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Introduction by Dustin Walcher, Southern Oregon University

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Introduction by Dustin Walcher, Southern Oregon University

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On 2 December 1823, James Monroe sent his State of the Union message to Congress, and within it the principles that would comprise his doctrine. Concerned that members of the Holy Alliance (France, Austria, Russia, and Prussia) might seek to capitalize on the collapse of the Spanish Empire, British Foreign Secretary George Canning had suggested a joint Anglo-American statement of opposition. Alone among Monroe's advisors, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams argued instead for a unilateral declaration that the Western Hemisphere was closed to further European colonization or political intervention. Henceforth, the Doctrine insisted, the republican New World would remain separate from the decadent colonialism of the Old World. Adams' approach – ultimately adopted by Monroe as his own – was directed as much at Russian incursions in the Pacific Northwest as it was at the specter of Holy Alliance intervention in what only later would be called Latin America. Monroe's message was audacious. To the extent that they took it seriously in the first place, Europeans ridiculed Monroe's message, correctly observing that the United States was incapable of enforcing such a policy. Monroe understood the limits of his nation's capabilities too; he never specified any obligations on the part of the United States. No matter – despite Monroe's decision to go it alone, London's interests, as was often the case as the nineteenth century progressed, were basically aligned with Washington's. While the United States was incapable of effectively challenging the Holy Alliance on the high seas, the British Navy was. In any event, for reasons unrelated to the Monroe Doctrine, members of the Holy Alliance did not intervene directly while Spain's former colonies set about the arduous task of nation building.

In subsequent years, Monroe's message was largely forgotten. It was not enforced, for instance, when Great Britain took control of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands in 1833. Ultimately, it took James K. Polk to resuscitate the Doctrine. His purposes were quite different from those of the fifth president. Whereas Monroe called for non-intervention in the affairs of the hemisphere, Polk used the Doctrine to justify U.S. continental expansion. Subsequent presidential administrations throughout the nineteenth century trotted out the 1823 message for their own purposes. Just as often, they ignored it in situations where it might have been applied, as was the case when France intervened in Mexico between 1862 and 1867, and when the United States went to war with Spain in 1898. Ultimately, Theodore Roosevelt offered his own Corollary to Monroe's message that allowed the Monroe Doctrine to serve as a vehicle for U.S. overseas empire.

Commensurate with the Doctrine's significance, historians of U.S. foreign relations devoted substantial attention to it when their field was young. Leading scholars analyzed the Doctrine at length – including most notably Dexter Perkins in his impressive three-volume history.<sup>1</sup> But as the collective attention of the field by and large turned to more

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<sup>1</sup> Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1826* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927); Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1826-1867* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1933); Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1867-1907* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1937). See also Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Latin American Policy of the United States: An Historical Interpretation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace,

contemporary topics, few historians have devoted substantial attention to nineteenth century subjects of any sort, let alone the origins and evolution of the Monroe Doctrine in the years before the Roosevelt Corollary. Enter Jay Sexton, for whom toiling on long-neglected but clearly significant topics has become a calling card. His history of the financial diplomacy of the mid-nineteenth century will long serve as the standard work on a topic of monumental importance.<sup>2</sup> In his second book, Sexton turns his attention to the Monroe Doctrine.

Sexton surveys the history of the Monroe Doctrine from its origins in the geopolitical landscape of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries through the 1904 invocation of the Roosevelt Corollary. The subject matter is broad enough that Daniel Walker Howe finds Sexton's "account of the Monroe Doctrine comes close to constituting an interpretation of nineteenth-century United States foreign policy in general." At the most basic level, Sexton seeks to explain how a policy statement aimed at limiting European influence in the Americas evolved into a declaration of U.S. hemispheric hegemony. Along the way, he explains the significance of the Anglo-American relationship and how different politicians used the Monroe Doctrine for their own purposes – often altering its meaning in consequential ways.

The reviewers offer great praise. Peter Onuf declares that "Sexton's study of the Monroe Doctrine deserves a broad readership among American historians generally, not just students of foreign policy history." Howe calls it "a fascinating book that takes the Monroe Doctrine, a virtual cliché of American historiography, and dispassionately dissects it, showing that it has had many different meanings, purposes, and interpretations from the time of its original promulgation to the time when Theodore Roosevelt formulated his famous Corollary to it." It is "a lively and well-written account" in the words of Max Edling. Anders Stephanson finds that Sexton offers an "incisive and informative account of the Monroe Doctrine." Indeed, the reviewers direct the bulk of their attention to exploring the book's themes and, especially in the case of Stephanson, expanding on the Doctrine's meaning and long-term significance. There is comparatively little in the way of pointed criticism.

The reviewers highlight the distinct themes that drive *The Monroe Doctrine*. First, as Edling in particular discusses, the Doctrine embodied the tension between anti-colonialism and imperialism. Monroe's unilateral declaration did not include the statement of self-restraint – a U.S. renunciation of territorial ambitions in the hemisphere – which Canning had proposed. Instead, Monroe insisted that the hemisphere was closed only to European interventionism and colonialism. Monroe's message emphasized the hands-off approach that Adams favored, while obligating the United States to no specific action, and without

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and Co., 1944); Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1949).

<sup>2</sup> Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

foreclosing the nation's future options. Indeed, in later years the intentional omission became critical. Defining their continental consolidation as something distinct from colonialism, Americans distinguished between their own empire of liberty and European-style colonial expansion. In this way, even as Americans expanded their territorial holdings the Monroe Doctrine's East-West dichotomy remained useful. By the turn of the twentieth century, the situation had changed. "In a world where the United States was an empire among empires," Edling explains, "rather than a republic among monarchies, and where the promotion of civilization rather than republicanism was the primary foreign policy goal, a Monroe Doctrine stipulating a longitudinal divide between fundamentally different and inherently antagonistic political regimes in the Old and the New World no longer made sense." Consequently, under Theodore Roosevelt the Monroe Doctrine was transformed from a declaration of separation between the imagined republicanism of the New World and the decadence of the monarchical old world into a legal instrument permitting the United States, as part of the 'civilized' Global North, to impose order upon a portion of the supposedly 'barbaric' Global South. Rather than oppose the European powers, Roosevelt embraced their larger imperial project, and remarkably in light of its origins, used the Monroe Doctrine to do so.

"The Anglo-American relationship, changing and problematic, lies at the heart of Sexton's account of the Monroe Doctrine," Howe writes, summarizing a second theme in the book. Specifically, as Onuf explains, the two countries embarked upon parallel imperial projects and shared other common characteristics throughout the nineteenth century. "Both experienced industrialization, commercial expansion, technological progress, urbanization, democratization, humanitarian reform, and imperialism – all on a foundation of common language, law, representative politics, evangelical religion, and culture," he observes. Sexton is in many ways at his best when exploring the bilateral relationship. As he does in much greater depth in *Debtor Diplomacy*, he emphasizes cooperation over confrontation. Situating this theme in a broader context, Edling concludes that "[w]orking mostly alongside rather than against each other, it seems that the British Empire and the United States and their brand of liberal politics have done more than anything else to shape the world in which we all live."

Third, Sexton argues that "there were as many Monroe Doctrines as there were perspectives on nineteenth-century statecraft: an isolationist one and an internationalist one; pro- and antislavery interpretations; expansionist and antiannexationist ones; interventionist and noninterventionist; one concerned exclusively with ideology and another only with interests" (246-47). As Edling points out, "[t]he doctrine was a slogan, not a policy; a symbol more than an idea." Sexton details the Doctrine's many variations. Politicians of nearly all political stripes appealed to the Doctrine in support of their own objectives. If doing so meant reshaping the Monroe Doctrine, then it was reshaped. Edling agrees that "the importance and longevity of the Monroe Doctrine rest on a plasticity that allows for creative reinterpretations." Stephanson alone among the reviewers expresses some skepticism about framing the Doctrine in this manner. He argues that "the number of such perspectives [on the Doctrine] is limited and ... there was something about the original version that tilted the proceedings in a certain direction." In this respect, Stephanson might be characterized as a Monroe Doctrine originalist; for him, efforts of self-

serving politicians to alter its meaning in service of later political arguments cannot change the core of the Doctrine. Sexton does not appear to disagree on the substance of Stephanson's claim, although he remains interested in explaining how subsequent generations used (or misused if you prefer) the Doctrine. Stephanson certainly acknowledges that other politicians came to claim the mantle of Monroe, and so understands Sexton's intent. Consequently, Sexton's analysis highlights the busy intersection of foreign policy formulation and domestic politics.

Stephanson's contribution to this roundtable – what he calls his “riff” on the Monroe Doctrine – calls for a brief explanation. Coming in at approximately 16,000 words (including notes), and exploring the subject of the Monroe Doctrine broadly, it is an article in its own right that should be widely read. As has always been true in my experience with Stephanson, both in print and in person, he sets off to tackle big ideas. Here he fundamentally offers an intellectual history of the Monroe Doctrine – and as such provides a useful compliment to Sexton's political history. But as Sexton observes in his response to this roundtable, the two agree more than they disagree, and the two approaches can best be understood as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

Sexton has produced an important book that surveys one of the most significant vehicles in the history of U.S. foreign policy – the Monroe Doctrine – over the course nearly a century. Particularly in light of the relative scarcity of new scholarship on nineteenth century U.S. foreign relations, this is a book that is needed. It will likely find its way into a number of course syllabi and will serve as the new starting point for serious investigations into Monroe's message of 1823, and its subsequent incarnations.

### Participants:

**Jay Sexton** is University Lecturer and Tutorial Fellow in U.S. history at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He is the author of *Debtor Diplomacy: American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (2005), *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (2011), and, co-edited with Richard Carwardine, *The Global Lincoln* (2011).

**Dustin Walcher** is Associate Professor of History and Strategic Studies at Southern Oregon University, and a review editor for H-Diplo. He received his Ph.D. in 2007 from the Ohio State University. A specialist in the history of U.S. foreign relations, he is currently completing a manuscript that examines the failure of U.S.-led economic initiatives and the rise of political violence in Argentina during the 1950s and 1960s.

**Daniel Walker Howe** was educated at East High School, Denver, Harvard, Oxford, and (for his Ph.D. in History) the University of California at Berkeley. He has taught at Yale for 7 ½ years, UCLA for 19 years, Oxford for 11 years, and most recently, at Wofford College in South Carolina for a semester. He is the author of *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861*; *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*; *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*; and *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2008.

**Max M. Edling** is Lecturer in Early North American History at King's College London. He is the author of *A Revolution in Favor of Government: The U.S. Constitution and Origins of the American State* (2003) and is currently completing a monograph on American public finances and the funding of wars and territorial expansion from 1783 to 1867.

**Peter S. Onuf** is Thomas Jefferson Foundation Professor of History at the University of Virginia. He is currently collaborating with Annette Gordon-Reed on an intellectual biography of Thomas Jefferson, "Most Blessed of the Patriarchs."

**Anders Stephanson** is the Andrew and Virginia Rudd Family Foundation Professor of History at Columbia University. He is much interested in the Cold War as a periodizing device and the history of concepts.



Every student of American history is familiar with the Monroe Doctrine: As part of his annual message to Congress of December 2, 1823, President James Monroe laid out in succinct form the fundamental principles of American foreign policy. Drawn up by John Quincy Adams, the message declared that “the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.” In a further challenge to the Old World monarchies, Adams and Monroe stated that “any interposition for the purpose of oppressing” the newly independent nations of Spanish America made by a European power, or any attempt at “controlling in any other manner their destiny,” would be regarded as “the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.” Here was a hint, surely, that any government intervening in American affairs would suffer the consequences in the shape of U.S. countermeasures. All attempts by European great powers to “extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere,” being “dangerous to our peace and safety,” would be regarded as a direct threat to U.S. security concerns. By arguing that the “political system” of Europe was “essentially different” from that of America, the Monroe Doctrine divided the world into a Western hemisphere where republican values, and by extension the United States, would govern and an Old World, which would be left to sort out its follies of great power struggles and monarchical rule as best as it could.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine’s central principles can therefore be summarized in the concepts of republicanism, anti-colonialism, and nonintervention. As every student of American history knows, these principles have guided U.S. foreign policy ever since.

Or have they? Jay Sexton’s *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* demonstrates that there is considerably more to the conventional story than first meets the eye. To begin with, Monroe’s message was a lot vaguer than is often assumed. It was not framed as a binding foreign policy statement and the term ‘doctrine’ was not used before the 1840s. Statesmen of the early republic did not speak of the “Monroe Doctrine” but of “Mr. Monroe’s Message” (107). Although the message provided a very broad concept of U.S. security—no new regime antithetical to republican principles could be established anywhere in the Americas—it was silent on the crucial issue of U.S. commitments. What would Monroe and his cabinet do if the Holy Alliance decided to go ahead with intervention in Spanish America? What would they do if Russia decided to press its claims to the Pacific Coast?

The message was also silent about the intervention and expansion of the United States in the hemisphere. The doctrine originated in a proposal from British Foreign Minister George Canning that Britain and the United States jointly declared the new nations in Spanish America to be off limits to the Holy Alliance. In return they would promise not to acquire new territory in places vacated by the decrepit Spanish Empire. Canning’s proposal was rejected, however, and it is no coincidence that the non-expansion pledge was left out of

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<sup>1</sup> Transcript of Monroe Doctrine, “100 Milestone Documents,” National Archives and Records Administration, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=23&page=transcript>

Monroe's message. This convenient oversight made it possible to combine opposition to European colonialism with support for United States imperialism.

The broad but vague principles of the message were open to many different readings. Like other founding documents, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the importance and longevity of the Monroe Doctrine rest on a plasticity that allows for creative reinterpretations. As Sexton makes abundantly clear in his analysis of the Monroe Doctrine's fate in the long nineteenth century, the doctrine offered little in the way of foreign policy guidance. Throughout the nineteenth century there was in fact not one but many Monroe Doctrines. Isolationists and expansionists, abolitionists and slave owners, interventionists and anti-interventionists, ideologues and realists all laid claim to the mantle of Monroe. The doctrine was a slogan, not a policy; a symbol more than an idea.

In the 1840s, pro-slavery statesmen used the Monroe Doctrine to support their call for the annexation of Texas. They were attempting to prevent Britain from influencing the Lone Star Republic to abolish slavery. At about the same time, James K. Polk found in the doctrine a defense for a preemptive move against Mexico. Again Britain was the villain, which together with France cast hungry eyes on the California coast. By going to war against Mexico, Polk willingly abandoned all pretence of protecting American sister republics from predatory nations. In the decade before the Civil War, Stephen Douglas turned to the Monroe Doctrine to legitimize a program of territorial aggrandizement, whereas William Seward saw in the doctrine a blueprint for unfettered global commerce. After the war, the 1823 message was used to support an active foreign policy program that contained annexation of Pacific and Caribbean islands, commercial dominance in South America, and the building of a U.S. controlled isthmian canal in Central America. With his 1904 Corollary, Theodore Roosevelt transformed the doctrine into an interventionist policy on behalf of Old World powers whose rights had been trampled underfoot by miscreant nations in the New World. Yet within little over a decade there was a complete *volte face* when Woodrow Wilson reinvented the doctrine as a statement of self-determination and anti-colonialism, and placed it at the center of his vision for a new world order.

Sexton sets out to use "the Monroe Doctrine to examine how the state that emerged as the preeminent global power of the twentieth century was the product of the protracted, contentious, and interconnected process of anticolonial liberation, internal national consolidation, and imperial expansion" (5). If the multifarious interpretations of the doctrine are one striking feature of his book, it is equally remarkable how for long stretches of time the Monroe Doctrine disappears from view altogether in Sexton's history of U.S. foreign relations in the first century after independence. This suggests that not only was the meaning of the doctrine hard to pin down, but in many cases, and quite contrary to established opinion, its relevance as a guide to the nation's foreign policy was often of marginal importance.

