Documents, 1783–1854* (Urbana, Ill., 1978), 4–6; Marqués de Casa Calvo to Cevallos, Mar. 30, 1804, *ibid.*, 173–74; Nemesio Salcedo y Salcedo to Wilkinson, Sept. 18, 1806, *Letters Received by the Secretary of War: Registered Series* (Washington, D. C., National Archives Record Group 107, Microfilm Copy M22) (hereafter cited as *Letters Received, Registered Series*, followed by reel and document numbers), 14:W-195; Carlos Grand Pré to Daniel P. Hicky, Oct. 12, 1806, Daniel P. Hicky Papers, Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, box 1, folder 3; Dan Flores, ed., *Jefferson and Southwestern Exploration: The Freeman and Custis Accounts of the Red River Expedition of 1806* (Norman, Okla., 1984), 203–07; Jackson, *Thomas Jefferson and the Stony Mountain: Exploring the West from Monticello* (Urbana, Ill., 1981), 242–63; David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, 1992), 294–96.

<sup>33</sup> Sibley to Dearborn, Aug. 8, 1805, *Annals of Congress*, 15:1207 (Ninth Congress); Claiborne to Dearborn, Oct. 30, 1805, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 3:216–17; Claiborne to Simón de Herrera y Leyva, Aug. 26, 1806, William C. C. Claiborne Papers, LSU; Wilkinson to Cordero, Sept. 24, 1806, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 14:W-190; Cordero to Wilkinson, Sept. 29, 1806, *ibid.*, W-191; *Orleans Territory v. Durossat*, 2 Martin 120–24 (LA, 1812); Abraham P. Nasatir, *Borderland in Retreat: From Spanish Louisiana to the Far Southwest* (Albuquerque, 1976), 127–35.

<sup>34</sup> Sibley to Dearborn, May 1, 1805, *Annals of Congress*, 15:1205–06 (Ninth Congress); Dearborn to Wilkinson, May 6, 1806, Thomas Jefferson Papers, reel 57. See also Dearborn to Williams, May 8, 1806, *ibid.*; J. L. Donaldson to William Stewart, July 5, 1806, *ibid.*, reel 58; Claiborne to Constant Freeman, Mather, and Richard Claiborne (3 letters), Aug. 17, 1806, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 3:377–81; statement by James McKim, David Henson, and James Teal, Sept. 26, 1806, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 14:W-190.



tics among the Caddos would continue to shape the diplomatic landscape of the borderlands.<sup>35</sup>

It was in this diplomatic stalemate that General James Wilkinson (commanding American troops in the Southwest), Colonel Simón de Herrera y Leyva (his opposite number in East Texas), and Dehahuit (the leading Caddo chief) launched their own diplomatic initiative. In November 1806, Wilkinson and Herrera carved out a strip of land called the Neutral Ground that would be off-limits to soldiers from either nation pending a final diplomatic settlement between Washington and Madrid. Dehahuit quickly endorsed the agreement.<sup>36</sup>

Timing proved revealing. Also in November 1806, Jefferson proposed that the United States and Spain both withdraw their troops from the disputed territory, by which point Wilkinson and Herrera had already completed their negotiations, and news of the settlement was en route to Washington.<sup>37</sup> The similarity to circumstances in 1809, when Claiborne and Congress enacted similar policies toward the St. Domingue refugees, is more than coincidental. So long as people at both ends of the policymaking continuum reached the same conclusions, officials in Washington did not insist on following a hierarchical chain of authority.

In the years that followed, however, observers saw the Neutral Ground less as an international pressure valve than as a regional quagmire. White squatters and runaway slaves descended on the Neutral Ground. Both groups sought independence, either through the acquisition of land or escape from enslavement. In a region where troops enforced the laws of property (whether landed or human), the Neutral Ground's specific exclusion of Spanish and American forces created an ideal circumstance for squatters and runaways. By 1810, Colonel Thomas Cushing observed that "the intruders—have taken their present position in full confidence that neither nation can remove them." The Caddos concluded that the Spanish and American governments were unable to keep their own people in check. As the Neutral Ground agreement appeared increasingly obsolete, Indian agents and army officers worried that the situation might precipitate an Indian war, a concern that the Caddos fed in order to make clear the extent of their anger.<sup>38</sup>

With the Neutral Ground threatened, local diplomacy once again provided a solution. As had been the case in 1806, American, Spanish, and Caddo officials set aside international disputes in the interest of local objec-

<sup>35</sup> F. Todd Smith, *The Caddo Indians: Tribes at the Convergence of Empires, 1542–1854* (College Station, Tex., 1995), 85–88.

<sup>36</sup> Wilkinson to Antonio Cordero y Bustamente, Sept. 24, 1806, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 14:W-190; Cordero to Wilkinson, Sept. 29, 1806, *ibid.*, W-191; Wilkinson to Dearborn, Oct. 17, 1806, *ibid.*, W-195; Theodore J. Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson's Army: Political and Social Reform of the Military Establishment, 1801–1809* (New York, 1987), 128–31.

<sup>37</sup> Jefferson to Wilkinson, Nov. 8, 1806, Thomas Jefferson Papers, reel 59.

<sup>38</sup> Cushing to William Eustis, Apr. 24, 1810, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 35:C-126. See also John Sibley to Eustis, Jan. 30, 1810, *ibid.*, 40:S-71; Sibley to Eustis, Mar. 20, 1810, *Territorial Papers*, 9:879; Charles Wollstonecraft to Cushing, July 21, 1810, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 35:C-191; and Sibley to Eustis, Nov. 30, 1810, *ibid.*, 40:C-243.

tives. Representatives from the three groups agreed that troops from both white nations could remove the intruders. "Should you approve of the plan," Cushing wrote to Secretary of War William Eustis, "and authorize a Co-operation on our part, an early check may be put to an evil which, if permitted to progress, may produce very injurious Consequences at a future day."<sup>39</sup> In June 1810, Eustis gave Cushing vague instructions permitting him to remove the intruders. Cushing elaborated on those instructions by dispatching twenty-five men under a young lieutenant named Augustus Magee, who joined an identical number of Spanish troops to drive the squatters from their settlement and burn their makeshift homes.<sup>40</sup>

The resolution on the Neutral Ground should not be misunderstood. It was hardly an indication of amity among the parties crowded onto the Texas-Louisiana border. So long as it worked and so long as the administration did not consider itself in a position to press its claim to the Neutral Ground more vigorously, local diplomacy would reign with the blessings of the administration.

