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# Commerce and Conquest in Early American Foreign Relations, 1750–1850

PAUL A. GILJE

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Early American foreign relations revolved around commerce. Most books on American diplomatic history begin with the premise that the United States inevitably occupied a continent. When we think about foreign relations, therefore, we all too often think about conquest. Consider two recent and crucial studies. Peter Onuf's sophisticated analysis of Jefferson's ideas on nationhood assumes that the Sage of Monticello believed that the United States would march across the continent to form an empire of liberty. Eliga Gould shares this perspective and argues that as early as 1776 Americans planned on replacing the British empire with a continental nation of their own that would allow the United States to be an equal among the powers of the earth. Although scholars like Onuf and Gould emphasize an early vision of an inevitable expansion, they also acknowledge the importance of commerce. Onuf discusses Jefferson's interest in commerce as a "beneficent, harmonizing, and civilizing" force and contends that the faith in free trade would enable a commercial expansion that would lead to "the proliferation of Jefferson's freeholding farmers." Gould recognizes that international trade agreements contributed to making the United States treaty worthy.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Bradford Perkins, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, Volume 1: The Creation of a Republican Empire, 1776–1865* (Cambridge, UK, 1993); Walter Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (New York, 2008); William Earl Weeks, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, Volume I: Dimensions of the Early American Empire, 1754–1865*

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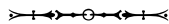
Acknowledging commerce, however, is not the same thing as placing it at the crux of analysis. This essay seeks to alter our understanding of the relative importance of commerce and expansion in early America by relating the story of American foreign policy for over a century moving into and out of the Revolution. Although one essay cannot provide a complete history of early American foreign policy, it can direct our attention to key trends and points of transition.

Tracing this narrative of the role of commerce in American diplomacy reveals both continuity and change. Commerce remained the focus of foreign relations during the colonial period, the experience of the American Revolution, and the early years of the American republic. Revolutionaries seized upon the ideals of the Enlightenment to decry the restricted trade practices of mercantilism dictated by the British empire and asserted a policy of free trade reflective of the Age of Reason. Conquest and expansion remained secondary to interest in commerce in the 1780s, 1790s, and early 1800s. Indeed, the first serious steps toward American expansion—the Mississippi River boundary of the Treaty of

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(Cambridge, UK, 2013). For other traditional examples of the emphasis on expansion, see Bradford Perkins, “Interests, Values, and the Prism: The Sources of American Foreign Policy,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 14 (Winter 1994), 458–66; Francis D. Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson’s Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT, 2014); James D. Drake, *The Nation’s Nature: How Continental Presumptions Gave Rise to the United States of America* (Charlottesville, VA, 2011); Richard Kluger, *Seizing Destiny: How America Grew from Sea to Shining Sea* (New York, 2007); Bethel Saler, “An Empire of Liberty, a State of Empire: The U. S. National State before and after the Revolution of 1800,” in *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*, ed. James Horn et al. (Charlottesville, VA, 2002), 360–82. For a different approach to Jefferson’s empire of liberty, see Julian P. Boyd, “Thomas Jefferson’s Empire of Liberty,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 24, no. 4 (1948), 538–54; and Paul A. Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailors’ Rights in the War of 1812* (New York, 2013), 127–36; Lawrence S. Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation: American Diplomacy, 1763–1801* (New York, 1972); Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1990). Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, VA, 2000), quotations at 68, 71; Onuf, “The Empire of Liberty: Land of the Free and Home of the Slave,” in *The World of the Revolutionary American Republic: Land, Labor, and the Conflict for a Continent*, ed. Andrew Shankman (New York, 2014), 195–217; Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2012).

Paris in 1783, the settlement of the Ohio Country after the Treaty of Greenville, the withdrawal of the Spanish from much of the Old Southwest, and the Louisiana Purchase—all were accidental and incidental consequences of diplomatic activities aimed at protecting American commerce. The balance between commerce and conquest began to shift first in the approach to Native Americans in the trans-Appalachian West. Questions of commerce did not disappear in Indian–American relations, as testified in the many trade and intercourse acts to regulate relations with Native Americans, but the drive to control western land lay behind claims of trying to civilize Indians and ultimately led to the tragedy of removal and the Trail of Tears. After the War of 1812 the emphasis on expansion spread to relations with other powers as Americans proclaimed their right to take neighboring territory in Florida, Texas, Oregon, and the Pacific Coast in a new romantic nationalism that eventually became expressed as a manifest destiny to establish American territory across a continent. Even as Americans brashly extended their geographical horizons and centered their foreign policy on conquest, commerce remained an important component of American diplomacy.