This is all the more remarkable because the events that occurred when the Monroe Doctrine failed to make an impact were themselves far from marginal. Only a few years after Polk had used the doctrine to warn European powers to keep out of North America, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty invited Britain to share the management of a Central American



isthmian canal with the United States. Because contemporaries ascribed enormous importance to the canal, it was no small concession to accept that Britain had the right to a say in how to run a major transportation and communications route running straight through America's back yard. The treaty also pledged that neither nation would acquire new territory in the region. Later the British envoy recalled how the "Munro [sic] doctrine" had been "tacitly set aside" during the negotiations. Administration critic James Buchanan noted how the treaty "altogether reverses the Monroe Doctrine and establishes it against ourselves rather than European Governments" (118).

At no point in the nineteenth century was Monroe's message more openly challenged than when France intervened in Mexico during the American Civil War to set up a monarchical regime under Archduke Maximilian of Austria. This was precisely the kind of action that Monroe had declared "dangerous to our peace and safety." Yet the Lincoln administration never referred to the Monroe Doctrine. "Remarkably," Sexton writes, "neither Seward not Lincoln used the phrase 'Monroe Doctrine' in public between 1861 and 1865" (148). The irrelevance of the doctrine went further than this. Lincoln's cabinet in fact accepted the fact that foreign powers had a right of to intervene in Spanish America in order to collect their unpaid debts, which was the original reason for Napoleon III's Mexican adventure.

A decade after the Civil War ended, American statesmen again set aside the Monroe Doctrine. This time it was Ulysses S. Grant's Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, who invited six European powers to help the United States put pressure on Spain to end a rebellion in Cuba. "What has become of the Monroe Doctrine?" asked the London *Times*. "The right of the leading European Powers to interfere in the politics of the American Continent has been recognized, and in some sense invited, by the State Department" (173). Although the Monroe Doctrine figured prominently in the crisis with Britain over the border between Venezuela and British Guiana in the 1890s, it was not used to justify war with Spain in 1898. It was "the dog that did not bark" (212).

Both the flexibility of the Monroe Doctrine and the growth of U.S. strength are perhaps best revealed by contrasting the international situation and intellectual context of Monroe's message to Congress in 1823 with the situation and context of the message Roosevelt delivered to the same body in 1904. Sexton begins his story not in the 1820s but in the struggle for independence half a century earlier. It is only against the backdrop of the foreign policy ideas of the founding generation that we can make sense of the original formulation of the doctrine. Historians of the founding have begun to pay greater attention to the larger geopolitical context of the Atlantic World in recent years. This attention has pointed to the precarious situation of the newborn United States in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries. The Atlantic never formed an "Ocean of fire" in Jefferson's memorable phrase, insulating the New from the Old World.<sup>2</sup> To the contrary, the Americas were highly integrated in the Atlantic economy, and, by extension, in European great power struggles.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Elbridge Gerry, May 13, 1797, Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, 12 vols. (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1904-1905) VIII, 287.

Over the course of the eighteenth century North America and the Caribbean grew in importance as both war theatres and spoils of war. This development continued for almost half a century after the Declaration of Independence. The War of Independence was, of course, an international war between European great powers, something diplomatic historians have always recognized but mainstream historians have seldom fully appreciated. After the Peace of Paris of 1783, international pressure continued and was an important reason for the overhaul of the federal union that took place in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. Only two years later the French Revolution broke out and in its wake followed another prolonged great power conflict that drew the United States into several war scares in the early and mid-1790s, a phony war with France in 1798, and a real war with Britain in 1812. The volatile international situation also caused domestic political strife and bred party formation and conflict. In the Americas, trouble was not over with Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. The return of Ferdinand VII to Spain from French captivity triggered a decade of social unrest and civil war in the Spanish Empire that eventually led to Spanish American independence. In short, when Monroe communicated his message to Congress more than a hundred years of history suggested that the integration of European and American political and economic life was likely not only to continue, but to deepen.

Such a development would not have been so problematic were it not for the fact that the New World was built on a different political fundament than the Old. Whereas European statesmen recognized that theirs was a continent made up of competing states whose only guarantee for survival was the international balance of power, the leaders of the American Revolution hoped to start their world over again. The founders designed the United States as a federal union of state-republics, which promised to banish war from the North American continent. The *raison d'être* of this political regime was the safeguarding of the liberty and property of the citizen and one of the greatest threats to this regime came from the demands of the state. State demands, in turn, were driven by international war. American statesmen consciously rejected Europe's 'war system,' by which they meant the balance of power, military preparations, and frequent wars. Paradoxically this decision led to the formulation of exaggerated security concerns, which in the hands of some politicians would serve as an excuse for a foreign policy of imperial expansion. International peace depended on the absence of powerful neighbors with antagonistic interests on the North American continent. To create and maintain such an environment, it would sometimes be necessary to expand.

Against this backdrop it made perfect sense for Monroe and Adams to declare that monarchical Europe should keep its hands off republican America. It also made perfect sense to keep the question of the role of the United States in the development of the hemisphere open. To guard its own security effectively, the federal government had to have the freedom to act in every way that its leaders thought necessary to best defend and promote the interests of the nation.

Now fast forward to the turn of the nineteenth century and we find a much more self-confident United States. The eight decades that followed on Monroe's message saw the

European powers leave the North American continent and accept U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. It was a trend crowned by Britain's recognition of the right of the United States to intervene in the border conflict between Venezuela and British Guiana in 1895, victory in the Spanish-American War of 1898, and the American construction of the Panama Canal, which began in 1906. The grand geopolitical reconfiguration that occurred around 1900 brought with it a change in American self-understanding and foreign policy ideology. The period has always stood out as the brief phase when the United States seemed to be openly imperialist. But perhaps equally important is the fact that this was also one of the few periods when American statesmen downplayed their nation's unique mission in favor of assuming a shared role with the other great powers of the world in upholding so-called 'civilization.' Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that the rhetoric of the period was steeped in machismo and braggadocio, leading politicians could be very clear sighted about their nation's past. "We have a record of conquest, colonization, and territorial expansion unequalled by any people in the nineteenth century," Senator Henry Cabot Lodge could boast in 1895 (213). In short, the nation's past had made the United States eminently well-equipped to govern the world alongside Britain, France, Prussia, Russia, and a rising Japan.

In a world where the United States was an empire among empires, rather than a republic among monarchies, and where the promotion of civilization rather than republicanism was the primary foreign policy goal, a Monroe Doctrine stipulating a longitudinal divide between fundamentally different and inherently antagonistic political regimes in the Old and the New World no longer made sense. The Roosevelt Corollary updated the Monroe Doctrine. The dividing line now ran along a north-south axis between civilized and uncivilized powers. In this world it fell to the great powers to uphold civilization against the breaches perpetrated by uncivilized peoples and their governments. "Chronic wrongdoing," Roosevelt explained, "or an impotence, which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power" (229). But if Roosevelt updated the Monroe Doctrine, he also fundamentally changed it. Imperialist intervention now replaced the anti-colonialism of the original message. "The 1823 message," according to Sexton, "challenged the international order espoused by the European powers; the 1904 message embraced it" (237).

Sexton's book is a lively and well-written account of the long nineteenth century when "the United States transformed itself from a weak collection of former colonies into a global power that peoples around the world respected and, at times, feared" (244). The curious blend of anti-colonialism and liberalism, on the one hand, and the expansionism and interventionism, on the other hand, which Sexton finds at the heart of the Monroe Doctrine, also remained an essential feature of United States foreign policy in the twentieth century. The book therefore serves as a natural starting point for a discussion of the curious breed that has dominated world politics for the better part of two centuries: the liberal empire.

In fact, some of Sexton's most perceptive comments concern the relationship between the

United States and the British Empire. Although that relationship was fraught by intermittent conflict, it was symbiotic over the long run. The United States benefitted from direct investment from Britain but also indirectly by taking advantage of Britain's liberal trade regime. Thus it was not Monroe's and Adams's warnings, but British statecraft backed by the power of the Royal Navy, that kept the Holy Alliance out of Spanish America. By the time that Roosevelt presented his corollary, Britain was happy to pass over the duty not only as international policeman, but as liberal international policeman, to the United States. Between these points in time, Britain's commercial practice, navy, and special brand of imperialism served as a model to many American statesmen for their nation's development. It is to be hoped that Sexton will continue this investigation into the intertwined fates of the British Empire and its ex-colonial offshoot in the future. Working mostly alongside rather than against each other, it seems that the British Empire and the United States and their brand of liberal politics have done more than anything else to shape the world in which we all live.

Jay Sexton has written a fascinating book that takes the Monroe Doctrine, a virtual cliché of American historiography, and dispassionately dissects it, showing that it has had many different meanings, purposes, and interpretations from the time of its original promulgation to the time when Theodore Roosevelt formulated his famous Corollary to it. Sexton interprets the original Doctrine as a compromise among the rival agendas of Massachusetts, Virginia, and South Carolina, likening it to the Missouri Compromise that had preoccupied the Monroe Administration scarcely three years earlier. He emphasizes that the Doctrine, embodied in no comprehensive diplomatic document but buried in fragments of Monroe's Annual Message to Congress of December 1823, listed things that European powers should not do, but specified nothing about what the United States would do. It was left to later generations to fill in the gaps in the open-ended statement. The Monroe Doctrine became an icon of American popular nationalism because later politicians whipped up enthusiasm for it in order to legitimate agendas of their own. Disagreement over the meaning of the Monroe Doctrine actually began as early as the bitter debates during the John Quincy Adams Administration over whether the United States should participate in the Panama Congress of 1826.

The meaning of the Monroe Doctrine evolved over time as the world itself did. Originally an assertion of anticolonialism, it became a code word for American imperialism. Within a generation of its formulation, President James Knox Polk was pointing to "Monroe's Doctrine" to justify acquisition of Texas, Oregon, and California. The two major antebellum political parties, the Jacksonian Democrats and the Whigs, had their own versions of what policies the Monroe Doctrine implied. In particular, they differed in their attitude toward the superpower of their age, the British Empire. The Democrats were thoroughgoing Anglophobes, who feared British power lurking everywhere and justified U.S. expansion as necessary to forestall British interventions. The Whigs, on the other hand, were less interested in territorial expansion than in economic growth and diversification. "Our augmentation is by growth, not acquisition," declared the great Whig Daniel Webster, "by internal development, not by external accession" (101). The Whigs wanted commercial expansion—including freedom of the seas for American merchants. They aspired to increase U.S. trade with Latin America. A measure of cooperation with the world's greatest naval power accordingly made sense.

The Anglo-American relationship, changing and problematic, lies at the heart of Sexton's account of the Monroe Doctrine. This puts him among the historians currently interpreting nineteenth-century American history in the light of its relationship with Britain. So far the most important of these works is Sam W. Haynes's impressively researched *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World*.<sup>1</sup> Haynes understands the Democratic Anglophobes more fully than he does the Whigs, and in this respect Sexton provides a valuable supplement; he quite appreciates the Whig attitude toward Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010)

Sexton emphasizes the practical reality that Britain was by far the largest foreign creditor of the United States. American transportation projects, whether canals, pikes, or railroads, depended heavily on British investors. The Whigs, supporters of “internal improvements,” wanted British good will. When several states proved unable to meet their obligations to bondholders after the Panics of 1837 and 1839, it seriously strained Anglo-American relations. Arkansas, Mississippi, and Florida even repudiated the principal on their debts, which British bankers remembered when, a generation later, the Confederacy came asking for loans. On this subject, Sexton is able to draw upon his own first book, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873*.<sup>2</sup>

One reason why British and American history were so closely intertwined in the Victorian era is that Britain and the United States shared many historical developments during the nineteenth century. Both experienced industrialization, commercial expansion, technological progress, urbanization, democratization, humanitarian reform, and imperialism--all on a foundation of common language, law, representative politics, evangelical religion, and culture. Britain was farther along in the evolution of industrialization, so Americans looked at Britain as both an exemplar and a cautionary tale. This is the theme of my essay, “The Victorian Period of American History,” in *The Victorian World*, ed. Martin Hewitt.<sup>3</sup> Sexton’s view of the Anglo-American relationship as fundamental to U.S. diplomacy in the nineteenth century is congruent with the perspective there expressed.

Sexton shows how American imperialism evolved from the pursuit of continental dominance in the antebellum era to a more global, European-style imperialism by the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, his account of the Monroe Doctrine comes close to constituting an interpretation of nineteenth-century United States foreign policy in general. Sexton interprets the Monroe Doctrine as applied in practice according to the programs and priorities of American domestic politics. Foreign policy is as integral to political debate as domestic policy. Accordingly, his book ends up being as much about party politics as it is about diplomacy. Even in foreign affairs, Sexton maintains, U.S. decision-makers played to a domestic constituency at least as much as to a foreign audience. Sexton’s ability to pull off this broad definition of foreign policy is a tribute to his range and the depth of his understanding.

Sexton’s treatment of Grover Cleveland’s invocation of the Monroe Doctrine to demand that Britain consent to arbitrate the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana in 1895 is subtle. As a Democrat, Sexton argues, Cleveland did not really want to lay the groundwork for an active foreign policy of the kind Theodore Roosevelt espoused, any more than he wanted an active, interventionist federal government at home. Cleveland merely exploited popular Anglophobe prejudices, as the Democratic Party had done so often before.

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<sup>2</sup> Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (New York: Oxford Historical Monographs, 2005)

<sup>3</sup> Martin Hewitt, ed., *The Victorian World* (New York: Routledge, 2012)



Arbitration, when it came, eventually awarded over ninety percent of the disputed territory to British Guiana, but by that time the American public had moved on to other issues.

For Sexton, the topic of the Monroe Doctrine is not only a close look at a single famous policy statement, but a launching pad for the analysis of a whole variety of subject matter. His principal themes are three: (a) the evolution of U.S. foreign policy in the nineteenth century, especially the rise of American imperialism; (b) the close but volatile and fraught relationship between Great Britain and the United States during the *Pax Britannica*; and (c) the way politicians have manipulated an iconic symbol for partisan advantage. Sexton's book, written with commendable lucidity, should make a superb reading assignment for courses on American diplomatic history.

Review by Peter Onuf, University of Virginia

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Jay Sexton's study of the Monroe Doctrine deserves a broad readership among American historians generally, not just students of foreign policy history. President James Monroe's December 2, 1823, message warning the European powers against recolonizing or otherwise interfering in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere only became the "doctrine" that supposedly defined American foreign policy in retrospect. Symbolizing an "imagined tradition of unalloyed anticolonialism," Monroe's message could be appropriated for radically changing purposes, ultimately justifying an imperial posture in the hemisphere and beyond (13). By the time Theodore Roosevelt fashioned his 'Corollary' to the Doctrine in 1904, the U.S. had asserted its right to intervene anywhere in the hemisphere in order to uphold civilized values and its own national interests. The U.S. was always more interested in its own independence than that of its neighbors to the south. Under the Doctrine's pretext of combating the evil empires of the Old World, American policymakers practiced an "imperial anticolonialism" in the United States' sphere of influence: "South America will be to North America," a writer in the *North American Review* predicted in 1821, "what Asia and Africa are to Europe" (6, 41).

Of course, as we all know, Monroe's message had no immediate practical effect. If the Holy Allies were deterred from intervening in the collapsing Spanish Empire under the counter-revolutionary Troppau doctrine of 1820, it was because of British, not American, diplomacy. Jefferson and Madison were prepared to collaborate with the British, but John Quincy Adams, Monroe's secretary of state, was convinced that there was little threat of intervention and therefore "that there was no need to ally with the British" (52). "Wary of acting without the support of their former colonial master," the administration hoped that the British would follow the American lead with an anti-intervention proclamation of their own. By itself Monroe's message would not deter the Holy Allies, but it did offer the new nation the opportunity to position itself at the vanguard of an emerging liberal international order as it proclaimed its fealty to "the principles of republicanism, anticolonialism, and noninterventionism" (55). In the wake of the Missouri Crisis (1819-1821) in which the very survival of the union seemed in doubt, this was a morale-boosting reminder that the United States had—by asserting its independence and promoting the cause of national self-determination, neutral rights, and free trade—initiated a new epoch in international history. Linked to this mythic conception of the revolutionary founding, Monroe's message became a symbol of the new nation's uniqueness, or what we now call "American exceptionalism."<sup>1</sup> Foreign commentators greeted the impudent 'doctrine' with bemused contempt when it was first issued; as the United States expanded territorially and extended its influence into what would be called 'Latin America,' contempt gave way to a skepticism about 'idealistic' professions and self-interested practices that is shared by most foreign policy historians. But the mythic conception of national mission continues to hold sway among most Americans, even among skeptical progressives who characteristically chastise successive generations of statesmen for not living up to the founders' exalted, idealized standard.