This state of affairs could not have produced a better outcome for the Caddos in general or Dehahuit in particular. Well aware of the strategic advantage he enjoyed, Dehahuit made clear to American and Spanish officials that if they wanted to keep the peace, they had to satisfy the Caddos' needs. In the interest of creating a buffer zone, Spain and the United States acknowledged the Caddos' autonomy as well as their diplomatic legitimacy. The diplomatic disputes and their resolution in turn helped forge the internal structure among the Caddos, reinforcing Dehahuit's power over neighboring villages. A decade later, Indian agent George Gray still believed that Dehahuit "has more influence with those small tribes residing on Red River and the Province of Texas than any Indian within the limits of the Agency. In fact they are controlled by him entirely."<sup>41</sup>

Agreements such as the Neutral Ground were common to American borderlands. Not only did borderland residents create their own mechanisms to preserve the peace, but they did so with a keen awareness of the strategies of European powers.<sup>42</sup> The Neutral Ground had an obvious attraction for

<sup>39</sup> Cushing to Eustis, Apr. 24, 1810, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 35:C-126.

<sup>40</sup> Wollstonecraft to Wade Hampton, Apr. 15, 1810, *ibid.*; Wollstonecraft to Cushing, June 12, July 12, 1810, *ibid.*, C-191; Eustis to Hampton, June 15, 1810, *Territorial Papers*, 6:70-71; Eustis to Madison, Sept. 7, 1810, *PJM-PS*, 2:531 and n. 2; Wollstonecraft to Cushing, Aug. 15, 1810; Salcedo to Wollstonecraft, Aug. 17, 1810; Wollstonecraft to Magee, Aug. 29, 1810; Magee to Wollstonecraft, Sept. 4, 1810, all in *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 35:C-217; Villasana Haggard, "The Neutral Ground Between Louisiana and Texas, 1806-1821," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 38 (1945), 1062.

<sup>41</sup> George Gray to John C. Calhoun, Oct. 14, 1820, J. Fair Hardin Collection, LSU.

<sup>42</sup> Adelman and Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders"; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, 1992), 123-83; Reginald Horsman, "The Indian Policy of an 'Empire for Liberty,'" in Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (Charlottesville, 1999), 50-55; White, *Middle Ground*. Madison's and Monroe's Indian policies (both as secretaries of state and as presidents) remain open for investigation. Most of the scholarship on "Republican" Indian policy focuses almost exclusively on Jefferson, to the exclusion of his successors.

the Caddos, but it looked equally advantageous to federal leaders. In contrast to more militant Indian political movements in the Southeast and the Old Northwest premised on pan-Indian unity and explicit resistance to the federal government, the Caddos positioned themselves as agreeable negotiating partners who, if they sought their own autonomy, also claimed to reject violent conflict. Whether seeking peace or waging war with Indians, federal leaders recognized that settling affairs with Indians would help consolidate United States sovereignty against competing claims by Britain, France, and Spain. Curtailing European influence would in turn enable the United States to establish authority over the Indians. Both processes would define the domestic rule of the federal government.

For all these reasons, federal leaders were eager to construct viable treaties, especially those on disputed borderlands. These treaties would prevent violent encounters between Indians and American settlers while curtailing alliances between Indians and European powers that would work against the United States. The same federal government that so vociferously advocated treaties—whether with Indians or with Europeans—eventually broke most of its agreements with Indians. Rather than negate the reality of the administration's recognition of Indian autonomy, the government's record testifies to particular diplomatic circumstances in which international quarrels and domestic priorities combined to create diplomatic opportunities for the Indians of the North American borderlands.

The Caddos were only the latest in a series of Indians to find that disputes between the United States and European powers enabled Indians to realize their own diplomatic goals and sustain their own diplomatic style, replacing the bureaucratic practice of the United States with face-to-face negotiation that demanded the autonomy of their negotiating partners. When Claiborne met with Dehahuit two months before the Neutral Ground agreement, for example, Dehahuit said that "your words resemble the words my forefathers have told me they used to receive from the French in ancient times." He added, "If your nation has purchased what the French formerly possessed, you have purchased the country that we occupy, and we regard you in the same light as we did them." What Claiborne welcomed as the Caddos' acknowledgment of American sovereignty over the disputed borderland was also a statement of Caddo autonomy in that broader American realm.<sup>43</sup>

Madison never acknowledged local diplomacy as a system developed by Indians. There was more to this attitude than willful ignorance. The formal negotiation process that created the Neutral Ground was entirely in keeping with the way the administration hoped to preserve the peace. Negotiated by recognized authorities and governed by specific rules, the Neutral Ground agreement seemed to exemplify the sort of treaty making that the administration hoped to impose on Indians on numerous frontiers. Local diplomacy was also a structure fostered from within the federal government. Madison,

<sup>43</sup> Dehahuit speech, recorded in Claiborne to Cowles Mead, Sept. 5, 1806, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 4:4.

his cabinet, and officials in Louisiana had reasons to see the Neutral Ground agreement as a useful model for a distributed system of federal power that preserved their administration's goals.<sup>44</sup> That Madison committed his administration to removing intruders from Indian villages did not indicate any dramatic change in the nation's Indian policy. Instead, particular diplomatic conditions and domestic administrative needs combined to convince the administration that it should pursue this policy. The administration's ongoing endorsement of the frontier autonomy that sustained the Neutral Ground attested as much to the stipulations of local diplomacy as to its possibilities. So long as local officials made decisions that were in keeping with the broad contours of the administration's diplomatic and domestic objectives, men in Washington provided either retroactive approval or silent consent.