Before 1776 Anglo Americans believed that their empire was built upon commerce and not conquest. They drew a sharp distinction between the nature of their colonial enterprise and that of the Spanish American empire. The “Black legend” of the Spanish who had destroyed the Aztec and Inca so that they could enslave Indians and extract gold and silver stood in contrast to the myth of the beneficent English who brought civilization to a nearly empty North America. It does not matter that neither notion was true. What does matter is that Anglo Americans believed these myths and that they envisioned their empire within this conceptual framework. Eighteenth-century thinkers, like David Hume and Adam Smith, viewed conquest in search of gold and silver as bad for the nation and the colonies. As Hume explained, “extensive conquests, when pursued, must be the ruin of every free government.” Smith argued that relying on extraction of raw materials made the metropolis overly dependent upon the colonies. Spain was thus associated with the culture of conquest, while Anglo Americans saw themselves as having created a commercial empire based upon trade. From this perspective, agriculture provided a more legitimate rationale for colonies

than extraction of commodities. Emer de Vattel, the Swiss theorist who wrote the most important eighteenth-century treatise on international affairs, explained, “though the conquest of the civilised empires of Peru and Mexico was a notorious usurpation, the establishment of many colonies upon the continent of North America might, on confining themselves within just bounds, be extremely lawful. The people [Indians] of those extensive tracts rather ranged through than inhabited them.”<sup>2</sup>

If commerce was so important to Anglo Americans, how can we explain the wars for empire in the eighteenth century? Were not these conflicts, culminating in the great imperial contest of the French and Indian War, about conquest and expansion? Yes, the British sought to conquer both French and Spanish colonies, but they did so largely for two interrelated reasons—security and commerce. The British North American colonies became increasingly important to the metropolitan center in the eighteenth century. In 1700 British trade with its American colonies was about 10 percent of the total value of all overseas commerce. By the eve of the American Revolution it had increased to one-third. At the same time, North American trade to the British West Indies continued to grow, and colonial North America became increasingly integrated

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2. David Hume, “Essay XIV: Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth,” *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, new ed. (London, 1758), 280; Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (1776; New York, 1994), 611–13; Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c.1500–c.1800* (New Haven, CT, 1995), 63–73. Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, ed. Béla Kapossy and Richard Whatmore (1758; Indianapolis, IN, 2008), 130. David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, UK, 2000), 182; John E. Crowley, “A Visual Empire: Seeing the British Atlantic World from a Global Perspective,” in *The Creation of the British Atlantic World*, ed. Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas (Baltimore, 2005), 283–303; Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (Cambridge, UK, 1995); P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America, c. 1750–1783* (Oxford, UK, 2005); Pagden, *Lords of All the World*; Kathleen Wilson, “Rethinking the Colonial State: Family, Gender, and Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century British Frontiers,” *American Historical Review* 116 (Dec. 2011), 1294–1322.

into a complex trading system that included the export of staple products and the African slave trade.<sup>3</sup>

As long as hostile French, Spanish, and Native Americans hovered around its borders, British North America and the trade it supported would never be safe. The wars for empire were thus not simply about conquering new lands and people; rather they hinged on the protection of a crucial hub in the British commercial empire, even though to do so entailed seizing additional territory and incorporating new people like the French Canadians. The great French and Indian War itself began with an obscure provincial militia officer's botched effort to control the forks of the Ohio for Anglo American speculators and settlers. But the deeper cause of the great conflagration was commerce. The British pursued Native American markets previously dominated by the French, entering the Ohio River Valley and trekking into the backcountry of Georgia and the Carolinas. To counter these efforts the French decided

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3. John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985), 35-88; see especially 40, 57. For the importance of commerce for both the colonies and Great Britain, see T. H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (Oct. 1986), 467-99; Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York, 2004); Richard L. Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985); Cathy Matson, *Merchants & Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore, 1998); Jane T. Merritt, "Tea Trade, Consumption, and the Republican Paradox in Prerevolutionary Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 128 (Apr. 2004), 117-48; Serena R. Zabin, *Dangerous Economies: Status and Commerce in Imperial New York* (Philadelphia, 2009); Michelle L. Craig, "Grounds for Debate? The Place of the Caribbean Provisions Trade in Philadelphia's Prerevolutionary Economy," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 128 (Apr. 2004), 149-77; Sherry Johnson, "El Niño, Environmental Crisis, and the Emergence of Alternative Markets in the Hispanic Caribbean, 1760s-70s," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (July 2005), 365-410; Gilman M. Ostrander, "The Colonial Molasses Trade," *Agricultural History* 30 (Apr. 1956), 77-84; Thomas M. Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven, CT, 2008); Edwin L. Combs, "Trading in Lubberland: Maritime Commerce in Colonial North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 80 (Jan. 2003), 22-23; Charles M. Andrews, "Colonial Commerce," *American Historical Review* 20 (Oct. 1914), 60-62; Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986), 146-48.

to build a fort at what is now Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As George Washington began his ill-fated expedition to the West, both the British and the French were more concerned with fighting for their commercial position than with seizing each other's settlements.<sup>4</sup>