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<sup>1</sup> "American Exceptionalism: Is it Real, Is it Good," forum in *American Political Thought*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 3-128; see my "American Exceptionalism and National Identity," 77-99.

Sexton's history of American foreign policy in the hemisphere offers plentiful ammunition for progressive exceptionalists. But Sexton, an American in Britain, is no exceptionalist and *The Monroe Doctrine* is happily free of the polemical tone that characterizes their scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Instead of focusing his study on the putative ideals that define the regime, Sexton emphasizes the central role of Britain and the British Empire both in American foreign policy and in national identity formation. Revolutionary patriots insisted that independence changed everything, juxtaposing American freedom to British tyranny, New World to Old. They were the first exceptionalists, and of course they protested too much. In recounting the "near-century-long struggle for hemispheric ascendancy between Britain and the United States" that the diplomacy around the Monroe Doctrine launched, Sexton's study underscores both similarities and continuities between *two* nations and *two* empires (63). "The empire that was most dramatically rising in the nineteenth century was not the American but the British," even in the 'American' hemisphere (17). While Americans touted their revolutionary, anticolonialist credentials, "Britain simply had more to offer South Americans than did the United States"; "it was the British, not the Americans, who constructed a new system upon the ashes of the old Spanish empire" (69, 70). That system reached deep into—and fueled the growth of—the U.S. economy itself, belying American claims to independence. In Sexton's neat formulation, "British power was an inescapable reality that paradoxically threatened and benefited the young American republic" (19). The "collaborative competition for ascendancy in Latin America" underscored Americans' mixed feelings about the former mother country. Anglophobia and Anglophilia were closely aligned, sometimes virtually indistinguishable, both testifying to intense feelings.<sup>3</sup> "Nineteenth-century Americans," Sexton accurately notes, "were obsessed with the British Empire" (7).

Sexton's description of the 'British world-system' suggests striking parallels to the Americans' so-called 'empire for liberty.' The decentralization of the British Empire "paradoxically fueled its integration" (18). The empire's prosperity and power rested less on military might than "upon the interconnected foundations of commercial and financial power, naval supremacy, communication networks, technological innovation, and political cooperation with indigenous elites" (18). Westward expansion in the United States relied heavily on military force and 'indigenous elites' were replaced by political entrepreneurs on the settlement frontier. But decentralization was crucial to the success of the Americans' 'anticolonial imperialism.' Centrifugal tendencies were curbed by "generous incentives," including disproportionate representation in Congress and ready access to public land, patronage, and lucrative contracts (34).<sup>4</sup> Under the aegis of their federal

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<sup>2</sup> Sexton and Australian Ian Tyrell convened a conference on "American Anti-Imperialism" in May 2011, in which I participated.

<sup>3</sup> Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Business: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> See my "The Louisiana Purchase and American Federalism, in Peter S. Onuf, *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (University of Virginia Press, 2007).

republican system, independent Americans were able to resume a process of imperial expansion that the Revolution had interrupted. For many patriots, misguided British policies in the wake of the Peace of Paris (1763) that threatened to halt expansion and thus betray their conception of the empire—and their identity as Anglo-Americans—animated their (extraordinarily reluctant) independence movement. The patriots' discovery of universal, natural rights in the 'rights of Englishmen' is a familiar and flattering story line for Americans; it obscures and mystifies a more important, ongoing imperial commitment to the continent's colonization.

Recent work on settler colonialism, most notably Christopher Tomlins's brilliant *Freedom Bound*, brings the suppressed narrative into clear and compelling view.<sup>5</sup> Americans generally 'distinguish' the sordid, materialistic motives of revolutionary founders from their idealistic and visionary better selves. But commitment to empire, as American patriots came to know and love it, was by their lights principled and progressive; far from abandoning the empire when they killed the king, they instead gave it a new federal republican rationale and structure that disguised its originally British character. British commentators saw through American pretenses. "The plain *Yankee* of the matter," a British newspaper quipped, was the American "wish to monopolize to themselves the privilege of colonising" the entire continent: this was Monroe's real message to the Holy Allies and, of course, to the British as well (62). Yet there was also a growing British recognition over the course of the century that they had something to learn from the Americans. If "the British Empire most often provided a model—both positive and negative—for nineteenth-century Americans," it was also true that "the federal and anticolonial model of the American empire intrigued British leaders" (246).

Anglo-American interdependence may have been reflected in the emergence of a 'liberal' international legal regime that facilitated British and then American versions of globalization. Liberal internationalism was predicated in turn on a conception of the great divide between modern progressive, 'civilized' nation-states of the North and the semi-barbarous 'uncivilized' states of the global South. The North-South distinction—first 'manifest' to Americans in their mission to civilize their continental West—was never far below the surface, for Americans had always aspired to recognition by the civilized 'powers of the earth.' That aspiration was itself a sublimated, diffuse expression of a more fundamental identification with Britain. Racial ideology buttressed these claims to civility and reinforced Anglo-American affinities. British recognition of America's hemispheric hegemony was the ultimate product of the "collaborative competition" Sexton so ably recounts. The Roosevelt Corollary codified that North-South latitudinal distinction, effectively supplanting the Monroe Doctrine, "which divided the globe longitudinally into the New World and Old World" (237). British commentators applauded the Roosevelt Corollary and Roosevelt was prepared to return the compliment (237). "The downfall of

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580–1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). See the forum in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 68, no. 4 (October, 2011), 701–38. See also the essays in Jack P. Greene, ed., *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

the British Empire,” he asserted, would be “a calamity to the race, and especially to this country” (238). Not coincidentally, these two great nations faced new threats across the globe, most notably from Germany. They were now prepared to recognize the affinities—the common interests and ideals—that had bound them so closely through the first century of American national history. Anglophobia had long animated American advocacy of universal, democratic values, sustaining “the simultaneity and interdependence of anticolonialism and imperialism” in American foreign policy (5). That paradoxical commitment to incompatible diplomatic imperatives, grounded in the Anglo-American relationship, has enabled successive generations of policymakers to live with—or be oblivious to—fundamental contradictions. Here, Sexton concludes, was “the great paradox of the Monroe Doctrine: its anticolonialism and idealism—its enlightened call for a new world order premised upon nonintervention, republican self-government, and an open world economy—justified and empowered an imperialist role for the United States in international affairs” (248).

*A Riff*

When Harry S Truman declared his ‘Doctrine’ in March 1947, he did not know he was doing so, in which regard, curiously, he was following the example of what turned out to be the model, namely, the Monroe Doctrine, whose originators (chiefly James Monroe and John Quincy Adams) did not know they had created any ‘doctrine’ either. In both cases, categorizing a policy principle a ‘doctrine’ was subsequent and invented by others. The time lag, however, was radically different. The Monroe statement (or *statements*) of 1823 did not become the Monroe Doctrine until, generally, the 1850s.<sup>1</sup> Truman’s global dualism, by contrast, was baptized a ‘doctrine’ at once because it was in fact seen as a new Monroe Doctrine, a doctrine in the same spirit but pertaining to the world as a whole rather than only the Western Hemisphere.

Within days, indeed, what had initially been called the ‘new Monroe Doctrine’ became the ‘Truman Doctrine’ in its own right. The immediate naming, at home and abroad, had to do with the impression that Truman had declared something quite as momentous in scope as the Monroe Doctrine and with a similar ring to it. There was a connexion of sorts: a principle of U.S. foreign policy relating to a larger space and featuring (arguably) some kind of obligation of guardianship. Oddly, there was also a similarity of immediate policy which had to do with material assistance to Greece: the desire to avoid it in 1823, the obverse extension of it in 1947. No president before Truman, in any case, had ever been dignified with a doctrine attached to his proper name in the manner of the original, no matter how decisive and important a shift he represented. There was no Wilson Doctrine. There was no (Franklin) Roosevelt Doctrine. The closest one gets is the (Teddy) Roosevelt Corollary to the Doctrine; but even he typically only got to be a revision, if not a footnote. The partial exception here was named after a Secretary of State: Henry Stimson’s Doctrine in 1932 that the U.S. would not recognize any territorial annexations acquired by force. Stimson’s juridical principle, however, was of limited applicability and symbolic charge; and events soon overtook it anyway. Transcending Monroe’s original, then, would require the stunning move to globalism in 1947.

Once that globalism had been achieved, the presidency was off to the races. Thus Truman’s latter-day simulacrum became itself the actual model, viz. the model for the myriad of ‘doctrines,’ some more real than others, ascribed ever since to postwar presidents and even a couple of lesser figures. These ‘doctrines’ work increasingly as a media exercise, as a branding event: every president must have one ascribed to him. Gerald Ford, whose reign was brief, escaped that fate; and the whole point of Barack Obama’s approach seems to be the avoidance of doctrines, though his non-doctrine will probably soon be called a doctrine

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<sup>1</sup> James Polk can lay some claim to having invented the term earlier. Thus, in October 1845 in private conversation with Senator Thomas Hart Benton, he refers twice to “Monroe’s doctrine,” typically with regard to the Pacific Northwest. See *The Diary of James K. Polk during his presidency, 1845 to 1849* (Chicago: McLurg, 1910), vol. I, 70-1. The term does not come into general usage, however, until the 1850s.



too, at which point one hopes the notion will have become meaningless. Inflation notwithstanding, the string of 'doctrines' from Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush, does have some structural continuity in connecting principle and space, usually taking the form of an answer to the question as to what kind of responsibilities an area or problem (allies?) signifies for the United States and in what name. The striking feature of the postwar doctrinal 'process' is, however, that every administration must come up with something perceived to be distinctly new at the same time as the new must be declared in the name of tradition. It is the privilege, indeed the duty, of every White House to figure out some seemingly original statement that defines its profile, the requirement being that it speaks within the eternal essence of 'America.'<sup>2</sup>

This is in accordance, of course, with the established notion of doctrine as the authoritative teaching of that which is unquestionably fitting and correct. The religious connotations, military usage from the late nineteenth century onwards notwithstanding, are never far from the surface; but it remains that the White House is not the Vatican, or for that matter the Communist Party of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It is not incumbent, in other words, upon any administration to have a correct view on everything under the sun and to maintain a continuous record of that correctness. The duty to invent the essence anew, in fact, also involves its opposite, the prerogative to forget and to ignore. This capacity for inventing and forgetting in the United States is facilitated by the peculiar combination of global power with a political system which is thoroughly anchored in domestic structures and concerns.

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None of this is within the formal compass of Jay Sexton's incisive and informative account of the Monroe Doctrine in the nineteenth century; but it is hard not to read it against the backdrop of the most recent invocation on the model (typically self-conscious to the point of postmodern pastiche), namely, the Bush Doctrine. It was a pity, accordingly, that Sexton (or his editors) chose not to add a final chapter on the twentieth century and what happened to the Monroe Doctrine as a form. Sexton's analytical focus, at any rate, is *the political*, which is a less obvious choice than meets the eye. By the 'political' here is meant the realm of men (they are all men) in the government who ran foreign policy in the nineteenth century, a small, very small, circle which extended into Congress now and then, as in the 1850s, but not consistently; and, to a lesser degree, the foreign policymakers engaged in the diplomacy and statecraft that concerned the Monroe Doctrine and the United States. Historically, then, the question is this: how does the Monroe Doctrine, or what comes to be invoked in that name, play in the force field of politics, domestic and international, at different times? Since that force field is volatile and not centered around foreign relations, the history becomes one of the sporadic and the discontinuous. Thus Sexton writes that "there were as many Monroe Doctrines as there were perspectives on

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<sup>2</sup> On some of these doctrines, see the special issue of *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 36:1 (March 2006). I wrote the present essay before reading it to see if I would reinvent the wheel. There is some overlap with the articles by Mark T. Gilderhus and Serge Ricard but there was no extensive reinvention.

nineteenth-century statecraft” (246).

I myself will argue that the number of such perspectives is limited and that there was something about the original version that tilted the proceedings in a certain direction. Appropriation, nonetheless, is the name of the game and so it is more than conventionally important to say that there is no single thing, organism or essence marching through history that is the Doctrine, more a loosely connected series of moments when it comes to the fore and into play, which is what interests Sexton. That the field, the setting, and the players are not immediately given is clear from even a cursory dip into the most extensively researched moment in his sequence, the composition of the original message. Who precisely wrote what and with what intention and scope is still not beyond dispute. It is not even entirely obvious what constitutes the ‘Doctrine’ within the annual message to Congress in December 1823 where ‘it’ appears.

Usually presented in summary form, quotations excised from the longish message, the ‘Doctrine’ was in fact anything but a pithily packaged statement. Though subject to condensation, it was really about two different problems in two different areas. Thus there was an early teaser paragraph, written in properly courteous terms by Adams, in response to a tsarist claim in the Northwest Pacific as well the British position there, to the effect that the United States now considered “that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.” By ‘colonization’ is meant here *settlement*, occupying new or disputed territories and putting them under European sovereignty. The message then continues with some other foreign issues before shifting to topics such as the annual compensation to the post masters (\$353,995.98), only getting back towards the end to ‘our’ textual matters. There is a passage about the Greek independence struggle, followed by the subsequently famous paragraphs asserting a fundamental, political difference between Europe (more precisely the Holy Alliance) and the Western hemisphere along with the concomitant principle of mutual non-engagement. The United States, it is also said, would find it an unfriendly act if any European power were to interpose itself in the affairs of the newly independent states in the Americas (recognized, as it happened, by the United States only *very* recently). Greece aside, this second section is chiefly about Spanish America and the risk, an insubstantial one, that the Holy Alliance might extend its reactionary restoration in Spain itself into recolonization of the previous possessions in the Americas. Recolonization, then, was grasped as a move to reassert rule over now independent republics. The two immediate issues at stake in the message overlap in that both concern European ‘colonization,’ but they are by no means identical.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The entire message can be found in *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875: Journal of the Senate of the United States of the United States of America*, Volume 13, 9-24. The distinction between the two referents was well laid out already by John Bassett Moore, “The Monroe Doctrine,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 11-1 (March 1896), 1-29. Moore would later play a central (one might say variable and instrumental) role both in Roosevelt’s handling of the Dominican events leading up to the Corollary and the legal issues concerning the Panama claims. On Moore, see Benjamin Coates, “Transatlantic Advocates: American International Law and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1898-1919,” unpubl Ph.D.

Much ink has been spent on sorting out the precise authorship, and the possible influence of other figures on those authors (e.g. Jefferson's communications with his neighbor Monroe); I agree with Sexton that Adams (indisputably) wrote the non-colonization passage and had a powerful role in the final composition of the rest, though the sum total, if there is such a thing, was a compromise.<sup>4</sup> 'Authorship' meanwhile is mostly interesting because it allows for a better analysis of the actual content of the eventual Doctrine, to which I shall return in greater detail later as it is in fact much more interesting and complicated conceptually than it seems. I mention the matter now to illustrate that the message, the mere 'text' itself, involves any number of events, personalities, intentions, ideologies, policies, places, targets and diverse power games. The context is potentially endless.