The local diplomacy that sustained the Neutral Ground proved particularly attractive in 1810 because formal relations between the United States and Spain had collapsed. In 1808, Napoleon invaded the Iberian Peninsula, installing his brother Joseph Bonaparte on the Spanish throne. The United States recognized neither the Napoleonic regime in Madrid nor the monarchist government-in-exile at Cadiz. Revolutionary governments took form throughout Spanish America, most of them issuing statements of loyalty to the ousted Bourbon regime (among those royalists were the residents of Cuba who evicted the St. Domingue refugees). While Madison found his own policy with Spain and the Spanish empire frozen by the absence of an acceptable negotiating partner, officials on the Southwestern frontier could maintain active diplomatic relations specifically because they were not accredited diplomats. Madison soon decided that local diplomacy might provide the means to realize his goals in West Florida. As the president and his advisors would learn, however, local diplomacy had its limitations.<sup>45</sup>

Madison had never abandoned his belief that the security of the union depended on American control of West Florida, and since 1803 he had sustained a fruitless assertion (against both the arguments of foreign diplomats and the admission of his own advisors) that West Florida had been part of the Louisiana Purchase. The chaos on the Gulf Coast that came with the collapse of the Spanish empire only reinforced his fears. The loyalists, British immigrants, and American migrants who together constituted an Anglo-American majority in Spanish West Florida had organized an extralegal con-

<sup>44</sup> Eustis to Hampton, June 15, 1810, *Territorial Papers*, 6:71; Hampton to Eustis, Aug. 22, 1810, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 5:H-181; Hampton to Eustis, Sept. 24, 1810, *ibid.*, 37:H-196; Hampton to Eustis, Nov. 3, 1810, *ibid.*, H-222; Hampton to Claiborne, Jan. 23, 1812, and Hampton to Claiborne, Feb. 14, 1812, both *ibid.*, 44:H-170; Hampton to Zebulon Pike, Feb. 6, 1812, and Pike to Hampton, Mar. 26, 1812, both *ibid.*, 45:H-212; Claiborne to John Carr, Feb. 16, 1812, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 6:56-57; Pike to Bernardino Montero, Feb. 26, 1812, vol. 1 of Thomas Jesup Papers, Library of Congress; William Henry Harrison to Eustis, Apr. 22, 1812, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 45:H-212.

<sup>45</sup> The most thorough analysis of Madison's attitudes during the West Florida crisis and the chronology of American decision making is contained in a lengthy editorial note in *PJM-PS*, 2:305-20.

vention to renegotiate their jurisdictional status. Exactly what that meant was anybody's guess. Although many conventioners probably sought entry into the United States, observers in Washington worried the conventioners might seek a separate alliance in Europe.<sup>46</sup>

Madison was determined to defuse the crisis on the Gulf Coast in a way that would satisfy American concerns, and he hoped that local diplomacy would provide the means. In July 1810, Smith dispatched Mississippi territorial judge William Wykoff and former Georgia governor George Mathews to establish contact with the conventioners, "diffusing the impression that the United States cherish[es] the sincerest good will . . . that in the event of a political separation from the parent Country, their incorporation into our Union would coincide with the sentiments and policy of the United States." Smith informed his delegates that they should also "draw their [the members of the West Florida Convention] minds to a contemplation of the obvious and very disagreeable consequences, as well to them as to us, should the dissolution of their ties to the parent Country be followed by a connection with any of the European powers."<sup>47</sup>

For all the intrigue of their instructions, Wykoff and Mathews were not covert agents in the modern sense of the term. Although Madison certainly hoped the two men would solicit a request for annexation by the West Florida Convention, he was more concerned that the United States avoid any official recognition of the convention. Wykoff and Mathews were instead a new byproduct of local diplomacy: unofficial delegates who could negotiate without binding the administration or providing the de facto recognition for the West Florida Convention that would come with sending accredited diplomats. Neither Jefferson nor Madison had ever deployed local diplomacy in such a direct or secretive way. In 1810, Madison tested just how much power the administration could wield through unofficial negotiations.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> George Erving to Madison, Sept. 2, 1810, *ibid.*, 519–21; Madison to Jefferson, Oct. 19, 1810, *ibid.*, 585–86; Madison to John Armstrong, Oct. 29, 1810, *ibid.*, 597–99. The exact intentions of the West Florida conventioners remain elusive, and one of the few certainties is that this is exactly how they wanted things. They gave mixed signals, and the existing evidence suggests that they saw a variety of possibilities that included both independence and American annexation. The standard works on this subject are Stanley Clisby Arthur, *The Story of the West Florida Rebellion* (St. Francisville, La., 1935); Isaac Cox, *The West Florida Controversy, 1798–1813: A Study in American Diplomacy* (Baltimore, 1923); Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., *Pistols and Politics: The Dilemma of Democracy in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1810–1899* (Baton Rouge, 1996), 20–23; Andrew McMichael, "Slavery on the Southwestern Borderlands: Anglos, Slaves, and Receding Spaniards" (paper delivered to the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, July 1999); Joseph and Burkholder Smith, *The Plot to Steal Florida: James Madison's Phony War* (New York, 1983).

<sup>47</sup> Smith to Wykoff, June 20, 1810, *Territorial Papers*, 9:884. See also Smith to Crawford, June 20, 1810, *ibid.*, 885; Smith to David Holmes, July 12, 21, 1810, *Domestic Letters*, 13:444, 471; Madison to Smith, July 17, 1810, *PJM-PS*, 2:419; and Holmes to Smith, July 31, 1810, *Territorial Papers*, 9:889–91.

<sup>48</sup> For the argument that these men were covert agents, see Stephen F. Knott, *Secret and Sanctioned: Covert Operations and the American Presidency* (New York, 1996), 61–115; Owsley and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*; and Smith, *Plot to Steal West Florida*, 58–60.

It was the West Florida Convention that upset Madison's plans. On September 26, 1810, the convention declared itself the government of an independent republic on the Gulf Coast. This was the president's worst case scenario. A weak, independent Florida created a vacuum of power that could easily offer the pretext for French or British intervention. Madison responded by abandoning the uncertainty of local diplomacy, and on October 27 he proclaimed the American annexation of West Florida. Madison backed up this decision by dispatching troops to seize West Florida and civil officials to extend federal sovereignty.

Madison's choice of direct action seemed to bring immediate benefits. American soldiers and civil officials from the Territories of Orleans and Mississippi descended on the Gulf Coast, quickly establishing their authority over Baton Rouge and the surrounding territory. By January 1811, Captain John Shaw, Porter's successor in New Orleans, could write confidently to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton: "So ended the Floridian Republic, much indeed to the well wishes of the good citizens in General."<sup>49</sup>

Ejecting the Spanish and suppressing the convention settled the matter for members of the Madison administration, who wanted to shift their attention to the remaining Spanish stronghold at Mobile. But people in the Southwest would not let the matter end so neatly. A week after dispatching his report to Hamilton, Shaw was thrown into a panic when an army of slaves (estimates of its numbers varied from 150 to 500) marched on New Orleans in what may well have been the largest slave revolt in United States history. What began on January 8 as a small uprising on a single plantation was, in twenty-four hours, a wholesale revolt armed with a combination of farm implements and a small number of firearms and other weapons. "An express gave up the alarm," Shaw eventually explained. "The whole city [of New Orleans] was convulsed, and the confusion which prevailed was general. . . . I have never before been witness to such general confusion and disarray."<sup>50</sup>

The slaves' goals remain elusive, but their decision to strike directly at the heart of white authority suggests their intention to demand permanent changes in the racial regime. Although the annexation of West Florida may not have led slaves to violence in 1811, circumstances in the Caribbean and in West Florida nonetheless created the domestic conditions that emboldened the slaves to attempt an insurrection. Some of the slaves who filled the ranks of the 1811 revolt had come from St. Domingue, and the revolt as a whole modeled its organization after the revolutionaries there. The slaves also could not have chosen a better moment than January 1811. The bulk of the soldiers, militiamen, and territorial leaders who together sustained white supremacy were in West Florida.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> John Shaw to Hamilton, Jan. 3, 1811, *Letters from Captains*, 19:6.