Although commerce lay at the core of imperial competition, as Washington's efforts attest, colonial Americans also desired land. Many British colonists sought to move toward the frontier, be it to the west, south, or north. By marrying young, having big families, and encouraging immigration, the British population in North America grew at an astounding rate. British colonists therefore looked for new land to settle. However, most of this land remained east of the Appalachian Mountains before 1770. Speculators like Washington may have hoped to establish their claims further west, but settlers had not yet begun the great migration that would stream into the region two decades later. We know that one of the sagas of American history was the movement of European Americans, and their African American slaves, across North America. As James D. Drake demonstrates, several writers anticipated that movement during the colonial period, exclaiming their confidence that British Americans would spread across the continent. But commerce drove the contest for empire in the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

We can see the same commercial dynamic in the interaction between British Americans and Native Americans. Vattel was wrong when he

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4. Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York, 2000); Paul W. Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713–1763* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, UK, 1991).

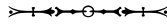
5. For social and economic developments, see James A. Henretta, *The Evolution of American Society, 1700–1815: An Interdisciplinary Analysis* (Lexington, MA, 1973); McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, 51–88; David Galenson, “The Settlement and Growth of the Colonies: Population, Labor, and Economic Development,” *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States, Vol. 1: The Colonial Era*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman (Cambridge, UK, 1998), 135–207; Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1645–1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York, 1986), 213–28. For early expressions of continental horizons see Drake, *The Nation's Nature*, 67–107; Zara Anishanslin, “Producing Empire: The British Empire in Theory and Practice,” in *The World of the Revolutionary American Republic*, ed. Shankman, 27–53.

categorized the native inhabitants of North America as nomadic. Most Indians east of the Mississippi lived in towns and depended upon agriculture. These Native Americans used trade and warfare to extend their influence in the region. Instead of the traditional story of the inexorable march of white men upon Indian land that led to an unending cycle of violence, we now see more complex relationships in which native groups incorporated European material goods and through a process of negotiation and occasional violence survived and even thrived for generations. Richard White has famously described the Ohio Country and Great Lakes region as a “middle ground” in which neither European Americans nor Native Americans dictated relations. In the Mississippi Valley groups like the Quapaw and Osage became so dominant that Kathleen DuVal has pronounced the area “native ground.” Further west the Comanche emerged on the southern plains to establish an empire that lasted for a century. Native groups that would later be called the “civilized tribes”—the Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw—flourished in the spaces between the British, French, and Spanish claims, trading in slaves, deerskins, and fur. Although diminished, the Iroquois, too, continued to exert influence over an extended territory. The white people in the backcountry did not need to be reminded of the horror of an Indian attack, which generated indiscriminate violence, loss of property, and captivity. Nor did Native Americans need to be reminded of the brutality of European American attacks on their villages, which likewise generated indiscriminate violence, loss of property, and captivity. Despite episodic violence and Anglo American aspirations for land, most of the time Indians and whites managed to live in relative peace, engaging in trade and commerce. Moreover, whenever British Americans sought Indian land, they ordinarily did so through treaties that included an exchange of goods.<sup>6</sup>

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6. White, *The Middle Ground*. Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia, 2006). Early Native American history has become a field unto itself. Some of the best work covering the period includes Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore, 1992); Pekka Hämäläinen, “The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 67 (Apr. 2010), 173–208; Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT, 2008); Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Era of Revolution* (New York, 1995); Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires:*





Commerce was also central to the American Revolution. Whatever the complex origins of the War for Independence, the regulation of trade lay at the heart of the crisis that led to the rupture between Great Britain and what became the United States. The British empire had been constructed on the fundamental premise of mercantilism—the belief in the importance of maintaining a positive balance of trade and through this process to gain specie. The 1760s and 1770s brought a series of regulations to enhance revenue and ensure colonial adherence to mercantilist principles. Scholars tend to focus on the revenue aspects of these measures since they led to a resistance movement that ended in revolution. These laws were also an elaboration on the Navigation Acts that guided colonial trade for the benefit of the metropolis. Colonial protests against these measures focused on specific hardships created by the legislation while asserting larger principles about liberty and representation. Some groups, however, attacked the mercantilism embedded in the laws. New York merchants drew up a remonstrance against the Townshend Duties that also declared that “free trade” with the French West Indies was necessary for the prosperity of the colony. As Benjamin Franklin explained to Parliament in 1766, illegal commerce with other nations outside mercantilist restrictions accounted for the “money, bills of exchange, or commodities” that colonists used to purchase goods from Great Britain and therefore “all the profits on the industry of our merchants and

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*Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673–1800* (Cambridge, UK, 1997); Paul Kelton, “The British and Indian War: Cherokee Power and the Fate of Empire in North America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 69 (Oct. 2012), 763–92; James H. Merrell, *The Indians’ New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1989); Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 1999); Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003); Joshua Aaron Piker, *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler: Telling Stories in Colonial America* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of Creek Indians, 1733–1816* (Cambridge, UK, 1999); Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992); White, *The Middle Ground*.