Sexton's choice of context, let it be said, generally works well in his sense of political play, the sequence of different settings, not completely anew each time but not with any simple continuity either. His salient theme throughout is that no serious policymaker ever pondered a foreign policy without bearing firmly in mind, in fact calculating quite carefully, the domestic function and effects. Put in that form, the proposition is hardly surprising. Sexton, however, goes one step further: he shows that the inside and the outside are never *distinct*, certainly not as distinct as they are in the contemporary European setting. To no little degree, of course, the reason is the extraordinary fluidity and 'open-endedness' of the federated Union in the nineteenth century. The 'border' could not steadily be maintained, literally and conceptually, because so many things were, to put it vulgarly, up for grabs and could not firmly be situated either inside or outside. There were, for example, the possible effects of Caribbean liberations (*prima facie* in the spirit of the Doctrine) on the southern slave states. Expansion in the west in the 1840s, also with reference to the Doctrine, put into question what might be called the internal balance of power. Present in its absence, slavery was throughout the Basil Fawltian 'don't mention the war'. After the Civil War, there were more immediately instrumentalist ways of out-maneuvering domestic opponents by beating the nationalist drum in the name of the now putatively 'founding' document of 1823.

What complicates this diffusion and confusion of the foreign and domestic further is that *the opposite is also true* at certain moments: the U.S. presidency possesses an astonishing license to act and to 'create' its own realm of action vis-à-vis the outside. The effects can be nigh-on world-historical in scope. Consider Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase or Polk's war of aggression against Mexico, two contingent 'events' that created the United States as we know it, though the second almost ended up destroying it. A combination of presidential initiative and a certain, historically unrepeatable situation on the North American continent and the Atlantic world, produced successful expansion on a scale that in turn

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dissertation, Columbia University 2010. My impression is that the period between 1895 and roughly speaking the U.S. entry into World War I witnessed the most sustained debate about the Doctrine.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Sexton's authoritative account, 49-62.

generated and corroborated massive belief in providential favor, a belief only momentarily shaken by the Civil War.

The individual moments here are well known: the peculiar circumstances of the composition of the Message in the fall of 1823 (the formation of the reactionary Holy Alliance in Europe, the crumbling Spanish empire in the Americas, the dragged out process of U.S. recognition of the postcolonial states, the British and Russian problem in the Northwest, Adams's rewriting of Monroe's and John Calhoun's early suggestions into something quite different); the forgetting or putting aside of the message until Polk found a use for it in his double effort (together with James Buchanan) to define the Oregon boundary and to seize a vast part of Mexico; the conflicts over territory and slavery in the 1850s in the context of 'America' followed by the Civil War (when Lincoln and Seward, with a keen eye on the British, kept mum about the Doctrine while the French made their disastrous move in Mexico); the post-bellum, gradual, uneven transition towards great power status that would eventually make possible the break into empire proper in 1898, crowned by the Roosevelt Corollary, the advent of an outright protectorate over the Caribbean Basin, an order of protection and obedience. Sexton covers this well and soundly. He is especially interesting, to me, on figures of less obvious prominence such as Hamilton Fish, who is well worth the attention (and already resurrected in an earlier Sexton publication). A reading of the better-known Richard Olney, Grover Cleveland's Secretary of State, makes sense of his apparently strange move from the inflated vision of U.S. power in 1895 ('sovereignty' in the Americas) to the criticism of Teddy Roosevelt's imperialism a few years later. Sexton, as befits a scholar of U.S.-British relations, is also highly informative on the role and place of the hegemon of the nineteenth century, and on the intricate political, economic and cultural relationship between the United States and Britain which arguably marked the trajectory from start to finish.

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Nonetheless, I have one or two quarrels and some remarks of elaboration. They concern the meaning of the Monroe Doctrine and how its history might be written. There are many different appropriations but the original meant something not only quite purposeful (as Sexton himself lays out) but more distinct in its diversity than what the *New York Times*, in 1858, pontifically called "that vague potency."<sup>5</sup> The pronouncements of 1823 entail some constitutive tensions and discrepancies which make the production of the 'Doctrine,' the range of its possible appropriations, a more telling matter than one might expect from the purely instrumental appropriations.

The first objection is however largely empirical and I pose it in Sexton's own terms, which is to say, those of 'statecraft.' It has to do with law and international law in particular. Sexton, on the whole, ignores it *as a distinct problem*. He is not interested in law as statecraft. Yet by the early twentieth century, 'international law' had become an inescapable reference point for U.S. statecraft and the particular status of the Monroe

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<sup>5</sup> *New York Times*, 18 Dec 1858, 4.

Doctrine from this angle became a divisive issue. Let us recall that, with the exception of William Jennings Bryan, every single living Secretary of State from 1892 until 1920 was a member of the American Society of International Law (founded in 1906 when its roll-call included virtually the entire top echelon of the State Department). By this time, as Benjamin Coates has shown, to grasp “international relations in the United States at the normative level was to do so as ‘international law.’”<sup>6</sup> Elihu Root, on that score, always recognized that the Doctrine was no part of international law, that in all essentials it was a U.S. policy. His whole project of putting the Platt Amendment into the Cuban Constitution, *insisting* on it in fact, had to do with his conviction that it was now, in the new imperial moment, necessary to invest the Doctrine specifically with juridical status as recognized force, if not full-fledged law.<sup>7</sup> This question was in turn intimately tied to the whole problem, adumbrated in Sexton’s account, of 1898, having to do with exceptionalism and the critique of it among the great-power theorists and practitioners of that era: the shortcoming, the gap if you will, in the general posture and system of the United States having been diagnosed by them as an insufficient capacity to act and compete as a Great Power, which is to say as a *European* power. International law has always been a tricky issue in that context. For traditionalists, the question becomes how far and in what way the exceptional nation can subject itself to law that is not exclusively its own. For great-power enthusiasts, it becomes a language of international, largely western, civilizational development: it is rules of the club, how the accepted members are supposed to conduct themselves. Traditionalists in the United States then looked (in a minor key) to the Doctrine as one way of maintaining difference; Great-Power enthusiasts did not. Latin American contemporaries, meanwhile, saw the possibilities here to counteract the imperialist implications of the Doctrine by using the Doctrine, or a different sense of it, to blunt and circumvent imperialism in its most unadorned form.

The surge of the great-power enthusiasts around 1900 did in fact produce a different Doctrine, based on civilizational responsibility for a ‘sphere.’ This, in turn, raises the question on what grounds, where and to what an extent such a responsibility applied legitimately, from a U.S. perspective, to other imperial and/or civilizing agents. I will pursue that issue by going back to the original Doctrine, or, rather, that set of statements within Monroe’s message which eventually came to make it up; and with that starting point, I want to do a bit of a riff on Sexton’s account, the object being to see if one can say something by way of conceptual history about why the ‘Doctrine’ took the course it did.

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Sexton provides, as mentioned, a contextual account of the composition and the compromises that went into it along with a textual précis. He also emphasizes, with good reason, the ‘negative’ qualities which made it productive of so many appropriations. Stating

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Coates, “Transatlantic Advocates.”

<sup>7</sup> See Christina Burnett, “Contingent Constitutions: Empire and Law in the Americas,” PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2010, ch. 5.



what the European powers, more precisely the Holy Alliance, could not do in the western hemisphere as far as the United States were concerned (still a plural at this stage), it said nothing as to what these federated states of the New World would actually do in case of a breach. There were several intimations: peace seriously disturbed, the United States would be 'unhappy,' take it in the gravest possible way, and doubtless be forced to act in some as yet undefined but commensurate manner. It was all very hazy. Why indeed be more specific? Adams was nothing if not a wily diplomat. Words are commitments. The fewer commitments, the greater one's flexibility of action. Adams was keen on U.S. flexibility of action.

There was another reason. The administration did not wish to explore the question of potential retribution because it would have revealed that the United States actually could not do very much at all. Again, Adams was able to counter Monroe's (and behind him Jefferson's) attempt to offer more militant language. As it turned out, the United States did precious little in the few cases where flagrant breaches seemed to occur. Andrew Jackson, far from opposing the British colonization of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands, in fact paved the way for it, this being the very site where, in a double irony, the United States a century and a half later in the otherwise Monroe-thumping Reagan administration came to give substantial support to the Thatcher government's costly recolonization. Nothing on any *serious* scale was, however, ever done by European powers in the nineteenth century by way of recolonization since none of them had any interest in it, the exception being the French misadventure in Mexico. As Adams knew, neither the Alliance nor Spain had any real means of attacking the United States, or, on the whole, vanquishing the Latin American movement. Anyone in doubt could examine a fairly recent and very graphic failure: Napoleon's massive expedition force of 1802, the largest such transatlantic force ever, had met a miserable fate in trying to recolonize Saint-Domingue (Haiti), an area slightly smaller than Maryland. The British, meanwhile, who *could* have called the U.S. bluff, chose not to do so. Their imperial interest, amply and successfully pursued, was commercial and informal in Latin America. Elsewhere, ultimately, their conflicting interest in the Pacific Northwest (and momentarily Texas) did not outweigh the advantage of maintaining hegemonic control with the United States in a subsidiary role, whatever the pretensions that that role seemed to require on the part of the junior partner.

The effect at home, then, was that anyone wishing to invoke (or 'construct' shall we say?) the Monroe principles as an 'American Doctrine' could put in a claim in the abstract. There was, not for the last time in U.S. foreign relations, *no reality check*. Here, as Sexton also demonstrates in considerable detail, it was easy to conjure up a foreign threat to the Doctrine in order to justify any given action or potential action, often to gain political advantage over domestic opponents. The absence of any check also meant that, positively, one could continuously imagine and argue that it was the 'Monroe Doctrine' that had saved or protected the Americas from evil European designs, turning the statements of 1823 it into yet another 'American' myth. A precondition of that mythical potential was indeed that it referred, explicitly and implicitly, to a whole range of *American* signs: America, the Americas, the United States of America, the American continent, the American hemisphere. It is a semantic field that lends itself to ideological use.



So we have an initial proposition: the declarations, saying nothing specific about any counteraction, opened up for a wide range of possible domestic invocations and contingently-grounded foreign policies, all depending on the circumstances. This is a structural feature, to be sure, but it is essentially *practical*, a matter of (sometimes) prudent statecraft abroad and (sometimes) inflated claims at home. One can certainly read the subsequent history entirely in that vein. Taken retrospectively as a 'doctrine,' however, the statements of 1823 embody a constitutive discrepancy and some auxiliary tensions that are of the greatest importance for the range of varying, but scarcely arbitrary, content the Doctrine was later to be given. To put it simply, the postcolonial hemisphere of collective identity, the (potential) solidarity of 'the Americas' if you will, was combined with a strategic subject whose interests were particular as opposed to hemispheric. The first notion was revolutionary in conception, the latter conventional in its ensuing expressions and sometimes at odds with the hemisphere. The difference was never resolved because there was no need to do so.

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John Quincy Adams set forth the revolutionary element, though it took some time for him to come around to it and I have my doubts as to how deeply he embraced it. In pragmatic terms, he wanted to achieve more than one thing. He wanted to prevent any ambition, rhetorical or other, on the part of Monroe, Calhoun, and the United States as such, to get involved in European matters, pre-eminently that of the Greek independence struggle. The message contains, accordingly, some nice encouragement of the Greeks and a nod to the civilizational importance, given ancient history and their present enemy, of their marvellous effort - but finally nothing but sentiment filed away under the tradition of U.S. non-involvement. He also wanted to respond favourably to the substance of the British proposal regarding the dissolution of Spanish America; and he did so brilliantly by turning it into a unilateral U.S. declaration partly directed against the British themselves (and the Russians) in the Pacific Northwest and any further colonization in the name of discovery (which, however spurious, remains to this day a decisive legal justification for land title against indigenous claims). Politically correct settlement/colonization from now on would be republican and 'American.' Coupling this with the pressing need to say something about Spanish America against the Holy Alliance, Adams thus came up with the non-colonization passage of the 'Doctrine' which extended the principle to the Americas as a whole.

This is where the 'break' appears. A year earlier, Adams had changed his mind when it came to Latin America (as it would eventually be named). Mostly for tactical reasons, he had long resisted Henry Clay's demands, charged with flowery rhetoric, for recognition of the South American republics; but, in 1822, Adams and the administration decided the moment to be right, at which point his hitherto scathing view of the would-be 'American' credentials of the Latin Americans were also muted. The southern republics (Mexico would remain an 'empire' for another year) were duly recognized. In his non-colonization principle a year later, however, Adams set forth a novel notion of political space and time - novel in the context of international theory and practice, the law of nations. His formulation, declaring the Americas now 'free and independent' and *hence* ineligible for a return to colonial status, was grounded in a linear theory of historical stages according to

which republican independence as exemplified by the United States constituted the highest and final one. On this side of the Atlantic, then, lay nothing less than a new spatio-temporal sphere, a kind of imagined community of the Americas. The whole hemisphere constituted a liberated zone, a political community. Synchronic incompatibility between the principle of the Holy Alliance (i.e. reactionary Monarchy) in Europe and the Americas (i.e. republican independence, the government of the self) also entailed a diachronic aspect such that it would be unnatural, against the providential course of history, to regress from the latter to the former. The polarity between Europe and the Americas in general, the Holy Alliance and the United States in particular, was thus expressed at once spatially and temporally: the two spaces exist at the same chronological moment in two different historical epochs, the one qualitatively further ahead than the other (in fact, it had arrived at 'the end' of history).

A skeptical contemporary, say in London, might well have pointed out here that a not inconsiderable part of North America, much larger than the United States in fact, was still in the hands of European colonial powers, namely, Britain (Canada or what would become Canada in 1867) and Russia (Alaska, Russian until 1867). *Actually existing colonialism*, however, did not unsettle Adams's concept, only the extension of such rule. Adams was always convinced that European monarchy, at least in its essential, reactionary form, was historically doomed, just as colonialism was doomed. On that view, the Spanish debacle signified the deeper truth that colonial rule in the Americas had become a historical relic, a dead historical presence (or some such proto-Hegelian idea). A later passage says: "It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; *nor can anyone believe that our Southern Brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord*" (my emphasis).<sup>8</sup> No rational person or state, having achieved freedom and independence, would ever *choose freely* the reactionary system. Such a system could only be *imposed*, imposed by overt or covert violence and undue influence. The historical principle of the Americas was not in doubt, then, provided European *regression* could be kept out. Mutual non-entanglement would serve not only as a convenient policy dictated by circumstances (e.g., no intervention or actual meddling in the Greek struggle, no recolonization or intra-European transfer of the erstwhile Spanish possessions) but also as a guarantee that the natural course of history, so auspiciously embodied in the United States, would continue to its proper and logical end. One might call this an asymmetric counterconcept, a normative polarity in which the other side is by definition not only negative but also unequal.<sup>9</sup>

The reciprocity of non-entanglement in the message was inscribed in this new and expanded view of hemispheric difference. There would be no meddling on the part of either side. However, the reciprocity was not symmetrical. Monroe spoke as tradition commanded in the name of the United States, so it was not the Western Hemisphere but the

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<sup>8</sup> *Century of Lawmaking*. The quotation appears on 23.

<sup>9</sup> I take "asymmetrical counterconcept" from Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, tr. Keith Tribe, (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1985).

United States that would refrain from 'interposition' in Europe. Obversely, however, Europe was to do the same but in the Americas as a whole. There was a second asymmetry here. Non-entanglement is a normative concept, the proper way to behave in international relations which it is indeed the signal virtue of the United States (I am extrapolating) always to have observed. The other side did not show that fundamental respect for others. Reactionary monarchy, as evidenced by explicit declarations and recent actions, sought by nature to destroy freedom and independence. Who could tell if the Holy Alliance would not cross the ocean to do what it did in destroying reform in Spain? The United States would consider such actions injurious to itself and see to its defense (nothing is said about the defense of the Americas). The spatio-temporal aspect thus enters into the tradition of non-entanglement. Political difference was inscribed in the hemispheric separation. Freedom and independence form a system that, by nature, leaves others alone. Reactionary monarchy, the European system in its essence, tried to savage others in war and domination. Though, in principle, distance and difference of political systems conduce to mutual separation, the other side, then, would typically not respect that natural order of things.