<sup>50</sup> Shaw to Hamilton, Jan. 18, 1811, *ibid.*, 35. For the slave revolt, see Hampton to Eustis, Jan. 16, 1811, *Territorial Papers*, 9:917; *La. Gaz.*, Jan. 10, 11, 1811; *New York Evening Post*, Feb. 19, 1811; [*Philadelphia Aurora General Advertiser*, Feb. 19, 1811. For analysis of the slave revolt see James H. Dorman, "The Persistent Specter: Slave Rebellion in Territorial Louisiana," *La. Hist.*, 18 (1977), 394, and Paquette, "Revolutionary Saint Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana," 204–25.

<sup>51</sup> Claiborne to Smith, Jan. 9, 1811, Claiborne to John Ballinger, Jan. 20, 1811, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:95–96, 108; Manuel Andry to Claiborne, Jan. 11, 1811, *Territorial Papers*, 9:915; *La. Gaz.*, Jan. 11, 1811.

Despite the advantages of striking in the winter of 1810–1811, the slaves' opportunity proved short-lived. Had they struck a few weeks earlier, they might well have reached New Orleans. But troops were on their way back from West Florida. Wade Hampton, Wilkinson's successor in command of troops in the Southwest, had missed the annexation altogether as a result of numerous delays on his passage to the Southwest. But Hampton conveniently reached New Orleans on January 6. When the revolt began, Hampton described conditions in much the same way Shaw eventually did, concluding that "the confusion was great beyond description."<sup>52</sup> Hampton and Claiborne immediately reoriented American military strategy to launch what one observer called "the war" against the slaves.<sup>53</sup> A pitched battle followed on January 10. Even when federal troops and Louisiana militiamen (including both whites and free men of color) defeated the slaves and a tribunal ordered the execution of twenty-one suspected conspirators, Hampton, Claiborne, and white Louisianians put the administration's efforts to isolate Mobile on hold while they attempted to root out any remaining conspirators.<sup>54</sup>

Developments in West Florida further prevented a tidy conclusion to Madison's October 27 proclamation. American conventioners who welcomed the end of Spanish rule now placed their own demands on the federal government. They wanted representation in the Orleans Territorial Legislature and resolution of disputed Spanish land claims.<sup>55</sup> A settler named James Neilson expressed the attitudes of many in West Florida when he reported to Madison that "although the Inhabitants of Florida are Generally warm friends to the Government of the United States—it can not be expected but they will look to be Secured in their Just rights and Property—let that be done, then there may be as much confidence placed in them as in any Such numerous branch of the United States."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Hampton to Eustis, Jan. 16, 1811, *Territorial Papers*, 9:917. See also Claiborne to Hampton, Jan. 7, 1811, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:92; [*New Orleans*] *Louisiana Courier*, Jan. 7, 1811. Claiborne had also been absent from Louisiana for weeks on a sojourn to the East Coast where he conferred with federal officials in Washington and took care of family business in his home state of Virginia.

<sup>53</sup> Peter V. Ogden to Evans, Jan. 11, 1811, Nathaniel Evans and Family Papers, ser. 1, pt. 2, reel 1, frames 244–45. See also Claiborne to Hampton, Jan. 9, 1811, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:94; Claiborne to Smith, Jan. 9, 1811, *ibid.*, 95–96; Claiborne to Michael St. Amand, Jan. 9, 1811, *ibid.*, 94; Claiborne to Bullingney, Jan. 9, 1811, *ibid.*, 95; *Richmond Enquirer*, Feb. 22, 1811; and *Aurora General Advertiser*, Feb. 19, 1811.

<sup>54</sup> Claiborne to Louis Moreau Lislet, Jan. 20, 1811, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:112; Claiborne to Steele, Jan. 20, 1811, *ibid.*, 112–13; Claiborne to Michael Cantrelle, Apr. 4, 1811, *ibid.*, 203; Holmes to Thomas Butler, box 2, folder 9, Thomas Butler and Family Papers, LSU; Claiborne to the Orleans Territorial Legislature, Apr. 19, 1811, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:214; Claiborne to Hampton, Jan. 24, 1811, *ibid.*, 117; Hampton to Eustis, Jan. 19, 1811, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 37:H-294; *Acts Passed (1811)*, 196.

<sup>55</sup> "Mr. Lee" to ? Dec. 24, 1810, *Nat'l Intelligencer*, Feb. 26, 1810; *Annals of Congress*, 15:41–42 (Ninth Congress); Floyd, *Pistols and Politics*, 20–23.

<sup>56</sup> Neilson to Madison, Jan. 5, 1811, *PJM-PS*, 3:102. See also Pollock to Thomas Butler, Nov. 2, 1810, box 2, folder 9, Thomas Butler and Family Papers, LSU; "Mr. Lee" to ? Dec. 24, 1810, *Nat'l Intelligencer*, Feb. 26, 1810; and *Annals of Congress*, 15:41–42 (Ninth Congress).

Convinced that American sovereignty remained insecure if white residents resented the annexation, the American officials assigned to take charge in West Florida advanced the agenda of Gulf Coast residents. They intended to curtail the “anarchy and confusion” that followed the annexation and advised the administration that all other objectives would have to wait. After traveling through West Florida to “reconcile the people” to annexation, for example, Mississippi territorial governor David Holmes informed Smith that the annexation “had occasioned a considerable degree of excitement: many seemed to think, that . . . the citizens had been treated with indignity by the United States, in taking possession of the Country without shewing to them the respect due to a people in the exercise of self government.”<sup>57</sup> As they struggled to win over the new citizens, civil officials in the Southwest would not let Madison, Smith, or Monroe (who replaced Smith at the State Department in April 1811) forget about West Florida. Public officials in the Territories of Orleans (which received direct jurisdiction over West Florida) and Mississippi persistently demanded time, money, and personnel from the federal leaders whose diplomatic decisions had created new administrative burdens.<sup>58</sup>

The annexation of West Florida did more than show how frontier residents could exploit international conditions to achieve their domestic ends. Madison’s decision to assert direct authority indicated the limitations of local diplomacy. The further adventures of George Mathews and Augustus Magee, who had seemed so useful in West Florida and on the Neutral Ground, provide telling examples.