mariners, arising in those circuitous voyages, and the freights made by their ships, center finally in Britain.”<sup>7</sup>

As American revolutionaries thought about their relations with other nations, they focused on how to regulate commerce. Confronted by a King George who ordered their ports closed, Congress moved toward independence in late 1775 and early 1776. In September Congress decided to import munitions. Later that fall Congress organized the Committee of Secret Correspondence to maintain contact with informants overseas, and in early March 1776 it appointed Silas Deane as a special agent to go to France to obtain aid. On April 6, 1776, Congress opened American ports to all foreign vessels. By the time Congress resolved to declare independence in early June, the United States was already operating as an independent nation seeking commercial opportunities abroad. Besides a grand statement of principle and an indictment of King George as a tyrant, the document we celebrate as the magical moment that brought into being our nation, asserted the American states

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7. The American Revolution had many causes. Because of the focus of this essay, I only consider the most immediate cause here—the imperial crisis over efforts of British regulation. For a fuller discussion of my analysis of the causes of the American Revolution, see Paul A. Gilje, *The Making of the American Republic, 1763–1815* (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2006), 1–39. Jonathan Barth, “Reconstructing Mercantilism: Consensus and Conflict in British Imperial Economy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 73 (Apr. 2016), 257–90; Virginia D. Harrington, *The New York Merchants on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, 1935); Michael Kammen, *Empire and Interest: The American Colonies and the Politics of Mercantilism* (Philadelphia, 1970); McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, 35–88. See also the roundtable in the *William and Mary Quarterly* in 2007 in response to Steve Pincus, “Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 69 (Jan. 2012), 3–34; Cathy Matson, “Imperial Political Economy: An Ideological Debate and Shifting Practices,” *ibid.*, 35–40; Trevor Burnard, “Making a Whig Empire Work: Transatlantic Politics and the Imperial Economy in Britain and British America,” *ibid.*, 51–56; Margaret Ellen Newell, “Putting the ‘Political’ Back in Political Economy (This Is Not Your Parents’ Mercantilism),” *ibid.*, 57–62. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth*; Matson, *Merchants & Empire*. See also Staughton Lynd and David Waldstreicher, “Free Trade, Sovereignty, and Slavery: Toward an Economic Interpretation of American Independence,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 68 (Oct. 2011), 597–630. Leonard W. Labaree et al., eds, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, CT, 1959–), 13: 133.

had “full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.”<sup>8</sup>

Congress also wrote the first draft of the Articles of Confederation in 1776. Rather than see this document as a failed effort to create a national government, we should look at it as a dramatic attempt to revolutionize diplomatic relations based on commerce. Few people in 1776 envisioned building a strong central state in North America. The individual colonies, upon independence, became individual sovereign states as stipulated in the Articles. The confederation therefore was a means for those states to bind together, fight a war, obtain allies, and negotiate treaties. The revolutionaries included a provision to incorporate Canada into their union and thereby provided for some expansion. More importantly, the Articles established a commercial agreement without trade barriers among the sovereign and independent states. Previously the hard-nosed diplomats in the Old World had erected trade barriers between European states following mercantilist principles and power politics; now the revolutionary leaders asserted a new diplomacy rooted in enlightened ideas by erasing trade barriers among the united states in North America. Given the context of eighteenth-century realpolitik, this was a giant step toward an entirely new commercial policy that shifted away from the mercantilism of the ancien regime to a new gospel of free trade.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of this new commercial policy to foreign relations can also be seen in the Plan of Treaties, another revolutionary product of 1776. Composed largely by John Adams, the treaty was directed specifically at France but was to serve as a model for agreements with other nations. In it the United States idealistically eschewed binding military alliances and embraced the most modern and enlightened ideas on trade. The treaty proposed an abandonment of mercantilist principles by establishing reciprocity, whereby Americans would pay the same duties as the

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8. David Armitage, “The Declaration of Independence and International Law,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (Jan. 2002), 39–64; David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

9. Charles C. Tansill, *Documents Illustrative of the Formation of the Union of the American States* (Washington, DC, 1927), 27–37. Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailors’ Rights*, 39–42; David C. Hendrickson, *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (Lawrence, KS, 2003); Merrill Jensen, *The Articles of Confederation: An Interpretation of the Social-Constitutional History of the American Revolution, 1774–1781* (Madison, WI, 1940).