The idea of such a hemispheric antagonism, despotism versus liberty, was not original. Jefferson, spatially attuned as he was, had intimated something similar on occasion for a long time, most recently in his letter (24 October 1823) to Monroe about the British proposal; and Clay, more than anyone, had invoked the idea of a system for the Americas as a 'counter-poise' to the Holy Alliance. Still, no such sphere had ever been declared before in the law of nations. This was not a mere sphere of interest, domination or security. Its closest analogue, one notes in passing, is not the eternalist and divine claims of the Holy Alliance of Adams's time but the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' which retroactively legitimated the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The Warsaw Pact, it will be recalled, was supposedly eliminating reactionary, historically regressive forces that were threatening the socialist advances and achievements, of which the Pact and its leading power in Moscow were the ultimate guarantors (et cetera, et cetera). Here too there was a linear conception of historical stages and the insistence that regression was an unnatural event, a perversion of history, to be prevented by those so appointed. There the similarities resoundingly end, however, for Adams absolutely rejected any alliance or security system for the Americas, anything that would require the United States to assume any actual geopolitical responsibilities. The only 'counter-poise' Adams was typically interested in was the United States.

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A dual question then arises. What was said of the actual nature of the intra-American relationship of the exemplary federated republic to the imagined community of free republics in the 'Americas,' in which the United States was now presumably one of several parts? And what, if any, were the responsibilities of the exemplary Republic to the zone of liberty it had now declared into existence? I will pursue this in reverse order starting with Adams's avoidance of any concrete commitment and then proceed to the larger issue of the United States in 'the Americas.'

Whether any obligations followed here is evidently not the same question as the essentially tactical silence on actual counteractions in case of transgression. Obligations are a matter not of convenience but of principle. One would think (Latin Americans certainly did and many others then and since) that *if* the United States declares (i) a liberated zone in the Americas and (ii) that the U.S. will consider future colonization and interference illegitimate in that zone, *then* some kind of obligation of action, however unspecified, is intrinsic to the setup. In other words, one might well say that a political community of the given kind implies no inherent guardianship on the part of the United States; but some kind of action pertaining to the whole is nonetheless inscribed in the axiomatic notion that any regression within the community to the despotic principle of Europe is not only unnatural but also a threat to the United States. Any such irrational regression, moreover, would be *prima facie* evidence of undue European influence. Accordingly, whatever the action, the United States had on principle to be vitally concerned with the internal and external affairs of the Americas as a whole.

This intriguing issue was left in the air or in any case never properly articulated. What was abundantly obvious, however, was that no protection or guarantees were on offer. Monroe and Jefferson had advocated something stronger but the tenacious Adams won out. The message says nothing aside from the aforementioned intimations of potential unhappiness. Nothing is said of any security umbrella or any other responsibility for the collective entity in question. Adams's own position here was crystal clear. The United States would never be a *guardian*. Being free and independent means that one can take care of oneself; and taking care of oneself here signifies competence in matters both domestic and foreign. So the security aspect is automatically situated 'below' the level of spatio-temporal identity: each should by definition be able to carry out what that identity requires. The responsibility of the United States, meanwhile, was that of a successful example, the metonymic essence, of what 'the Americas' were or should be about. Its only obligation, then, was to remain true to itself and its original promise. (Eventually, by then uniquely a president turned congressman and about to be subjected to the infamous gag rule, Adams would come to the radical view that the United States was in fact no longer true to that original promise, antithetical slavery thriving and expanding, subjugating and destroying the union of free, federated states. Slavery turned out *not* to be historically passé; time and history were still extant in the universal republic, thus requiring one last great struggle.)

Adams, strictly speaking, was thus not incoherent. The difficulty was nonetheless real. Even on his own notion of independent, individual action, there was a difference between the scope of the U.S. setup (the whole of the Americas) and that of a typical, say, Latin American republic (me and my own immediate environs at the most). Taking care of oneself would be a vastly different matter. Taking care of the U.S. self would entail, according to the message, keeping track of the issue of regress, or implantation of regressive principles, throughout the continent. So when it comes to *the range of possible events* under scrutiny, the optic of Washington D.C. was completely different from that of Buenos Aires. Moreover, concretely, if there were a European counter-revolution in the Americas, surely the declared 'injury' to the United States would require cooperation with others in the sphere of freedom and independence.

Thus it seems that Adams, or the message, was hovering between two alternative positions: the Americas as a political identity and community on the one hand, the Americas as a security zone on the other. In principle, both positions involved a 'concern' with all of the Americas with reference to potential European action which is why the differential issue was not obvious. The crux of the matter can be seen more easily, however, if one posits for a moment what the 'clean' alternatives would have looked like. First, Adams could have issued a nominal Declaration of Independence in the name of the Americas, viz. "colonialism, as far as we are concerned, is over and done with in the western hemisphere and we, doubtless along with our southern brethren, will look askance at any attempt to reintroduce it:" a matter of principled opinion so to speak sans political commitment beyond that level. Second, he (and Monroe) could have defined a security zone, turning the Americas into a sphere of vital national interest for reasons of self-preservation or some such thing, a space devoid of any political principle or other normative content. The region would become an external object of policy as opposed to a collective zone whose unifying political principle had to be defended, if only by brilliant example. Either position would have been unequivocal. The situation in 1823, however, did not call for any such choice and instead the two were defined in interlocking ways. The constitutive political difference between the hemispheres created the alleged security problem in the first place; but the defining power of interest and policy was the United States alone, which both belonged to the zone and remained apart from it. The potentially discomfited subject of security resided in Washington, D.C. and it reserved for itself, it seems, complete privilege of independent judgment.

This situation is then complicated by a further discrepancy: the imagined community of the zone was largely that: imaginary. It was a virtual community with very little basis in actual fact. Similarity of political narrative (emancipation from colonial rule, republicanism) had no real foundation in economic or military structures, no presence in reality that corresponded to Adams's concept. Buenos Aires had more to do with London and Paris than with Washington, D.C. and New York (and ironically the more 'European' Buenos Aires appeared, the more easily it may have qualified as 'American' to the United States). Moreover, the Europeans did not try to reconquer Latin America in a territorial sense. The function of the posited difference, the constitutive difference, of the hemispheres was thus really to foreground the strategic polarity between 'Europe' and the United States. So there was a reversal: what mattered in the end was the strategic polarity, not the imagined political one of the republican Americas. For as long as continental expansion in North America was up in the air, non-colonization in Monroe's terms could be applied to any European claims that competed (or were said to compete) directly with U.S. claims. Insofar as the Doctrine was invoked, then, it was to legitimate properly 'American' colonization – settlement - of the North American continent. In short, the strategic aspect became overdeterminant and typically delimited to North America and the immediate environs in the Caribbean. At the same time, one could even use the putative identity within the zone as an opening for making 'correct' claims on the 'sister republics.'

This was still to come. Arguments in Adams's moment of hemispheric debate in the mid-1820s remained sharply focused on the specter of political commitments southwards on behalf of distant and alien regimes. Such possible entanglements deeply bothered his



congressional contemporaries (or delighted them as they found the dreadful scenario an excellent opportunity to damage him). “We are the natural head of the American family,” Clay had enthused in 1818;<sup>10</sup> but when he introduced a congressional resolution shortly after Monroe’s message in that spirit, he got nowhere. Adams and Clay, by then respectively President and Secretary of State, got *somewhere*, but not very far, in 1826 when they tried to send delegates to the exceedingly modest ‘American’ congress in Panama: Adams was forced to promise that, aside from the preservation of U.S. ‘neutrality,’ the whole point of the exercise would be to establish that each participant would prevent European colonization in their own space and with their own resources. The two delegates, in any case, never made it to Panama, one having died and the other arriving too late. Congressional opposition, meanwhile, was vociferous. Senator Hayne of South Carolina, calling Monroe’s statements “extremely vague and indefinite,” insisted that the United States was “altogether free to act’ as it wished and ‘had incurred no obligations to others by the declaration.” The sentiment was not unusual. It expressed (aside from an unwarranted fear that the Black Republic of Haiti would be recognized) what was perceived as the unshakeable U.S. tradition of non-entanglement, the tradition established in Washington’s Farewell Address: nothing was to be gained and much to be lost by entering into systematic, political relations abroad. It was not the American way. Alliances, in Hayne’s opinion, were a subversion of *independence*, presumably because such relations created mutual *dependence*.<sup>11</sup> Hayne and his cohort, consequently, rejected Adams’s imagined community of free and independent republics in the ‘Americas.’ The southern brethren were no such thing. Mingling with them in any geopolitical manner was a sharp departure from the straight and narrow staked out by the Founder.

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Before I say something more about the larger question of how the United States was supposedly, and in fact, related to ‘the Americas,’ I want to note three related ambiguities and issues.

First, it is not obvious what ‘their [European] political system’ actually denotes. It can mean either (despotic) monarchy in a single state or the international (ultimately monarchical) system of Europe, as crystallized in the Balance of Power. In fact, the United States was prepared to accept monarchy in the Americas, first, very briefly, in Mexico and then more durably in Brazil, a regime with imperial pretensions to boot which Washington recognized in 1824, though it was of course a Brazilian monarchy in a manner of speaking rather than a European one. Meanwhile, the presence of *any* European state of whatever ilk, even if republican (say, later, France) or a constitutional monarchy (say Britain), could be seen as a

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<sup>10</sup> Calvin Colton. *The Life and Times of Henry Clay* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1846), vol. 1. 221 (speeches and correspondence). See also Halford L. Hoskins, “The Hispanic American Policy of Henry Clay, 1816-1828,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Nov., 1927), 460-478.

<sup>11</sup> Hayne’s statements will be found in M.M. Miller, ed. *Great Debates in American History*, Vol. 2:1 (New York: Current Literature Publishing), 1913, ch. VIII.

potential 'extension' of an alien political system, the Balance of Power more precisely, and hence to mark a security threat to the United States (and/or, again, an obstacle to expansion). It is easy to see the flexibility of that formula: almost anything by way of European action could be so construed should the occasion so demand or permit. Even actions by entities that were not strictly speaking part of the European system could be included as objective agents of it, as it were, such as a private French company intent on building an isthmian canal. The possibilities were limitless. It takes no great flight of the imagination to see how a similar matrix worked in a later period, that of the Cold War when the presence of 'their political system' once again became an ambiguously powerful concept.

The second issue is indeed to do with economics and again Adams may stand as the representative figure. It would seem odd that the political difference and lines of demarcation entailed little or no sense of *economic* power. Like many of his contemporaries, Adams subscribed to the idea that trade and exchange were natural, while politics (above all in the European sense) was a distortion of some kind. Hence the classic U.S. formula, expressed with some eloquence both by Washington and Jefferson, that a properly 'American' approach to foreign relations involved a maximum of trade/economics coupled inversely with a minimum of politics/entanglements (ideally none). Adams himself would follow this later to its logical conclusion, *extreme* logical conclusion, in his support for the British in their insistence on the open door in China, that is to say, their human right to peddle opium against the wishes of the Chinese government. He was strangely (or perhaps not) insensitive to the political power of economic relations. The British, who proceeded to 'colonize' a good deal of Latin America by economic means and procured a large stake in the United States itself in the nineteenth century were by contrast keenly aware of that power. It was only when 'the economic' became undeniably strategic, as exemplified by the issue of the potential canal, that informed opinion began in the final decades of the century to rethink space from that angle. Clamour for territorial expansion earlier was evidently 'economic' in a fundamental, crude way, as was in large part the process itself. Similarly, there was the desire, often expressed, for markets abroad, coupled curiously enough with the staunchest protectionism at home - all things being equal, trade must be 'free' as trade was free amongst the states of the federation itself. Still, these arguments were not conceptually related, at least not immediately, to the visions of an ideal order of international relations.

Britain itself formed the third submerged problem from the viewpoint of the Doctrine. The constitutive polarity was between the monarchical Holy Alliance and the republican United States, the essence, respectively, of 'Europe' and 'the Americas.' Britain, however, was not part of the Holy Alliance and its political 'system,' certainly not by 1823. So perhaps Britain was not entirely 'European?' The British themselves might have answered variously (and still do). The Monroe message included Britain as an addressee in the 'Russian' passage as regards the Northwest. At the same time, the direct origin of the pronouncements was the British proposal for a united front, supported at first by Monroe, Calhoun and, for characteristically devious reasons, Jefferson, that exemplary Machiavellian. So the exact place of Britain remained in question. Depending on the circumstances, it could be located anywhere or nowhere within the polarity. In the best of cases, Anglo-Saxonism lurking in



the background, the United Kingdom could be seen as an ersatz republic, the monarch essentially serving as the first magistrate (nothing really wrong now, at the end of the day, with Queen Victoria?) Meanwhile, as the Doctrine did not *require* any explicit placement of Britain or indeed any theorization of mediation, one could also very easily put it in the category of un-American threats, should there be political hay be in the offing.

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The exact nature of the relation to Latin America need not be resolved, then, but it is interesting for future reference to see how the avoidance was framed, the lacuna if you will. We must return to 1823, then, and say something about the subterranean problem of the Latin American republics, or republics in the making. Regarding relations within the zone of free and independent republics, the original statements say not a word. Because this was an annual presidential message to Congress whose polemical target was Europe and not Latin America, one might think the absence understandable. Yet one would have expected, at the very least, some soothing remarks about relations with the “southern brethren,” rather in the vein of the encouraging Greek passages. The eloquent silence, moreover, coincided with practice: nothing much happened except negatively, as in the debacle of the Panama conference.

Insofar as the Latin question was at all answered, it appeared in two different registers, neither of them surprising. First there was overpowering presence of the yardstick itself, i.e. the United States, the quintessence of the Americas and the narrative archetype for what was ideally to follow. The United States was the first modern postcolonial state, the result of a successful revolution against a powerful European empire (about the second such state, the black republic of Haiti, one did not wish to speak, as indeed it would take six decades and the Civil War until it was convenient to recognize it, which did not stop U.S. tolerance of endless European interventions against it). The United States had achieved, to its own satisfaction, a glorious new system of freedom, beyond the postcolonial status of independence. Mere independence in the sense of decolonization did not yet make a new republic truly ‘American.’ Decolonization had to be followed, positively, by a set of practices and institutions that demonstrated capacity to govern oneself. Most immediately, it required *free institutions*. Saliently, for example, there would have to be separation of church and state along with the elimination of clerical dominance. Nothing was more important in conventional U.S. opinion about Latin America than that facet. European monarchy and political despotism may have been ejected, but there remained the question of Catholicism and the degree to which a republic still mired putatively in religious despotism could really be ‘free and independent.’ It is well to recall, today, that ‘protestantism’ in the United States of 1823 signified not (only) a set of theological positions but a strong notion of religious freedom and independence, defined first and foremost against the model of Catholicism and secondarily against any state imposition.