In 1811, only months after issuing his West Florida proclamation, Madison received permission from Congress to seize East Florida in the event of foreign intervention or a local request for annexation. When Madison dispatched Mathews and Colonel John McKee to observe the situation, Mathews instead attempted to revolutionize East Florida as a prelude to an American claim. Meanwhile, Magee had resigned from the army and settled in western Louisiana. In 1812, he joined a filibustering expedition designed to create an independent republic in East Texas that would include much of the Neutral Ground. Like his venture into the Neutral Ground, this expedition was a multinational affair, with Magee serving under the nominal leadership of Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara, a former Spanish officer.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Holmes to Smith, Jan. 1, 1811, *Territorial Papers*, 9:909–10. See also Claiborne to Smith, Jan. 5, 1811, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:81; Claiborne to William Flood, Jan. 5, 1811, *ibid.*, 82–84; Claiborne to Smith, Jan. 5, 1811, *ibid.*, 82–84; Claiborne to Eustis, Jan. 5, 1811, *Letters Received, Registered Series*, 35:C-342; and Claiborne to Bernard Genois, Jan. 24, 1811, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:117.

<sup>58</sup> Toulmin to Madison, Nov. 28, 1810, *Territorial Papers*, 6:140–43; Claiborne Proclamation to the Territorial Legislature, Dec. 22, 1810, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 5:64–65; John Pollock to Butler, Jan. 7, 1811, Thomas Butler and Family Papers, Box 2, folder 9; Toulmin to Madison, Jan. 10, 1811, *PJM-PS*, 3:110–16; *Aurora*, Jan. 30, 1811; *Acts Passed (1811)*, 3–5; *Nat’l Intelligencer*, Mar. 16, 1811.

<sup>59</sup> Smith to Mathews, Jan. 11, 1811, *Domestic Letters*, 13; Cox, “The Border Missions of General George Mathews,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 12 (1925), 309–33; Harry McCorry Henderson, “The Magee-Gutierrez Expedition,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 55 (1951), 43–48; Paul Kruse, “A Secret Agent in East Florida: General George Mathews and the Patriot War,” *J. Southern Hist.*, 18 (1952), 193–217; Rembert W. Patrick, *Florida Fiasco: Rampant*



Mathews and Magee could easily see these acts in keeping with the traditions of local diplomacy. To Madison, these expeditions threatened to disrupt American relations with Spain and its new ally, Great Britain. Likewise, fomenting revolt in East Florida could force the president into a corner in much the same way as the West Florida Convention's declaration of independence. Writing of the situation in East Florida, Madison complained to Jefferson that "Mathews has been playing a strange comedy, in the face of common sense, as well as of his instructions. His extravagances place us in the most distressing dilemma." Madison ordered a quick end to Mathews's activities, and Secretary Monroe sent a perfunctory letter informing Mathews that "You will, therefore, consider your powers as revoked." Madison and Monroe were equally relieved when Magee's separatist movement disintegrated.<sup>60</sup> The unpredictability of men like Mathews and Magee solidified the administration's trust in Claiborne and goes a long way toward explaining why a man whom Jefferson and Madison had chosen with considerable reservations eventually won their praise for his ability to discern the administration's goals.<sup>61</sup>

Even as the federal government responded to problems of local diplomacy and the aftermath of expansion on the Gulf Coast, white Louisianians advanced agendas that, given diplomatic priorities, the Madison administration could not ignore. In his December 1811 annual message, Madison had made clear his intention to mobilize for a war with Great Britain. Meanwhile, a convention meeting in New Orleans wrote a state constitution, a goal many in Louisiana had sought since 1803 but one that Congress only authorized in February 1811. The linkage between these seemingly disconnected events—the definitive international problem of Anglo-American hostility and the distinctly domestic process of state building—became clear in January 1812 when Julien Poydras, the president of the convention, sent a copy of a completed constitution to Madison with a letter claiming that "Motives of peculiar urgency, connected with the repose and security of the people of this territory" mandated statehood. Only a state could bring about the sort of militia reform necessary to safeguard Louisiana against invasion in the event of war.<sup>62</sup>

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*Rebels on the Georgia-Florida Border, 1810–1815* (Athens, Ga., 1954); Rufus Kay Wyllys, "The East Florida Revolution of 1812–1814," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 9 (1929), 415–45.

<sup>60</sup> Monroe to Matthews, Apr. 4, 1812, *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States*, Foreign Relations Series (Washington, D. C., 1832–1861), 3:572; Madison to Jefferson, Apr. 24, 1812, in Gaillard Hunt, ed., *The Writings of James Madison*, 9 vols. (New York, 1900–1910), 8:190; Lewis, *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, 32–40.

<sup>61</sup> Jefferson to Claiborne, Aug. 30, 1804, *Territorial Papers*, 9:281–82; Jefferson to Madison, Mar. 23, 1805, James Morton Smith, ed., *The Republic of Letters: The Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and James Madison*, 3 vols. (New York, 1995), 3:1367; Jefferson to John Dickinson, Jan. 13, 1807, in Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, 12 vols. (New York, 1904–1905), 10:340–41.

<sup>62</sup> Poydras to Madison, Jan. 28, 1812, *Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting the Constitution or Form of Government, Established by the Convention of the Territory of Orleans . . .* (Washington, D. C., 1812). For Madison's Dec. 1811 message and the chronology of his war planning, see Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783–1830* (Princeton, 1983), 79–110.

Madison could ill afford discontent on the nation's periphery, and Louisianians—much like West Florida settlers—used the president's concerns to their advantage. Eager to ensure the mutually reinforcing goals of security and loyalty in Louisiana, Madison and many of his Republican colleagues endorsed the bid for statehood. Congress created the state of Louisiana on April 30, 1812, nine years to the day after the Louisiana Purchase and less than two months before declaring war on Great Britain. The Territory of Orleans, created and organized in the wake of one diplomatic development, now ceased to exist in preparation for another.