French in France and the French would pay the same duties as Americans in the United States. Twenty-nine of the thirty articles of the treaty covered a host of commercial provisions, including a broad definition of contraband in time of war.<sup>10</sup>

Given French interests and the harsh realities of war, the American plan for the new commercial diplomacy with Europe was impossible to sustain. Wedded to traditional notions of foreign policy, the French were uninterested in free trade. Instead they wanted somehow to bring North America into *their* mercantilist orbit. Congress, whose initial instructions had allowed for some flexibility in negotiations, in the fall of 1776 asked its representatives in Paris to seek support of any kind, including a military alliance. The French hesitated to make a formal commitment until February 1778, when they signed two treaties with the Americans. One was a military alliance that committed France, if it entered the war, to fight until Great Britain ceded independence to the Americans, while the United States pledged to defend the French West Indies if threatened in the future. This was the kind of binding alliance that the revolutionaries had wanted to avoid. Yet it was also vital to the successful conclusion of the war. Without the French navy there would have been no British surrender at Yorktown, no great victory to end the war, and probably no United States. If the military treaty was crucial to the revolutionaries, the commercial treaty was equally important to the long range plans of both nations. Not as liberal as the Plan of Treaties, it granted the United States most-favored-nation status. The treaty asserted that “free ships make free goods,” thereby guaranteeing the right of each nation, if it remained neutral, to trade with an enemy of the other nation in time of war. In addition, the treaty narrowly defined contraband. The most-favored-nation provision, which set duties and port fees for American merchants at the lowest level the French offered to other nations, was a huge concession for the French. It represented their desire to replace the British

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10. “Plan of Treaties,” *Papers of John Adams*, Vols. 1–, ed. Robert J. Taylor et al. (Cambridge, MA, 1977–) 4: 260–302; Plan of Treaties (Sept. 17, 1776), *Journals of the Continental Congress* 5: 768–78. See discussion in Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (1961; Princeton, NJ, 1970), 44–54; James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington, KY, 1980), 26–31; William C. Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance* (Syracuse, NY, 1969), 1–31; Stinchcombe, “John Adams and the Model Treaty,” in *The American Revolution and “A Candid World,”* ed. Lawrence S. Kaplan (Kent, OH, 1977), 69–84.

as the vital trading partner of what was now the United States. Similarly, the Americans believed that the French would become a prime market for their agricultural produce and end their dependence on British manufactured goods.<sup>11</sup>

These hopes were never fulfilled. Once the French signed their treaties with the United States, they considered the Americans little more than a client state. When Benjamin Franklin arrived in France at the end of 1776, he understood the reality of his situation as a supplicant to a world power, and for most of the war Franklin allowed himself to be manipulated by Comte de Vergennes, the French foreign minister. Histories of the diplomacy of the War for Independence focus on Franklin and the other American representatives sent to Europe. What happened in Paris was important, but so, too, was what happened in Philadelphia because in both locations, the French called the shots. Franklin, amid the splendors of Versailles and surrounded by aristocrats and philosophes in the salons of Paris (not to mention beautiful women showering him with attention), understandably deferred to Vergennes. But in Philadelphia, in the shadow of the building we call Independence Hall, the French exerted an outsized influence on the course of American affairs. The first French minister to the United States, Conrad-Alexandre Gérard, embroiled himself in Congressional infighting. His smooth talking successor, the Comte de La Luzerne, developed a core of supporters in Congress by treating them to meals and assisting them financially, and even composed instructions for Congress that would be sent to the American commissioners in Paris. Although the French representatives in Philadelphia and elsewhere in the United States played a less active political role after the war, the same basic attitude of superiority persisted throughout the 1780s, creating difficulties for developing trade between

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11. Hunter Miller, ed., *Treaties and other International Acts of the United States of America*, 8 vols. (Washington, DC, 1931), 2: 3–44. Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Bloomington, IN, 1957), 29–69; Jonathan R. Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (New Haven, CT, 1985), 49–50, 57–103; Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Diplomacy and the Revolution: The Franco-American Alliance of 1778* (Charlottesville, VA, 1981); Lawrence S. Kaplan, *Entangling Alliances with None: American Foreign Policy in the Age of Jefferson* (Kent, OH, 1987); Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance*; Paul A. Varg, *Foreign Policies of the Founding Fathers* (East Lansing, MI, 1963).

the two countries. Jefferson, the American minister to France for much of the 1780s, strove to convince the French government that the only way the United States could become a market for French manufactured goods was if the French removed barriers to American imports. By the time Jefferson left his post in 1789, the French agreed to alter some trade barriers, but between the French attitude of superiority and French bureaucratic hurdles, trade languished between the two nations. Regardless of these difficulties, commerce dominated Franco–American relations.<sup>12</sup>