The second register was the commonplace of familial analogues, according to which, most immediately, the Latin American colonies were children who had just emancipated themselves from the parent (mother usually) but not quite achieved full ‘maturity.’ There were any number of variations on this. Consider Clay’s example, more elaborate and

sympathetic in a patronizing (and faulty) sort of way than most: “Whenever I think of Spanish America, the image irresistibly forces itself upon my mind of an elder brother, whose education has been neglected, whose person has been abused and maltreated, and who has been disinherited by the unkindness of an unnatural parent.”<sup>12</sup>

The bottom line, in either case, was not in doubt. A real rupture had occurred whereby monarchical rule had been eliminated (Brazil notwithstanding) and the colonial yoke tossed away. A rupture, however, was not enough. One had to prove oneself *capable* of running oneself, of mastering oneself, of being truly free, of being truly American. The form had to be filled with real content. Here, the Latins had shown themselves wanting, mired as they allegedly were in clerical degradation and lazy self-absorption. Above all, there was the problem of chronic instability. What could be a more obvious sign of immaturity than disorder? On closer inspection, then, the capacity of Latin American republics to govern themselves, to be truly free, was doubtful. Latin America was thus a zone of *not-yet*, within the New World but not quite fully new. Even Clay, their most vociferous supporter, turned noticeably cooler once he had become Secretary of State, *disappointed* in fact as he explained in 1828 in a plaintive letter to Simon Bolivar, the Great Liberator himself, wherein Clay deplored that independence had not generally been followed by ‘free institutions.’<sup>13</sup> Daniel Webster, in a celebrated speech in the debate on the Panama Congress in 1826, had held forth on the joyous emergence of the southern republics: “well-secured popular liberty,” to be sure, was yet to be achieved by the “pupils in the school” but considering the horrible legacy of Spanish despotism they were doing admirably, looking as they rightly were to *‘that great Northern light’* for guidance. By 1843, Webster was instead using Spanish America as a negative contrast to the virtues of “English civilization, English law, and what is more than all, Anglo-Saxon blood” he was extolling in the conquest of America. Owing to the English heritage, the United States were thus already free when they became independent. The Latin republics to the south, products of Spanish despotism, were decidedly not; moreover, they showed few signs of being able to rid themselves of that dark inheritance.<sup>14</sup> Somehow, perhaps, an element of essential Europe, Spain, survived within the form of the new?

Webster’s perspective would become the matrix for the rest of the nineteenth century: questioning whether the Latins would really ever be capable of governing themselves. Evidence for a negative answer could always be found. Besides, the issue was chiefly rhetorical: no *definitive answer was actually needed*. It was in continuous suspension. When, at some diffuse future date, the New World would become wholly New south of the U.S. border, relations would by definition be rational, marked by trade and peace, the system

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<sup>12</sup> Colton, Clay, 228.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 244-45.

<sup>14</sup> Webster’s statement from 1826, “The Panama Mission,” can be found in Daniel Webster, *Works* (Boston: Little Brown, 1853), vol. III; for his subsequent reconsideration, see Daniel Webster, *An Address Delivered at Completion of the Bunker Hill Monument, June 17, 1843* (Boston: Tappan and Dennett, 1843).

then no doubt bearing some kind semblance to the peaceful order of the federated republic to the North itself (the spirit here is indicated by the rhetorical finale of Monroe's message which is not included in the 'Doctrine'). The question need not be explored in any systematic way because nothing much compelled anyone to do so. The matter, together with the precise status of the United States could thus be resolved pragmatically *by not resolving it at all*. In the absence of any sustained interest, there was no need to answer any of this.

No novel institutional arrangements followed, no significant military deployments, no strategies, no sedimented set of practices, rules and policies that can make up a policy orientation. Contingency reigned. One might say this or that. One might do this or that.<sup>15</sup>

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James Polk's revival of Mr. Monroe's message in the mid-1840s was exemplary of the reversal. He invoked it because he wanted to reassert freedom and independence from any European interference, above all British, as regards Texas, California and the Oregon Territory; and to castigate the Balance of Power. As he said at the time with customary precision: "in reasserting Mr. Monroe's doctrine, I had California and the fine bay of San Francisco as much in view as Oregon."<sup>16</sup> In Polk's version, that doctrine referred exclusively to North America but in another way it was expanded to include all European 'dominion,' even if duly sanctioned by an independent American republic. Polk's desire for expansion and colonization of the right kind came to full expression a year later when he launched a war of aggression on the properly American, non-slave, federated republic to the southwest so as to liberate choice parts of its territory for inclusion into his own federated slave republic. In South America he had no interest. The collective 'identity' of the Americas had duly been bracketed.

The record of 'the Monroe Doctrine' in the nineteenth century is thus necessarily spotty. Tellingly, it was not invoked in interstate relations until 1895. It came up domestically, as in the 1850s, in the context of matters foreign (Cuba, Nicaragua, the Clayton-Bulwer treaty on the isthmian canal, etc); but even in those cases it was never *central*. Europeans paid little attention to it; Americans, intermittently, more so, but did they do anything *because* of it? Did it become a constitutive frame for action? The answer is largely no. Only when it was transformed in the early twentieth century did it become an operational reference and a subject of real political struggle, invariably involving a legitimating history of what the true Doctrine really meant. This may also be the moment, paradoxically, when 'it' ceased to exist.

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<sup>15</sup> Thus I am tempted to think of the Doctrine as an "empty signifier" in Ernesto Laclau's sense, a discursive space that can be filled with a wide range of content (e.g. 'the people') depending on how a certain political contestation over hegemony works out. See, most recently, Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005). On second reflection, however, I think it may carry us too far afield for the present purposes.

<sup>16</sup> Polk, *Diary*, 71.

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As Sexton rightly lays out, the matter comes into a qualitatively different light once we arrive at 1898, most immediately because of the pressing question of Cuban independence and the issue of what to do with the other Spanish possessions, above all the Philippines, a space that in no way could be assimilated into, or construed as, 'America' (Hawaii was already a stretch). For the civilizational imperialists (Henry Cabot Lodge, Roosevelt, Alfred Thayer Mahan), this was not a problem because the entire framework was recast. The Roosevelt Corollary was not a corollary or a revision. It was a new doctrine.<sup>17</sup> For the Corollary was not about any difference with the Old World. On the contrary, it established an *identity* with it in the name of "the same great commonwealth of the spirit" which is "civilization," as he would later describe it. Most immediately, the Corollary was about the practical need to establish a certain right to intervene in, and order, the Caribbean Basin so as to eliminate "chronic wrong-doing," thereby eliminating in turn any legitimate demands on these miscreants that European powers might have owing to the expanding role of finance capital in the region. Hence, as often noted, the Corollary transformed the negative or defensive sense of the Doctrine *vis-à-vis* Europe into a positive and offensive right to intervene *vis-à-vis* Latin America (or at least the Caribbean Basin). The radical shift from the original sense of political community was also noted but less often put into question: that community now extended across the ocean rather than down the continental hemisphere. The United States was just, or should just have been, a better civilizational empire than its European counterparts, a better Great Power.

So we have moved here from a space, however theoretical, of republican freedom in the Americas, antithetical to reactionary, monarchical Europe, to a space of 'western civilization' which had nothing inherently to do with the Western Hemisphere. The Atlantic was no longer a line of demarcation but a *connexion*, a space of interaction without qualitative difference. We are now in fact within the *same* spatio-temporal frame. Identity extended primarily across the Atlantic rather than southwards in 'the Americas.' Once 'civilization' became the operational concept, then, all manner of places and spaces including Latin America could be redefined, reinscribed with new meaning according to an evolutionary scale, an organic process of gradations as opposed to placed within the bipolarity of Adams's conception. Conduct and character could become the criterion of classification. The Caribbean Basin, filled with irresponsible and uncouth scoundrels, needed disciplining and the United States should provide it. The United States would then finally live up to its duties and obligations, control its own backyard so as to void European meddling and also, not coincidentally, secure the entry routes to the vital isthmian canal in the making. Meanwhile, it may be conceded that the ABC countries (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, all of which were fairly European) further down the road in South America, temperate as opposed to tropical South America, might well be capable of exerting control in their immediate environs, ready to put forth their own Doctrine. (I'm paraphrasing, if not

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<sup>17</sup> A number of people then and since have taken this position on the novelty issue. Serge Ricard develops it ably and interestingly in his contribution to the *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (see n. 3).

caricaturing, Teddy Roosevelt.)<sup>18</sup>

The smooth, republican space of ‘the Americas’ had thus become a striated one, ordered according to quite different criteria, a traditional sphere of dominance, actual or potential, a subject (the United States) and an object (the rest, forgetting Canada as quasi-U.S.) and an open-ended series of other objects in the Pacific and who knows where. The utopian space of ‘America,’ always imaginary first and foremost, was here turned into something new and ‘normalized.’ It was in opposition to this shift that a few Latin Americans began to see, oddly, the potentially solidaric elements of the ‘old’ Doctrine as a way of asserting some kind of special place and relative autonomy. Not surprisingly, it was the thwarted ‘Pan-Americanism, *avant la lettre*, of the original Doctrine itself that became the privileged, if largely symbolic, solution: the free and independent republics of ‘America,’ even conceding perhaps a place for Clay’s benevolent Head of Family up north. An attempt, one might say, to revive Adams’s political community for defensive purposes to blunt unilateral excesses from the northern power.

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Roosevelt’s move, carried out with typical verve, was not without its critics. A prominent one within the establishment was Richard Olney, the former Secretary of State who had been the first to deploy the Doctrine in actual foreign policy in his famous message to London in 1895. Olney is intriguing both for what he was and what he was not, and for his searching views on the Doctrine, unstable and sometimes contradictory views which fitted no obvious conventional frame but which were more probing than those of Roosevelt, his illustrious contemporary. Sexton gives Olney proper attention but I want to pursue the matter a bit further.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Roosevelt never delved deeply into the history or conceptual difficulties of the Doctrine; and his remarks on it betray a certain impatience, as was his wont, with doctrinal tradition. Action many times seemed in need of no extensive legitimation, its logic and moral virtue being clear to every even half-witted person. For a pre-presidential example, see Theodore Roosevelt, “The Monroe Doctrine” (1895) in his compilation *American Ideals*, Vol. II, (Philadelphia: Gebbie, 1903), ch. 3. Elihu Root, Roosevelt’s organic intellectual par excellence, is typically more precise and calculating, yet disappointingly shallow perhaps for the same reason. His considered view, exceedingly legalistic and extreme in its emphasis on the security aspect, is “The Real Monroe Doctrine,” *North American Review*, 199:703 (June 1914), 814-856. In reducing the Doctrine to a mere security declaration (his preferred term) entirely devoid of any reference to political community, Root falsified the Real Doctrine, I suspect deliberately so. The gain for him was that any action in foreign policy outside the minimalist security issue, specifically, of European meddling in the Americas could be construed as one not of overbearing power but confrontation between sovereign equals. This was a clever lawyerly move but, alas, *really* unpersuasive. He was responding in part, thus pulling in the polar opposite direction, to the widely read attack on the Doctrine by the Latin Americanist Hiram Bingham the year before, “The Monroe Doctrine: An Obsolete Shibboleth,” the *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1913, 721-734. There is a good deal to be said about that article too but the reader will be pleased to learn that I shall refrain.

<sup>19</sup> The following discussion is based on four major statements by Richard Olney: “The Isolation of the United States,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 81-488 (May 1898), 577-588; “The Growth of Our Foreign Policy,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 85-509 (March 1900), 289-301; “The Development of International Law,” *American Journal of International Law*, 1:2 (April 1907), 418-430 (see also “Olney Sees Peril in New Doctrines,” *New York Times* 21 April 1907, 4); “Our Latin-American Policy,” *North American Review*, 203-723 (Feb 1916), 185-193.



Unusually, Olney was a Realist of sorts who wanted to improve the navy as well as the merchant marine but did not subscribe to the navalist imperialism of the Mahans, Lodges, and Roosevelts, nor indeed their exuberant nationalism. Unusually, too, given his background as a practicing lawyer in Massachusetts serving the Boston elite and the railroads, he was a Democrat, albeit far removed from the Bryan wing. Notably, he was not a *politician* and did not wish to be one, having made a deliberate choice in the 1870s to remain a lawyer. When Cleveland brought Olney into his Second Administration, it was thus partly for his practical expertise in law. He became Attorney General in which position he played a leading role in crushing the great Pullman Strike of 1894 by the legal means of injunctions and the innovative use of federal troops against the American Railway Union, thus inadvertently turning Eugene Debs into a marxist by putting him in prison for six months and so allowing him the leisure to read Marx. Olney, however, was not against organized labour as such. Completely confident, also unusually, as to the essentially conservative function of federal regulation, he was an early exponent of what used in the leftist historiography of the 1960s and 70s to be called 'corporate liberalism,' the adjudication of organized interests inside and outside the state in the interest of stability, if not the status quo pure and simple.

On that view, Olney represented the kind of realism that is at the heart of law as a practice and at no time in so pronounced a way as in the late nineteenth century: the unapologetic staking of claims in the interest of embodied interests, above all here the railroads which so dominated the massive development of U.S. capitalism in this era (territorially, industrially and not least financially in creating the foundation for Wall Street as we know it). Railroads, being natural monopolies, tend as corporations to operate in a zero-sum game: one occupies space or one does not, my power is the absence of yours, I stake preemptive claims to keep you out. The alternative was oligopolistic deals to divide space but the overdetermining factor was a certain lethality as condensed in the non-lethal realm of civil law. Olney was scarcely a cynical player of that game; and as a serious practitioner of law, he was also capable of thinking through, to the point of hypothetically changing shoes, the position of the other side, not a necessary feature of the typical nationalist outlook. It is safe to say, in any case, that he would have been in *no doubt whatsoever* as to how material interests operate. There was a place, certainly, for what he liked to call 'moral' aspects; but that place was decidedly secondary. Both the material and the moral, at any rate, fitted within the nebulous and capacious notion of the civilized world, international society and Christendom, the three things being essentially synonymous.

Though serving less than two years as Secretary of State after Cleveland had moved him up from Justice, Olney left a deep imprint along with his taskmaster on the history of the Monroe Doctrine (or, more precisely, the history of its appropriations) through the notorious imbroglio with Great Britain in 1895 over the border dispute between British Guiana (as it was then called) and Venezuela. One might well see the imprudence of that gambit on Olney's part, two months into his new position, as a case of lawyerly excess, overstating the claim to lay the grounds for some kind of favourable compromise down the line. There was, too, an intricate domestic political aspect of which Sexton offers a persuasive account. Ultimately, Cleveland wanted to outflank such Republicans as Henry



Cabot Lodge who were trying to make the Venezuelan issue into a world-historical struggle (Dexter Perkins's apposite verdict on the Senator's polemic - "remarkable for the number and grossness of its historical errors" - could be applied to Roosevelt's various accounts of the Doctrine as well).<sup>20</sup> By outflanking the Lodges of this world, the administration aimed to prevent any radical change in the U.S. system overall. By being militant one might avoid massive militarization. Nonetheless, it was certainly rash, not to say silly, to claim that the United States was 'practically sovereign' on the continent, a statement which has since invariably been quoted to good effect (I have done so myself). It was also factually incorrect to ground this supposed sovereignty in the enormous resources of the United States and the strategic invulnerability: the former did not easily translate in 1895 into 'sovereignty' or the capacity to make its word law in Latin America and the latter was a suspect assumption in itself, the British being quite capable, all things being equal, of inflicting immense strategic damage on the United States. Olney must have known that. Only a few years later, in any case, he himself was bemoaning the lack of U.S. commercial and political penetration in Latin America, along with the inverse posture of seclusion and isolation, mirrored in his view by protectionism in trade. By 1916, he was claiming that the sum total of the general U.S. policy on Latin America had been the Monroe Doctrine, the real Doctrine that is, which is to say something really rather minimal where he was concerned.

The British, as it happened, chose not to corner Olney. Lord Salisbury of the Foreign Office did respond eventually with a disdainful but largely correct dismissal of Olney's revived Doctrine.<sup>21</sup> There was, he said rightly, no U.S. claim to the right of adjudication in the Monroe Doctrine. Since Monroe manifestly did not issue any protectorate over Latin America and hence incurred no obligation to supervise its conduct, the United States could claim no privilege of adjudication. British Guiana, in any case, existed before Venezuela and before 1823, as the Tory lord also rightly pointed out. Nor was Olney's dictum, "American questions are for American decision," in Monroe, nor in the law of nations. Finally, there was nothing inherently "unnatural" about ruling across 3000 miles of ocean. Angered by Salisbury's response, Cleveland then upped the ante into a supremely unnecessary war scare but that is beyond my present considerations. The British, having much more pressing problems with Germany in South Africa, nonetheless went along, actually ending up getting the better deal out of the ensuing arbitration. The substance of the matter was, however, not the chief concern of Olney and Cleveland. What they achieved, the *most* important thing (domestic politics aside), was de facto British recognition of the primacy of the United States in the process of deciding potential matters of this kind. They were staking a jurisdictional claim that was essentially political; and Salisbury, despite being right historically and legally, effectively conceded that claim. The Americans were also

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<sup>20</sup> Dexter Perkins. *A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1941), 174. Henry Cabot Lodge's militant piece, "England, Venezuela, and the Monroe Doctrine," appeared in the *North American Review*, 160-463 (June 1895), 651-658. He interpreted the border conflict as a sign that Britain, having exhausted African annexation, was now turning to South America.