In structural terms, statehood undermined the basis of local diplomacy. After all, the State Department surrendered its direct authority over the civil officials who had governed Louisiana since 1803. Nonetheless, local diplomacy did not end in 1812, in part because its cast of characters did not undergo much change (Madison won re-election; Monroe remained secretary of state through Madison's second term; and Claiborne won election as Louisiana's first governor), in part because the War, Navy, and Treasury Departments retained their large presence in the region, and in large part because the War of 1812 created new circumstances that fused foreign policy and domestic governance.

It was not simply that domestic concerns helped or hindered military planning during the War of 1812. Rather, people in Louisiana continued to believe that domestic and foreign policy were mutually reinforcing, an outlook that the administration shared. As Claiborne wrote to an anonymous correspondent in 1813, the war had created equally dangerous possibilities of "insurrection, invasion, or eminent danger of invasion."<sup>63</sup> When Mayor Nicholas Girod called on the New Orleans City Council to make plans for a possible invasion in September 1814, council members were "impressed, as he [Girod], that the State of Louisiana and New Orleans are in a time of crisis, and that all the authorities shall combine their efforts to prevent the danger threatening us, on the part of the enemy from within and without." To counter the threats posed by war, the council imposed new restrictions on slaves and free people of color.<sup>64</sup> State officials and army officers rushed to shore up alliances with the Caddos and to threaten other Indians against taking sides against the United States.<sup>65</sup>

Nor did these fears prove unwarranted. As the British developed plans to invade the Mississippi Valley, they hoped to capitalize on what they saw as the competing interests and fears in Louisiana. Writing in 1813 that white Louisianians were "Unconnected by blood or long fellowships with the other States of America," Captain James Sterling of the Royal navy predicted to the first lord of the admiralty that "there can be no doubt but a considerable party might be formed in favor of a separation from the United States."<sup>66</sup> In the

<sup>63</sup> Claiborne to ? July 28, 1813, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 6:248–49.

<sup>64</sup> *Proceedings of the Conseil de Ville*, New Orleans Public Library Microfilm Collection, 7:239–40.

<sup>65</sup> Claiborne to ? July 28, 1813, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 6:248–49; Andrew Jackson to Claiborne, Oct. 31, 1814, *ibid.*, 312; Claiborne to William McRae, Nov. 4, 1814, *ibid.*, 309–10; James Monroe to Jackson, Dec. 7, 1814, in Stanislaus Murray Hamilton, ed., *The Writings of James Monroe . . .*, 7 vols. (New York, 1898–1903), 5:301–02; *Proceedings of the Conseil de Ville*, 8:28–29.

<sup>66</sup> James Sterling Memorandum, Mar. 17, 1813, Historic New Orleans Collection (HNO).

summer of 1814, the British dispatched a broadside to "Spaniards, Frenchmen, Italians and British . . . in Louisiana," claiming that "the american *usurpation in this country*, must be abolished." To the carrot of liberation from American domination, the British added a stick in the form of welcoming runaway slaves and threatening white Louisianians with attack by a "large body of Indians, well armed, disciplined and Commanded by British officers."<sup>67</sup>

British tactics reinforced the entrenched belief in Louisiana that the "crisis" unleashed by war had both foreign and domestic forms. An anonymous correspondent wrote an alarmist letter to Eligius Fromentin, one of Louisiana's senators: "You know how much we have to fear about the 'domestic enemy,' and you know very well how limited is our defense in case of invasion. To what horror will our wives, our children as well as ourselves be exposed?" The author called on Fromentin to meet with Monroe (then serving an unprecedented tenure as both secretary of state and secretary of war) to secure federal troops that would help defend Louisiana against slaves and Indians. Private citizens and public officials in Louisiana made clear that an effective military strategy rested on preserving the domestic racial hierarchy.<sup>68</sup>

British troops reached Louisiana in December 1814. Slaves immediately capitalized on the situation to realize their own goals. The British promised freedom to runaways, just as they had during the American Revolution and with similar success. Slaves fled plantations in search of the British lines, exploiting the circumstances in much the same way they had on the western borderland from 1806 to 1810, when the Neutral Ground agreement created a realm outside the direct sovereignty of whites.

Andrew Jackson was already in Louisiana to take charge of what he thought would be a defense against British troops. Instead, he was driven to frustration by the priorities that white Louisianians brought to matters of military policy. White Louisianians demanded that militiamen search for runaways and patrol for insurrection. Militia officers were only too happy to oblige, for they too were slaveholders who feared the loss of property or the possibility of revolt. State leaders, militiamen, and non-office-holding whites saw the American forces that gathered in Louisiana in the winter of 1814–1815 as they had always seen the military: an armed force to defend against foreign nations, neighboring Indians, and enslaved Afro-Louisianians.<sup>69</sup>

That the British faced a united opposition in Louisiana was in no small part their own doing. British planners vastly overestimated white dissatisfac-

<sup>67</sup> Edward Nicholls broadside, Aug. 29, 1814, Edward Nicholls and William H. Percy Letters, folder 1, HNO Collection. For other attempts by the British to secure allies among the Louisianians, see William Percy, orders to ? Aug. 30, 1814, *ibid.*, folder 2; Nicholls to ? Sept. 1, 1814, *ibid.*, folder 3.

<sup>68</sup> ? to Fromentin, Oct. 10, 1814, Jacques Philippe Villeré Papers, folder 20, HNO Collection. See also ? to Jacques Villeré, Aug. 12, 1814, folder 8, *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Claiborne to Philemon Thomas, Dec. 17, 1814, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 6:323–24; A. LaBranche to Villeré, Jan. 4, 1815, folder 28, Jacques Philippe Villeré Papers; David Morgan to Edward Livingston, Jan. 16, 1815, David Morgan Papers, LSU; John Lambert to Jackson, Jan. 20, 1815, in Harold D. Moser et al., eds., *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, 5 vols. to date (Knoxville, 1980–), 3:253–54; Jackson to Claiborne, Feb. 5, 1815, *ibid.*, 270; Butler to Villeré, Jan. 21, 1815, folder 46, Villeré Papers; Lambert to Jackson, Feb. 27, 1815, *ibid.*, 290; *Proceedings of the Conseil de Ville*, 8:24–25; *Acts Passed at the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1814), 30–35.

tion. White Louisianians saw distinct advantages to citizenship in the United States, and few had any love for the British. In addition, by threatening racial revolt, the British reinforced white solidarity.<sup>70</sup> When British troops marched to destruction on the marshy fields outside New Orleans on January 8, 1815, they suffered from more than a defective set of battlefield tactics. The domestic strategies of American and British leaders alike had combined to generate the conditions that prevented a successful British invasion.