Trade was also the main preoccupation of most of the other diplomatic initiatives of the United States during the 1780s. The Americans signed liberal trade agreements with the Netherlands, Sweden, and Prussia, but none of these countries offered a significant venue for American trade. Neither did they agree to the full reciprocity of the Plan of Treaties. Without the protection of a navy, or the intercession of the French, American shipping became vulnerable to capture by the Barbary states. When Algiers seized two merchantmen in 1785, there was little the country could do to help the captured sailors. The United States had wanted to revolutionize diplomacy and “open trade with all the world.” Instead, it had to accept or reject terms dictated by foreign powers and still confronted mercantilist restrictions in the West Indies.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Stacy Schiff, *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America* (New York, 2005); Doron Ben-Atar, “Nationalism, Neo-Mercantilism, and Diplomacy: Rethinking the Franklin Mission,” *Diplomatic History* 22 (Winter 1998), 101–14; Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 2004); Jonathan R. Dull, “Benjamin Franklin and the Nature of American Diplomacy,” *International History Review* 5 (Aug. 1983), 346–63; John Ferling, “John Adams, Diplomat,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 51 (Apr. 1994), 227–52. Ralph L. Ketcham, “France and American Politics, 1763–1793,” *Political Science Quarterly* 78 (June 1963), 198–223. Paul Cheney, “A False Dawn for Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism? Franco–American Trade during the American War of Independence,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (July 2006), 463–88; Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and the Rights of Man (Volume 2 of Jefferson and His Time)* (Charlottesville, VA, 1951), 221–49; William Howard Adams, *The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson* (New Haven, CT, 1997), 159–206; Merrill D. Peterson, “Thomas Jefferson and Commercial Policy, 1783–1793,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 22 (Oct. 1965), 584–610.

13. Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 2: 59–95, 123–50, 162–84. Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776–1815* (Chicago, 1995); Lawrence A. Peskin, *Captives and Country-*

In the meantime, almost as soon as the Revolutionary War was over, the British began to re-build their commercial ties to their American cousins. There had been a glimmer of a possibility that the British would allow trade to resume on the same terms as had existed before independence since the Earl of Shelburne, who briefly served as prime minister in 1782, was an advocate of free trade and believed that a reciprocal agreement between Great Britain and the United States would sustain the British commercial empire. Strident mercantilists in Parliament crushed Shelburne's plan for reciprocity, and the Treaty of Paris contained no commercial provisions. As the mercantilists had argued, there was no need for concessions to the Americans. The old credit relations, the long habits of consumers, and the quality and price of British goods kept the flow of American trade to the north of the English Channel.<sup>14</sup>

As much as the foreign relations of the American Revolution emphasized commerce, it is possible to find commentators calling for an enlarged American nation. Yet any stretching of the boundaries of the United States was more a product of the machinations of European monarchies than the result of American diplomatic strategy. The Plan of Treaties made room for expansion into other areas of North America that had been occupied by Great Britain. But the one article that covered this issue did so more as a preemption to deny France these territories than as a blueprint for expansion. The idea behind this provision was that the United States was to become the heir to the British North American empire. This empire, as indicated in the Articles of Confederation,

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*men: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785–1816* (Baltimore, 2009). Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy* (New York, 1924), 21–36; John H. Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies in the Caribbean and South America, 1790–1812," *William and Mary Quarterly* 24 (Apr. 1967), 243–66; James Alexander Dun, "'What avenues of commerce, will you, Americans, not explore!': Commercial Philadelphia's Vantage onto the Early Haitian Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (July 2005), 473–504; Brooke Hunter, "Wheat, War, and the American Economy during the Age of Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (July 2005), 505–26; Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore, 2010), 14–15.

14. Richard B. Morris, *The Peacemakers: The Great Powers and American Independence* (New York, 1965), 317–19, 333, 350–63, 409, 431–32; Andrew Stockley, *Britain and France at the Birth of America: The European Powers and the Peace Negotiations of 1782–1783* (Exeter, UK, 2001), 177–83.

would be centered on the Atlantic Coast of North America and would be comprised of loosely associated sovereign states bound to mutual defense and commercially connected by a vast free trade zone. In the Treaty of Paris of 1783 the British offered generous boundaries to their former colonists that extended the new nation to the Mississippi River. The American negotiators had pressed for the Mississippi boundary and wanted parts of Upper Canada (modern Ontario), but the British refused to cede land north of the Great Lakes. The enlarged boundary of the United States did not reflect some grand scheme by Americans to occupy a continent. Rather it was a clever ploy on the part of the British to outmaneuver their traditional enemies diplomatically by ceding territory they did not possess. This diplomatic ploy also seemed to guarantee that a weak United States would become enmeshed in conflict with the Spanish as well as powerful Native Americans in the region.<sup>15</sup>

The British knew what they were doing. The United States had failed to open formal relations with Spain. The Spanish had gone to war with Great Britain in 1779 as an ally of France, but only as a co-belligerent of the United States. The Spanish funneled some money to the Americans, but they did not recognize the upstarts, nor sign a treaty with them. The Spanish pursued their own interests. Spain has often been portrayed as a decayed state with a tottering empire in the late eighteenth century.