<sup>21</sup> Lord Salisbury's response is to be found in M.M. Miller, ed. *Great Debates in American History* vol. III (New York: Current Literature Publ, 1913), 62-67. Olney's dispatch from the summer of 1895 was published by the *New York Times* on 18 Dec 1895, 2.

serving notice that, however minimal the actual risk, there would be no Scramble for Latin America along the recent lines of Africa. U.S. interest in Venezuela faded only to return when the British and the Germans, now together, blockaded it in 1902-03 for its failure to carry out financial obligations and thereby again raised Salisbury's point that the United States had refused any responsibility for the conduct of the southern brethren. A year later, Roosevelt would have his own response to Lord Salisbury, essentially agreeing with him (while thinking otherwise) by asserting in his Corollary precisely the obligations and privileges of a protectorate in the Caribbean that had not been present in the Doctrine. Richard Olney, interestingly, was horrified.

Olney had resumed his law practice in 1897, from which position he would offer the occasional in-depth analysis of U.S. foreign relations until his death in 1917. What united these statements was a certain *problem*, dealt with in typically blunt fashion (Olney was not of congenial disposition). Given that isolation was no longer either possible or desirable in an evolutionary world of interdependence and potential civilized progress, what should the U.S. position in the world be as regards 'Europe' on the one hand, and 'America' on the other? As a member of the administration that had refused annexation of Hawaii, Olney was against turning the United States into an Asiatic power and was appalled by the annexation of the Philippines, though once it was a *fait accompli* he typically counselled British models as the most realistic alternative. He failed ultimately, both properly to articulate and to resolve this problem, but it was an interesting failure which came to focus (though he himself did not quite see that) on the nature of 'protection' and its implications, the lacuna of the original Doctrine in point of fact.

One might reformulate his problem as follows: how could the United States be the guardian of multilateral 'American' interests without also performing, really, the role of the 'sovereign,' that is, the role of deciding in the last instance? Olney knew he did not like Roosevelt's geopolitical direction. He called the Panama project a case of "lawless violence which robbed Colombia" and he denounced the Corollary as an infraction of Latin American sovereignty in the interest of Europe, a bad move yielding no tangible U.S. advantage at all. No basic U.S. interest was in fact involved: "our institutions will surely live and our people continue to prosper without the United States converting itself into an international policeman for the American continent or into a debt-collecting agency for the benefit of foreign creditor states and their citizens." Moreover, turning the U.S. into "a self-appointed guardian of the independence of the one and the self-appointed guarantor of the rights of the other" brought no real goodwill (as opposed to acceptance) from either Latin America or Europe, nor any other kind of gains. On the contrary, it threatened to make the United States into a "Caesar," viz. a "sole and supreme dictator" in the Americas.

Roosevelt, characteristically seeing the problem after the fact, hotly denied any such intention: his Corollary and Latin American policy never implied any 'superiority' or protectorate, any whiff of Caesarism. Roosevelt might actually have believed this. It is hard to accept, however, as he would couple denial with stern announcements that "if the insurrectionary habit" continued, the United States, charged with "sponsorship before the civilized world for Cuba's career as a nation," would be forced to intervene again to

establish order.<sup>22</sup> In any case, there *was* a problem and Roosevelt had a post-Rooseveltian solution of his own, namely, the aforementioned elevation of some select Latin American states to the club of guardians, thereby recasting them into ersatz Northern states. As Olney noted, creating an internal division within the Americas between, in effect, the orderly and the disorderly (or temperate and tropical) was to do away with the Monroe Doctrine because it did away with the notion of the Americas as a distinct unit. In *concrete* terms, however, Roosevelt's solution seemed not that dissimilar from Olney's own alternative vision of a "Concert of America." Pragmatic concerns aside, he wanted to preserve some defining feature for 'the Americas' in the U.S. position. At the same time he was not, *decidedly not*, an American exceptionalist in the sense of divine and/or historical chosenness. The United States, doubtless, was a glorious example of success and so forth but it was in the world and in the last instance one power of many. In this, he was similar to Roosevelt as he was too in his negative view of 'isolation.' Their difference, then, lay in Olney's dislike of colonialism and his desire to preserve a special, 'neo-Monrovia' place for the 'Americas' in the proceedings, an organized setting and position, an anchor as it were, for the United States in a multilateral frame of the western hemisphere. For Roosevelt, the Western Hemisphere was little more than a strategic concept whose value was always to be determined and so subject to change against the backdrop of Great-Power cooperation and competition, itself in turn taking place amidst the general advance of civilization. If, say, Argentina was capable of ordering its neighborhood, so much the better; but no specifically 'American' aspect was attached to that project aside from the purely geographical one. In principle, it was of the same order as Japan's civilizing mission in the Korean hinterland, Japan being, as mentioned, another ersatz Northern power in Roosevelt's vision. The world, in short, was a collection of independent Great-Power configurations where conduct and responsibility was so to speak inherent in the civilizational membership.

'Americanism' of the Olney kind, meanwhile, faced a difficulty because, not surprisingly, he had largely given up Adams's foundational polarity between monarchy and republic, the spatio-temporal principle of 1823, in favour of a constitutive attachment to 'civilization,' which of course could be either monarchical or republican albeit with a certain relative advantage for the latter. This is why he had no qualms, remarkably, about fetching his alternative American solution directly from Europe. For it was to the Concert of Europe that he looked for a model, the great-power order that had presumably kept (more or less) the peace on the continent for so long. Olney's 'Concert of America' would thus form a league of 'principal states' to maintain cooperation, adjudicate conflicts and prevent war. Order would be an '*American*' matter rather than a 'U.S.' one, multilateral collaboration rather than unilateral dictation and hence, crucially, *legitimate* and down the evolutionary line eventually legal: a Monroe Doctrine for the present age. I think Henry Clay would have liked it; and it was certainly in tune with what the Wilson Administration circa 1916 hoped and imagined it was doing. Yet it remained that Olney was now in the realm of pragmatic rather than ideological arguments for the primacy of the 'Americas.' There was the

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<sup>22</sup> See his sixth annual message to Congress, 3 December 1906. For his late views on Latin America (after he had travelled there extensively), see "South America and the Monroe Doctrine," *Outlook*, 14 March 1914, 582-589.

accidental factor of proximity, which was not that convincing. There was, more substantially, the political consideration that, as Olney saw it, Roosevelt's Caesarist solution actually generated more responsibilities at a higher cost with no compensatory gains: a realist point. There was, finally, the conservative notion (I am guessing) of tradition, the idea that the tradition represented by the true Monroe Doctrine sans Rooseveltian recasting was somehow worth preserving because it was precisely a tradition and would not lead to any 'un-American' domestic changes such as a European-size standing army.

Olney could imagine that his neo-Monrovia solution eschewed the Caesarist aspect because of his false view of what the Doctrine had always really been about: *gratis* security for the Americas *vis-à-vis* Europe courtesy of the United States, based on the general historical principle of 'popular self-government' (of which principle however he said nothing much, once out of office). Though he had made a serious effort to study the history of the Doctrine, Olney had thus produced an almost wholly fictional model of it. Nevertheless, he had a point in dismissing Rooseveltian protectorates as a major deviation from it. The Monroe Doctrine on Olney's view provided *protection* but not a *protectorate*: the former was just a unilateral gift of free security to the Latins; the latter was a formal obligation of seeing to it that certain failed or failing states lived up to their obligations in turn to Europe in accordance with international law, an intrusive and taxing responsibility not only of protection but also of systematic obedience. 'Protection,' by contrast, presumed no actual involvement by the United States in the affairs of the American states themselves. It was just a free, anti-European security umbrella, unilaterally provided. *Ipsa facto*, it was *inconceivable* that any recipient of this gift could refuse it. Olney's Monroe Doctrine, the traditional Doctrine of his imagination, was self-evident rationality: in a world completely free of distortion, there were no rational grounds on which one could freely refuse the offer.

This, one might say, is the ideal, rational and neo-Kantian universe of Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls as opposed to the real one (perhaps) of Don Corleone. It was in any case a rationality that coincided with that of John Quincy Adams, whose position in 1823 had also assumed the impossibility of irrational regression. It is odd, nonetheless, that the unflinching Olney never pondered seriously the possibility that 'free security' was an offer one might very well refuse since it impinged, *quite obviously*, on one's independence *qua* state: the right freely to decide. He sensed the objection but circumvented it by a dual move. First, he set forth a deontological sequence: states are part of 'international society,' the collectivity of organized political communities; that 'society' consists in practice of several interacting regions; the 'Americas' is one such region; everyone in that region thus gains by constituting a collective form of security corresponding to the actually existing society; everyone is thus objectively obliged to participate in it; once institutionalized, the order will be its own rationality; no state is therefore rational in rejecting that order (just as it had been irrational to reject the traditional Doctrine of free security). Second, he made the related sociological observation that, because of interdependence and the growth of international society, the formal of equality between states no longer obtained in full force. Actual disparities of size and power now mattered. If organized properly in reasonable forms, such disparities could however become a collective good for small and great alike. A concert of 'principal states' which organizes the region in the interest of all is the legitimate

way to do that; the Ceasarist alternative à la Roosevelt is not.

To say no to this form of 'society' was not only by definition irrational, it was to put oneself, also by definition, in the realm of the illegitimate and so of potential collective punishment, to be followed by forcible inclusion. One recognizes the logic. There remained, nevertheless, the iffy question as to who actually qualified for 'principality' in this Concert (a virtual Security Council?) and who did not. The inclusion/exclusion issue was more serious for Olney than for Roosevelt, whose loose notion had the advantage of permitting quick changes in the taxonomy, conduct always being the flexible, defining feature: witness his reclassification of Germany in 1914. Olney's institutionalized cooperation, in contrast, would have raised immediate conflicts on that score. He chose not to pursue the matter. As an evolutionist by persuasion, he assumed that cooperation by the principals would be *ad hoc* at first, no doubt crystallizing at some point with sufficient practice and experience into more formalized institutions. He did not live to see Wilson's League of Nations but, party allegiances aside, all things being equal, he would probably have preferred William Howard Taft's version of the League to Enforce Peace (which indeed he also supported early on).

Thus, on my symptomatic reading (I have skated over the bumps), Olney's version of the Doctrine as multilateralist regionalism preserved the North-South connexion (in the Americas) while doing away with the constitutive anti-European element. It was an alternative to Roosevelt's position in particular but it was also against the fundamental shift overall, well noted by Sexton, from East-West (or Old versus New) to North versus South, in the course of the turn to imperialism of a 'normal' kind, the kind which Olney ultimately rejected. As mentioned earlier, it was that imperialist turn, the sudden, massive thrust from McKinley onwards, that for the first time made it *incumbent* on policymakers, for a while, to have a systematic account of how actions and strategies related to the Monroe Doctrine, if not the larger issue of the place of the United States in the world. The shift here can easily be measured in the distance between Olney's contingent dispatch of 1895, invoking the Doctrine to aid (it was said) a Latin American republic against *the* imperial European power, to McKinley's annexation of Puerto Rico, subordination of Cuba, and war of subjugation in the Philippines in 1898-99, not to mention Roosevelt's expropriation of the Panama Canal Zone in 1903. It was the distance from a typical nineteenth century anti-British move on rather thin grounds by Cleveland and Olney, to a full-fledged imperialist assertion of power to vast effect in a dramatically altered frame. The War of 1898 had of course begun, ostensibly, in the quite familiar terms of supporting the independence of Cuba, one of the last remaining American outposts of Spanish colonialism, only to turn with astonishing speed into something drastically different. The United States became unequivocally an imperial power in the Caribbean and in the Pacific.

The two thrusts shattered Adams's imaginary community of 'the Americas,' the first by changing the *internal* American relations between the United States and Latin America, the second by transferring the United States *out of* the Americas. For Theodore Roosevelt, that dual breach of tradition was, as such, unimportant. If the Corollary broke with tradition, so be it. Things evolve. Olney, on reflection, chose instead to retain the primacy of the region and to reinvent the Doctrine. Some Latin Americans tried to do the same. From now on, in any case, it was becoming difficult to pull 'the Monroe Doctrine' off the shelf whenever



convenient. The Doctrine had become real, so to speak, in its transcendence. There was the Corollary and the Teddy-like precepts to contend with. There was a certain historical experience and a current one to contend with. There was the contradictory and difficult moment of Woodrow Wilson to contend with. Yet the United States was still not the Vatican. The will selectively to forget is powerful and easy in the domain of the foreign. The traditional empire of insular possessions went on beyond the purview of the public, novel forms of financial control coexisted and overlapped with it. The Marines intervened. And Guam is still there, defined and largely treated as a piece of property.

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Some observers outside the United States took a keen interest in Roosevelt's Corollary. Thus I am obliged to note here that it was a stylized version of it that the Japanese and the Germans picked up on when they did their own exercise in appropriation of the Monroe Doctrine in the 1930s. Thus, in 1934, the Japanese embarrassingly proposed recognition of their thrust into Manchuria in terms of an Asian Monroe Doctrine. They thought they had a pretty good case. None other than Theodore Roosevelt himself had encouraged their move into Korea by singling them out as the ordering, civilizational power in the region. "No other nation in history has ever entered so quickly the circle of civilized powers," as he observed towards the end of his life.<sup>23</sup> Earlier (1905), he had intimated directly to them that he would welcome a Japanese version of the Monroe Doctrine in East Asia. Throughout 1920s, the decade of U.S.-Japanese cooperation, the highest echelons in Tokyo remained eminently aware of the precedent and took it very seriously indeed. Hitler, when in the spring of 1939 responding to FDR's futile attempt to defuse the accelerating European crisis, referred explicitly to the putative U.S. sphere of domination under the Monroe Doctrine: *Lebensraum* as *Lebensraum*, he seemed to say, though in truth the Monroe *Raum* was a very different kind of space and, in any case, the second Roosevelt was by then several years into the post-Monrovia posture of the good neighbour, a different kind of hegemony that would last into the Cold War when more Teddy-like precepts again became the order of the day.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The Japanese connexion is controversial but to me indisputable. Its chief vehicle, Kentaro Kaneko, was a Harvard-educated contemporary of Roosevelt's but they met for the first time only in 1890. Their friendship deepened in 1905 when Kaneko, a scholar of law, was sent to the U.S. to participate in the negotiations engineered by Roosevelt to end the Russo-Japanese war. Kaneko's account of Roosevelt's views on a potential Japanese Monroe Doctrine appeared in published form at different stages beginning in 1920. Kaneko was a responsible and pro-American member of the Japanese ruling class; nothing he said about Roosevelt's views seems the least bit excessive or surprising to me. What he did not say was that, Roosevelt's civilizational concerns aside, it made perfect sense from a traditional geopolitical perspective to wish the Japanese as far as possible into the Asian hinterland rather than into the Pacific Ocean and Southeast Asia. The quotation is from Theodore Roosevelt, *Japans' Part* (New York: Japan Society, 1918), 5. This piece was republished in Tokyo two years later with a series of prefatory statements from senior Japanese figures, among them Kaneko.