The War of 1812 would reshape the domestic and diplomatic landscapes beyond either New Orleans or even the immediate Anglo-American dispute, for the war provided the circumstances in the South that enabled the United States to attain its territorial ambitions on the Gulf Coast. As the war spun out of control, British and Indian operations on the southern borderlands created the pretext for the United States to seize those portions of West Florida the Spanish had not abandoned in 1810 as well as a sizable chunk of East Florida. Rather than rely on subterfuge of the sort exemplified by George Mathews's escapades in East Florida, Madison issued direct orders like those he had used to announce the annexation of West Florida. By the time negotiators signed the Treaty of Ghent in 1814, the United States controlled the Gulf Coast from Baton Rouge to Pensacola. These acquisitions finally accomplished the unfinished diplomatic business from 1803.<sup>71</sup>

It is tempting to attribute conditions in the Southwest to the unusual racial and ethnic composition of the local population, and to a certain degree the region's distinctive people shaped the planning and the eventual collapse of the British invasion. Yet the intersection of local conditions and national war policy was hardly unique to Louisiana. The War of 1812 exposed the impossibility of pursuing an effective military strategy without accommodating domestic pressures. Nor were those local factors always a hindrance. To be sure, political disputes between the administration and state leaders proved debilitating to federal strategy on the United States-Canadian border. On the western and southern frontiers, however, white residents proved eager to join the fight so long as military strategy also fulfilled other objectives, such as the preservation of the slave regime and the control or elimination of Indians.<sup>72</sup>

Peace in America coincided with peace in Europe, an event that more than any other established the conditions for a settlement of the disputes that fueled local diplomacy. To members of the administration, the benefits of local diplomacy that appeared so abundant from 1803 to 1815 seemed

<sup>70</sup> Claiborne to Choctaw Chief, Aug. 1812, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 6:153–55; Claiborne to Brown, July 27, 1813, *ibid.*, 245–46; Holmes to Wilkinson, Sept. 7, 1812, *Territorial Papers*, 6:320–21; *Proceedings of the Conseil de Ville*, 8:24–25; *Acts Passed at the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana*, 30–35.

<sup>71</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812–1815* (Gainesville, Fla., 1981), 42–60; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 488–90.

<sup>72</sup> Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 170–72, 181–90; William E. Foley, *The Genesis of Missouri: From Wilderness Outpost to Statehood* (Columbia, Mo., 1989), 225–33; Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767–1821* (New York, 1977), 191–245; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 177–269, 304–47; Reginald C. Stuart, "Special Interests and National Authority in Foreign Policy: American-British Provincial Links during the Embargo and the War of 1812," *Diplo. Hist.*, 8 (1984), 311–28.

increasingly scarce. Meanwhile, the pitfalls mounted. From 1815 to 1821, officials in Washington asserted their authority over the federal regime, and the residents of the southwestern borderlands found their own diplomatic opportunities increasingly limited.<sup>73</sup>

With the monarchist regime restored to the Spanish throne, the United States once again had an acceptable negotiating partner, and with the royalist political organizations that emerged in Spanish America during the Napoleonic invasion transforming into independence movements, the Spanish were eager to reach an accord with the United States. Madison and Monroe were no less enthusiastic for a settlement.<sup>74</sup> As Monroe informed the Senate Military Committee in 1815, "with Spain our affairs are yet unsettled." Nonetheless, he believed "the period is perhaps arrived when it may be practicable to settle on just and honorable conditions."<sup>75</sup> Madison and Monroe agreed that formal diplomacy among accredited diplomats might settle the disputes between the United States and Spain, so long as residents of the southwestern borderlands did not upset the negotiations.

Both the possibilities and dangers that Madison and Monroe saw on the horizon in 1815 help account for the rapid decline of local diplomacy. So too did the attitudes of a new cadre of political leaders who, in the aftermath of the War of 1812, decided that decentralizing diplomatic and military affairs did more to undermine than to promote efficiency.<sup>76</sup> Yet the end of local diplomacy in Louisiana was also the result of developments in the southwestern borderlands, and rightly so, for American foreign relations had emerged from the convergence of activities in Washington and on the frontier. As a growing number of public officials and private citizens joined filibustering expeditions on the southeastern and southwestern borderlands, members of the Madison and Monroe administrations became convinced that the domestic apparatus was undermining foreign policy, whether through the misadventures of some domestic officials or the failure of others to control their constituencies.<sup>77</sup>

Officials in Washington responded by curbing the autonomy of their frontier constabulary. In marked contrast with its silence during the interdepartmental squabbling of 1810–1811, for example, the administration now took charge of policymaking in the Mississippi Valley. In 1815, Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Crowninshield lamented that naval officers had a ten-

<sup>73</sup> Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams: England and the United States, 1812–1823* (Berkeley, 1964); Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 501–17.

<sup>74</sup> Monroe to Military Committee of the Senate, Feb. 22, 1815, in *Writings of James Monroe*, 5:323–24; Madison to William Crawford, Sept. 23, 1816, in *Writings of James Madison*, 8:366. See also Monroe to John Quincy Adams, Dec. 10, 1815, *ibid.*, 5:380–81. For the changing Spanish-American relationship in the 1810s, see Lewis, *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, 115–25.

<sup>75</sup> Monroe to Military Committee of the Senate, Feb. 22, 1815, in *Writings of James Monroe*, 5:323–24. For similar comments, see Monroe to Adams, Dec. 10, 1815, *ibid.*, 380–81, and Madison to William Crawford, Sept. 23, 1816, *Writings of James Madison*, 3:23.

<sup>76</sup> Monroe to the chairman, Military Committee of Senate, Feb. 1815, in *Writings of James Monroe*, 5:306–21; Monroe to Gallatin, June 1, 1816, *ibid.*, 384–87; Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity* (Charlottesville, 1990), 430–38; Lewis, *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, 48–50, 58, 120–24.

<sup>77</sup> Lewis, *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, 32–40, 80–84, 92–94.

dency “to harass those vessels whose objects and pursuits appear to be honest & lawful.” Crowninshield ordered Captain Daniel Patterson, the latest commander of the New Orleans naval station, to “endeavour to restrain the Commanders of Gun Boats and other vessels from committing any unnecessary violence upon the rights of others.” To this end Patterson should keep his vessels in the Gulf of Mexico, where naval officers could pursue pirates and, not coincidentally, where they could avoid any municipal entanglements. This letter bore James Madison’s stamp, for the president had drafted specific orders to Crowninshield that limited the navy’s domestic involvement as well as its institutional freedom.<sup>78</sup>

Nor did officials in Louisiana complain. Claiborne and his successor, a Creole named Jacques Philippe Villeré, increasingly detached themselves from foreign policy after 1815. Claiborne and Villeré continued to place demands on the administration for resources (a long tradition in the West), but diplomatic resources were not among them. With the State of Louisiana replacing the State Department as the employer for Louisiana’s civil officials, Monroe’s secretary of state—John Quincy Adams—paid little attention to internal affairs in the Southwest.