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15. Plan of Treaties (Sept. 17, 1776), *Journals of the Continental Congress* 5: 768–69. See discussion in Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address*, 44–54; David M. Fitzsimons, “Tom Paine’s New World Order: Idealistic Internationalism in the Ideology of Early American Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 19 (Fall 1995), 569–82; David M. Griffiths, “American Commercial Diplomacy in Russia, 1780 to 1783,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 27 (July 1970), 379–410; Gregg L. Lint, “The American Revolution and the Law of Nations, 1776–1789,” *Diplomatic History* 1 (Winter 1977), 20–34; Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1980); Peter Onuf and Nicholas Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World: The Law of Nations in an Age of Revolutions, 1776–1814* (Madison, WI, 1993). For criticism of Gilbert, see Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 26–31; Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance*, 1–31. For a different approach, see John E. Crowley, *The Privilege of Independence: Neomercantilism and the American Revolution* (Baltimore, 1993). Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, 2: 151–57. H. M. Scott, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution* (Oxford, UK, 1990); Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 189–256; Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution*, 144–63.



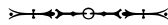
Such a view might be true in the 1790s when the French Revolution overwhelmed the Iberian Peninsula. During the 1770s and 1780s, however, Spain retained its vibrancy. This was the era of the Bourbon reforms in the Spanish empire, opening trade between colonies, reorganizing the bureaucracy, and establishing new outposts in North America. During the war, the governor of Louisiana, Bernardo de Gálvez, conquered West Florida and claimed the east bank of the Mississippi all the way to the Ohio River. In the mid 1780s John Jay's proposal to cede American rights to navigate the Mississippi River for a commercial treaty with Spain led to an uproar in Congress that placed two strains of commercial activity in opposition: The northern and eastern states wanted the agreement to expand trade in the Atlantic, while the southern states argued for opening the Mississippi to encourage both settlement and commerce in the West. Confronted by congressional deadlock, negotiations for a Spanish commercial treaty came to a halt.<sup>16</sup>

The British ploy also pitted the United States against Native Americans west of the Appalachians. Congress briefly adopted an ideology of conquest relative to the Indians in the trans-Appalachian West during the 1780s, only to abandon it in the face of continued Native American resistance and in recognition that such a policy reflected poorly upon their republican ideology. Despite the Treaty of Paris and the generous Mississippi boundary, and despite the assertions of Congress, the United States had not conquered the West during the Revolutionary War. Instead, the Indians were winning the war in the region, having scored major victories at Blue Licks and Sandusky in 1782. Congressional fulminations meant little north or south of the Ohio River, and Indian opposition to American claims persisted. By the end of the 1780s, Henry Knox, who headed the war department under the Confederation before

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16. Thomas E. Chavez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States: An Intrinsic Gift* (Albuquerque, NM, 2002); Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York, 2015); David Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire: The Struggle for Mastery in the Louisiana-Florida Borderlands, 1762-1803* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015); J. C. A. Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands: James Madison and the Spanish-American Frontier, 1776-1821* (New Haven, CT, 2009); David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT, 1992); Arthur Preston Whitaker, *The Spanish-American Frontier, 1783-1795: The Westward Movement and the Spanish Retreat in the Mississippi Valley* (Boston, 1927).

1789 and under the Constitution after ratification, urged a “conciliatory system” that accepted the idea that Indians were “the prior occupants” and “possess the right of soil.” To simply take Indian lands without a fair treaty was “a gross violation of the fundamental laws of nature, and that distributive justice which is the glory of the nation” and could lead to comparisons with the Spanish conquests in the New World. Knox was willing to use the military if he had to, but he urged more equitable relations with the Indians and the peaceful payment of money and goods for Native American land.<sup>17</sup>



The same trends established in foreign relations before the United States Constitution persisted in the years thereafter. While there might have been elements within American society eager to expand at the expense of European and non-European neighbors, national foreign policy remained consumed with commerce and wedded to the enlightened idea of free trade. One of the key reasons for writing and ratifying the United States Constitution was to strengthen American ability to negotiate trade agreements. The authors of the Articles made a mistake when they conceded to Congress the power to sign treaties with foreign nations, while granting the states control over commerce. Since Congress intended to focus its diplomacy on commercial relations, this oversight undermined the Confederation’s ability to conduct foreign affairs. As British mercantilist Lord Sheffield explained, “The act of Confederation does not enable Congress to form more than general treaties” and that “Each state has reserved every power relative to imports, exports, prohibitions, duties, &c. to itself.” Some states attempted to compel the British to open trade more freely by passing discriminatory legislation; other states did not charge British merchants additional duties and fees. The original purpose of the Constitutional Convention was to revise the Articles of Confederation to address these commercial problems and, directly connected to the issue of trade, to raise revenue through a national impost.

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17. *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 25: 680-93; *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, 1: 13, 61; Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812* (1967; Norman, OK, 1992), 3-52; Christina Snyder, “Native Nations in the Age of Revolutions,” in *The World of the Revolutionary American Republic*, ed. Shankman, 77-94; Kathleen DuVal, “Independence for Whom?: Expansion and Conflict in the South and Southwest,” in *ibid.*, 97-115.