<sup>24</sup> Hitler's speech is reproduced in translated form in the *New York Times*, 29 April 1939. The reference to the Monroe Doctrine is typically crude and overblown; it is by no means central but not insignificant either. The German aspect could be expanded here to include the lucid reflections on the Doctrine by the most prominent (and controversial) international jurist in the Reich, namely, Carl Schmitt. His



And yet, how Teddy-like were they after all? Did not Truman's declaration in 1947 have closer affinities, as indeed his contemporaries thought, to the original Monroe Doctrine itself? A license to intervene along Rooseveltian lines was certainly involved, especially, as it turned out, in Latin America. Arguably, then, the Truman Doctrine sets forth a protectorate of sorts, an order of protection and obedience, a zone of 'freedom' subject to U.S. authority and policing. Members of the 'Free World' are thus invested with the obligation to remain exactly that ('Free'); and insofar as they are unable to maintain that status, they are also subject to 'support,' that is, intervention. The decisive agent throughout is of course the Leader of the Free World: it polices the zone, it decides when and where danger is afoot and what kind of action is necessary. In this sense, in terms (theoretically) of actual effects, the coldwar order does look like the Roosevelt Caribbean writ large.

The legitimating frame is however profoundly different. The world of 1904 was an evolutionary one of development from barbarism to despotism to civilization, where the United States was part of the (western) zone of Great Powers charged within their respective regions with the obligation to police, control and assist the two other zones on their way up the ladder and the non-civilized were in turn charged with the obligation to behave themselves. The world of 1947 was utterly different and the declared stakes infinitely higher. The world was in fact sharply divided into two, a true, free one and a parasitical totalitarian one whose very essence is the need to destroy the former. The antagonism was thus not dialectical: the free world is natural, independent, autonomous, capable of existence on its own, while the totalitarian enemy is wholly dependent on having the free world to attack and feed on. In this setting of mortal aggression, as it happens, the very condition of possibility for the continued existence of the Free World was the United States. Its role was essentially messianic: unique in being decisive for the preservation of world history. One might think that that role would then feature overwhelmingly some crusade actually to vanquish ('liberate') the totalitarian netherworld; but, strikingly, the real task turned out to be ordering of the Free World itself, which not in terms of actual, free institutions but as that which is not totalitarian. Relations across the free/totalitarian divide were then famously frozen (non-entanglement as it were except at the rhetorical level), while, inversely, relations within the Free World were opened up in the most radical way conceivable from the standpoint of the United States. Given the threat, the Truman Doctrine *obliged* the United States to support anti-communist forces on a global scale, to act, in principle, everywhere or at least everywhere beyond the confines of the Red Army. This was of course to land oneself in potential trouble since the task was impossible – infinite obligations and finite resources, leading to inevitable accusations of betrayal. Witness the 'loss' of China. The payoff was however immense because Truman's polarity made unanswerable at home peacetime 'entanglements' on a massive scale across the

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notion of a novel political form of *Grossraum* is especially interesting though I think he flattens out the ambiguities and discrepancies of the original statement. For his considered view, composed later, see Carl Schmitt. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, tr. G.I. Ulmen, (New York: Telos, 2006), Part IV, ch. 5.

globe.<sup>25</sup>

Extensive, institutional effects followed, precisely of the kind that Adams had worried about in wanting to escape the guardianship of global or even ‘American’ freedom. To be sure, his world of 1823 and the Monroe Doctrine entailed too a political polarity, if not a strictly dichotomous one as Truman’s. The time and space of that polarity in 1823 were however quite different. A distinct space of free and independent republics had appeared in ‘the Americas’ in world-historical contrast to the space of monarchical despotism embodied by the Holy Alliance. The time of the Americas, the new world, was new, modern if you will; that of European reaction old and stagnant. The line in the Atlantic was sharply drawn; but the line itself did not oblige (or so it could be argued) the United States to assume the care of the New. The time of Truman’s two worlds in 1947, by contrast, is one of simultaneity. Totalitarianism is modern, frighteningly modern in fact. Moreover, though lines could be drawn and were drawn, e.g. around Greece and Turkey, Truman’s spatial divide was complicated by the presence of the enemy on the inside, communists in the State Department, communists in Italy and France, communists in Latin America, communists wherever, or alternatively people, forces, conditions that might well permit the appearance of communists. The Truman Doctrine was neither the Monroe Doctrine for the World, nor the Great-Power civilizer of the neighbourhood.

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Sexton’s fine history, his account of what was invoked as the Monroe Doctrine in the period when it could easily be used and abused, ends logically enough in the moment of its transcendence. As there is no single thing to be followed through time and space, it turns out, again, to be a history of appropriations. I have attempted to make that string of events more stringent still by asking what kind of figurations they presuppose.

*—Thanks to Christina Burnett, Ben Coates, François Fürstenberg, Stephen Wertheim and Marilyn Young, who are all absolved from errors of fact and judgment.*

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<sup>25</sup> The given universalist features of the Truman Doctrine were subject to disdain from the realists, publicly by Walter Lippmann, internally by George F. Kennan. The latter would later, when out of the Administration, like to quote John Quincy Adams’s formulation from his famous 4 July oration in 1821: “Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions, and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.” The female referred to is the United States. The address itself is an excellent summation Adams’s way of thinking about the United States in the world.

Author's Response by Jay Sexton, Corpus Christi College, Oxford

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Warm thanks are owed to Dustin Walcher, Max Edling, Daniel Walker Howe, Peter Onuf, and Anders Stephanson for their close readings and constructive comments. Thanks also to H-Diplo for its many roundtables on nineteenth-century topics, which have helped those of us in the field to shed the old label of inhabitants of “the great American desert” of U.S. historiography.<sup>1</sup> In this response, I will briefly outline a couple of the new avenues of investigation that emerge from the reviews. And then will take the mic from Stephanson and briefly riff off of his riff, which is less a review of my book than an important essay in its own right.

First things first: what is going on with the study of nineteenth-century U.S. foreign relations? One of the most important things, which all the reviewers have themselves written about, as has David Hendrickson in an important study that deserves to be widely read, concerns the interplay – indeed, the inseparability – of domestic politics and foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> In my book I mostly use the old-fashioned term “statecraft,” rather than “domestic politics” or “diplomacy,” because it encompasses both the foreign and the domestic. The Monroe Doctrine enables the historian to probe the interrelationship between internal and external politics in a focused and chronologically expansive manner – though Edling is right to point out that the Doctrine is missing from, or not central to, many important diplomatic episodes. Nonetheless, it is a useful narrative device, particularly in how it illuminates what we now call “national security.” In the nineteenth-century, national security concerned the preservation and advancement of the independence and unity of the union of states in North America. At the heart of the 1823 message was the attempt to fashion a regional, and perhaps even hemispheric, system conducive to these nationalist goals, though the nature of the desired internal unity was contested. This was the core meaning of the Monroe Doctrine through the Civil War and, arguably, until the turn of the century.

That politics did not stop at the water’s edge in the nineteenth-century is well known. What is open to interpretation and debate is the result of this politicization of foreign policy. The book argues that the battle between rival political groupings to claim the Monroe Doctrine deepened, rather than just reflected, internal divisions, particularly in the decades before the Civil War. The political scramble to claim the Doctrine also shaped U.S. foreign policy by narrowing policy options and pushing statesmen toward increasingly active, interventionist, and imperialist foreign policies. This was particularly the case during the Civil War era, which is strangely absent in most studies of nineteenth-century imperialism. The Monroe Doctrine highlights the ways in which U.S. imperialism paradoxically derived from an anti-imperial domestic political culture. However, the inverse is also true – domestic political structures at times inhibited expansion. This was certainly the intention

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<sup>1</sup> Kinley Brauer, “The Great American Desert Revisited: Recent Literature and Prospects for the Study of American Foreign Relations, 1815-1861,” *Diplomatic History*, 13:3 (July 1989), 395-416.

<sup>2</sup> David Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire: The American Debate over International Relations, 1789-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

of many of the proponents of the Monroe Doctrine. The book discusses them, especially in relation to the 1898 anti-imperialists, but more could be said.

A second area of current and future investigation concerns the centrality of British power to nineteenth-century U.S. statecraft. All of the reviewers pick up on this theme. There are several ways forward, as the work of Howe and Onuf, in particular, has made clear.<sup>3</sup> One is to think about the United States, particularly in the pre-1865 era, as remaining within the British Empire, albeit in an informal way – an “honorary dominion,” as A.G. Hopkins, the great historian of the British Empire, recently has put it.<sup>4</sup> The concept of the “British World,” particularly as formulated by Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson, provides another way of situating the United States within British global structures, especially for the later 1850-1914 period.<sup>5</sup> A related perspective would be to think of the early U.S. republic as a “postcolonial” entity bound together by Anglophobic, anticolonial nationalism, even as it continued to draw upon British economic, political, and cultural power.<sup>6</sup> One might argue that U.S. independence owed much to Britain’s post-1815 policy that minimized costs to London by outsourcing westward expansion to the United States, while reaping the financial and commercial benefits that followed on from the dynamic development and growth of the former North American colonies. Still another approach would be to view the U.S. and British nations and empires as complementary and overlapping entities that collaborated even as they competed against one another. In the bigger picture, one could portray the American empire as something that emerged from a British global system that gradually gave way to the rising power of the United States.

All of these approaches, which are more complementary than mutually exclusive, need to be further explored.<sup>7</sup> One payoff will be avoiding the anachronism that so long has plagued the study of nineteenth-century U.S. foreign affairs: though we should be concerned with tracking the rise of U.S. power, we must not forget that the nineteenth-century was a “British century,” not a trial run of the “American century.”

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Walker Howe, “American Victorianism as Culture,” *American Quarterly*, 27:5 (December 1975), 507-532; Peter Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> A.G. Hopkins, “The United States, 1783-1861: Britain’s Honorary Dominion?” *Britain and the World*, 4:2 (2011), 232-246.

<sup>5</sup> Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010); Kariann Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, a collaborative project, led by myself, Andrew Thompson, and Tamson Pietsch, is in the works on just this topic. If anyone is interested in knowing more, or has further ideas, please drop me a line.

This brings me to Stephanson's lament, early in his riff, that the book stops in the early twentieth-century. Ironically, my concern regarding periodization was that I had moved too far forward in time – that the book should end in 1865. The thinking here was that two themes central to the early Monroe Doctrine – nationalism and “national security” (as we now call it) – arrived at destinations of sorts in 1865 (or, alternatively, in 1867 with the French withdrawal from Mexico). But I opted to move forward, not least because when Americans spoke of the Monroe Doctrine in the second half of the nineteenth-century they tended to debate what it had meant in the first half. Furthermore, the Roosevelt Corollary provided an alternative ending point, not only because it recreated and inverted the 1823 message, but also (and less noted by historians) because, like the 1823 message, it was a political compromise of sorts.

In any event, rather than viewing the Doctrine as evolving inexorably toward U.S. global dominance, the intention was to view it in relation to the nineteenth-century processes of anticolonialism (that is, anti-British anticolonialism), national consolidation, and imperial expansion. Stephanson illuminates the links with “doctrines” of more recent times, as well as twentieth-century foreign appropriations. I chose, instead, to highlight the geopolitical structures that underlay the Doctrine in the nineteenth-century – structures that had dramatically changed by the early and mid-twentieth-century. Both approaches have merits and costs.

Stephanson frames his essay as a conceptual interrogation of a “constitutive tension” within the Doctrine: could the potential solidarity of the American hemisphere be combined with the particular, and changing, interests of the United States? This question, he rightly shows, was sidestepped by historical actors, at least until the turn of the century (as an aside, the pan-American episode of 1889-90 seems an important moment in the evolution of this issue in that it offered a glimpse – though only a glimpse – of how the pursuit of U.S. interests could be synthesized with formal structures of hemispheric unity). Stephanson's approach brings into focus certain themes pushed off centre stage in my account, particularly the importance of international law at the turn of the century. It provides a new context to interpret Olney in his post-Secretary of State phase, from which I learned much. The essay, written in the author's signature engaging style, is an important one that deserves a wide readership.

Stephanson's essay has prompted a rejoinder riff, however. The essay certainly has identified an important constitutive tension within the framing of the Monroe Doctrine (that is, the tension between the hemispheric and the national). But is it the central one? An alternative interpretation advanced in the book – one that requires us to break from twentieth-century convention that has us consider the Monroe Doctrine primarily in terms of U.S.-Latin American relations – is that the key problem concerned the nature, scope, and security of the postcolonial union of states in North America. This context of union – or, in today's parlance, the move toward U.S. national consolidation (or fragmentation) – is the one I emphasize in the discussion of the drafting of the 1823 message (especially pages 56-

62).<sup>8</sup> To be clear, this is not to dismiss the importance of U.S. policy and imperialism in Latin America, nor the hemispheric/national tension Stephanson identifies, but rather to view the them, as did the statesmen of the time, in relation to postcolonial questions of union in an age of rising British power.

Nineteenth-century Americans did not have to resolve the issue Stephanson poses (as he points out), but they did have to resolve those issues relating to union and independence. This is why the Civil War, rather than the 1823 message, is the crucial moment in the history of the Monroe Doctrine. The Civil War consolidated and empowered a new nation, freeing it from the ball and chain of the dreaded nexus of internal fragility and foreign menace (the Confederacy's flirtation with Britain is particularly important to keep in mind in this regard). The Union victory enabled the pursuit of U.S. interests in the hemisphere (and beyond) in ways hitherto precluded by internal divisions. The break was not clean – witness the many unsuccessful invocations of the Doctrine such as Grant's during the Santo Domingo annexation episode – but a break it was. And, as I try to point out in the book (149-51), the establishment of a consolidated and secure union was the prerequisite for the ascendancy of a "civilizationist" worldview that eclipsed the old "republican" one, thus paving the way for the Doctrine's transition from a New vs. Old World division to one which made the North vs. South distinction of "civilized" and "uncivilized" peoples.

All that being said, Stephanson and I largely sing from the same hymn-book (if that can be said of riffs?) – for he is attuned to the above interpretation, just as I am to the one he pursues. Furthermore, the two interpretations are far from incompatible; indeed, they are closely entwined at certain points in the Doctrine's history, an obvious example being the Panama congress debates of 1825-26. In the bigger picture, we both emphasize the protean and shape-shifting nature of the Doctrine, as well as the strained attempts of historical actors to synthesize their interests and ideals in a variety of contexts. Though the emphasis of a "conceptual" account might differ at times from a "political" one, we both cover similar ground and, indeed, use many of the same quotations from historical actors. I might quibble with a few specifics – was John Quincy Adams really "insensitive to the political power of economic relations"? Were there not "real political struggles" over "what the true Doctrine really meant" before the early twentieth-century? – just as he quibbles with some of my finer points. But these are minor issues of the post-seminar-in-the-pub variety.

A reader might interject here to say that we both have got things wrong in focusing on high-political actors at the expense of the bottom-up, or that cultural formations are ignored in favour of political and intellectual ones.<sup>9</sup> I would respond by pointing out how the high-political formulations of the Monroe Doctrine were profoundly shaped by forces

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<sup>8</sup> An important work here is 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: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> As explored in Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).



far beyond Washington. In part, statesmen responded to structural changes in the international system – the crumbling of the Spanish Empire, the rise of British globalism, the erosion of monarchy, and rapid advances in transport and communications. But the high-political formulators of the Monroe Doctrine also reacted to pressures from the bottom-up, as well as the outside-in. Pressures from the bottom-up can be seen not only in the party politics of the era, but also in how statesmen created a Monroe Doctrine whose purpose was to discipline or coopt potentially dangerous internal constituencies – slaves, Western separatists (in the early period), and working-class /agrarian radicals (mostly in the later period). Pressures from the ‘outside-in’ can be seen in the various ways that foreign actors, particularly those in Latin America, manipulated U.S. fears and exploited the Monroe Doctrine to achieve goals of their own choosing (a sub theme I try to follow in the book). In other words, the Monroe Doctrine articulated by elite actors in the nineteenth-century was one conditioned by the agency of those outside the corridors of power in Washington.

Thanks again to Dustin Walcher and the reviewers for a constructive exercise.

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