But local diplomacy was not without its holdouts. The New Orleans City Council exploited the new restraints on the United States navy to wrest control of the New Orleans waterfront.<sup>79</sup> The council also asserted broader diplomatic pretensions. In 1818, council members dispatched delegates to Havana to secure documents that would help settle disputes over landownership.<sup>80</sup> Striking though this sort of diplomatic initiative may appear, more striking was the absence of any reticence on the part of the City Council or any real concern in the administration that local officials would negotiate with officials of a European colony. Yet the council could sustain its domestic and foreign initiatives in large part because the administration acquiesced.

The shifting nature of power in the port of New Orleans also testified to the way that the relaxation of international tension stripped some activities of their diplomatic import. A similar change in circumstances worked to the detriment of the Caddos. Since 1803, the strategic situation in the Southwest enabled the Caddos to position themselves as a polity entitled to diplomatic engagement and political autonomy. With the Spanish removed from the equation in 1821, first by the Transcontinental Treaty and then by Mexican independence, the United States government could treat the Caddos as domestic dependents rather than independent actors. The Caddos suffered accordingly. As Secretary of War John C. Calhoun wrote to Indian agent John Jamison in 1818, “the

<sup>78</sup> Crowninshield to Patterson, Dec. 8, 1815, *Letters to the Secretary of the Navy*, reel 12, 233; Madison, “Instructions prepared for the Navy Department,” 1815 or 1816 (exact date unknown), in *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison* . . . , 4 vols. (Philadelphia, 1865), 3:10–11. See also Crowninshield to Patterson, Sept. 8, 1815, *Letters to the Secretary of the Navy*, reel 12, 200, and Crowninshield to Patterson, Mar. 7, 1817, *ibid.*, reel 12, 465.

<sup>79</sup> *Proceedings of the Conseil de Ville*, 9:111, 10:75, 185, 196, 11:225; Crowninshield to Patterson, June 27, 1815, *Letters to Captains*, reel 12, 159. For Patterson’s later relations with the council, see *Proceedings of the Conseil de Ville*, 10:190–91, 11:48. For the council’s long-term interest in controlling the port, see Mather to the City Council, Mar. 11, 1809, *Messages from the Mayor*, 3:118, and *Proceedings of the Conseil de Ville*, 8:42, 10:195.

<sup>80</sup> *Proceedings of the Conseil de Ville*, 9:246; *ibid.*, 10:24, 87, 133, 184, 212.

Indians must be made to yield . . . to the milder influence of our laws.”<sup>81</sup> By 1835, the United States government wielded sufficient power to force the Caddos from their land, eventually removing them to Oklahoma.<sup>82</sup>

The disappearance of the Neutral Ground in 1821 was a familiar tale on American frontiers, where negotiation gave way to the hegemony of the federal government. Yet there is more to this story than the federal policy of conquest or the suppression of native peoples. Studies of other frontiers suggest that, regardless of race or nationality, people asserted their diplomatic prerogatives on borderlands ranging from Texas to New England, and public officials scrambled to determine the threats as well as the possibilities that came with this activity. Frontier life often took shape in a diplomatic context that in turn shaped domestic governance.<sup>83</sup>

Perhaps it was fitting that James Monroe—who had signed the Louisiana Purchase—was president when Congress approved the Transcontinental Treaty in 1821, ending the disputes generated in 1803. That his own secretary of state, John Quincy Adams, played almost no role in local diplomacy was equally appropriate. The system that governed in Louisiana had outlived its utility.

James Monroe suggested both the context and the complexity of local diplomacy in an 1820 letter to Thomas Jefferson. Monroe began by showing how little the administration’s diplomatic goals had changed in the seventeen years since Jefferson dispatched Monroe to Paris. He revisited the concerns that had precipitated the government’s Louisiana policy. He continued to believe that “further acquisition, of territory, to the West & South, involves difficulties, of an internal nature, which menace the Union itself. We ought therefore to be cautious in making the attempt.” As if still fighting old policy battles, he reasserted the validity of Republican fears that failure to control the Mississippi would stimulate disunion. “That was not a question with Spain, in reality,” he concluded, “but one among ourselves.”<sup>84</sup> He could not have been more correct, for a broad range of actors scattered across the continent had determined the nation’s international affairs.

<sup>81</sup> Calhoun to Jamison, Jan. 8, 1818, in Robert L. Meriwether et al., eds., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, 26 vols. (Columbia, S. C., 1959–1998), 3:476. For similar comments, see Jamison to Calhoun, May 26, 1819, *ibid.*, 4:75–76; Jamison to Calhoun, June 16, 1819, *ibid.*, 110; and Calhoun to Jamison, July 5, 1819, *ibid.*, 149–52.

<sup>82</sup> Smith, *Caddo Indians*, 103–08. For the changes in perspective that came with the resolution of boundary disputes among white nations, see Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders.”

<sup>83</sup> Robert E. May, “Young American Males and Filibustering in the Age of Manifest Destiny: The United States Army as a Cultural Mirror,” *Journal of American History*, 78 (1991), 857–86; Stuart, “Special Interests and National Authority in Foreign Policy”; Samuel Watson, “United States Army Officers Fight the ‘Patriot War’: Responses to Filibustering on the Canadian Border, 1837–1839,” *J. Early Republic*, 18 (1998), 485–519. For studies that consider the diplomatic context of racial policy, see Randolph Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865* (Baton Rouge, 1989), 62–66, 180–81, 218; J. Wendel Cox, “A World Together, a World Apart: The United States and the Arikaras, 1803–1851” (Ph. D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1998); Woody Holton, “Rebel against Rebel: Enslaved Virginians and the Coming of the American Revolution,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 105 (1997), 157–92; Christopher Morris, *Becoming Southern: The Evolution of a Way of Life, Warren County and Vicksburg, Mississippi, 1770–1860* (New York, 1995); and White, *Middle Ground*.

<sup>84</sup> Monroe to Jefferson, May 1820, in *Writings of James Monroe*, 6:120, 123.