A consolidated government would have the ability to punish nations that refused to sign trade agreements with the United States based upon enlightened principles. As the *Federalist Papers* explained, the government under the Constitution would be in a far more advantageous position to negotiate commercial agreements with other nations. In *Federalist Number 11*, Hamilton declared that “By prohibitory regulations, extending, at the same time, throughout the States, we may oblige foreign countries to bid against each other, for the privileges of our markets.” He noted that if “we had a government in America, capable of excluding Great Britain (with whom we have at present no treaty of commerce) from all our ports,” it would “enable us to negotiate, with the fairest prospect of success, for commercial privileges.” Hamilton began *Federalist Number 12* by asserting what had become a basic axiom of the Age of Reason: “The prosperity of commerce is now perceived and acknowledged by all enlightened statesmen to be the most useful as well as the most productive source of national wealth, and has accordingly become a primary object of their political cares.” Commerce created wealth and even stimulated profits for farmers by providing markets and increasing the price of land. The ability to tax this wealth through an impost therefore was crucial. If each state set up its own impost, as occurred under the Articles of Confederation, then the law could be easily evaded. From his perspective “one national government would be able, at much less expense, to extend the duties on imports, beyond comparison, further than would be practicable to the States separately, or to any partial confederacies.”<sup>18</sup>

Although the Constitution empowered Congress to regulate commerce in the hope of pursuing a free trade, the essential problems relating to the mercantilist regulations of other nations persisted. Most West

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18. John Holroyd, Earl of Sheffield, *Observations on the Commerce of the American States with Europe and the West Indies* . . . (Philadelphia, 1783), 40–41; Bemis, *Jay’s Treaty*, 26–33; Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation*, 158–61. The Society of Ship-Owners of Great Britain, *Collection of Interesting and Important Reports and Papers on the Navigation and Trade of Great Britain, Ireland, and the British Colonies* (London, 1807), 55–60; Bemis, *Jay’s Treaty*, 24–26; Frederick W. Marks, III, *Independence on Trial: Foreign Affairs and the Making of the Constitution* (1973; Lanham, MD, 1984); Cathy D. Matson and Peter S. Onuf, *A Union of Interests: Political and Economic Thought in Revolutionary America* (Lawrence, KS, 1990). *Federalist Papers*, No. 11, No. 12.

Indies colonies were closed to American ships, and the British continued to dominate American trade. Efforts to use the federal government to pressure the British into a commercial agreement ran into political opposition. When the new Congress passed an impost to raise revenue in 1789, James Madison demanded that there should be additional duties applied to the British. He argued that British restrictions had bound the United States “in commercial manacles, and very nearly defeated the object of our independence,” and claimed that the only way to obtain free trade was through coercion. Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton was desperate for revenue and feared that such a measure would lead to a trade war, a drop in imports, and a bankrupt nation. He abandoned the position he articulated in the *Federalist Papers* and opposed additional duties on the British. Madison and Jefferson repeatedly argued for discrimination against the British to little avail.<sup>19</sup>

The Anglo–French war that began in 1793 only intensified America’s diplomatic problems and continued to demonstrate the importance of commerce to American foreign relations. President George Washington’s reaction to the war was to issue a neutrality proclamation regardless of the binding Franco–American military treaty of 1778. Washington’s proclamation did not prevent a crisis with Great Britain. Previously, relying on mercantilist principles, the French had not allowed American ships to carry goods between France and most of its colonies. At war

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19. *Annals of Congress*, 1<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> sess., House of Representatives (May 4, 1789), 247. See also *ibid.* (Apr. 9, 1789), 117; *ibid.*, (Apr. 25, 1789), 214. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788–1800* (New York, 1993), 65–69, 73–74, 88–89, 123, 153–55; John Lamberton Harper, *American Machiavelli: Alexander Hamilton and the Origins of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK, 2004); Peterson, “Thomas Jefferson and Commercial Policy, 1783–1793”; Michael Schwarz, “The Great Divergence Reconsidered: Hamilton, Madison, and U.S. British Relations, 1783–89,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 27 (Fall 2007), 407–36. For the argument that discrimination represented a form of mercantilism, see William Appleman Williams, “The Age of Mercantilism: An Interpretation of the American Political Economy, 1763 to 1828,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 15 (Oct. 1958), 419–37. On the importance of revenue to the state, see Max M. Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U. S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (New York, 2003); Edling, *A Hercules in the Cradle: War, Money, and the American State, 1783–1867* (Chicago, 2014); Gautham Rao, *National Duties: Custom Houses and the Making of the American State* (Chicago, 2016).

with the British, and using the rhetoric of free trade, French revolutionaries permitted this commerce. The British rejected the subterfuge and seized hundreds of American ships loaded with French property. To avoid more seizures, in the spring of 1794 the federal government issued an embargo preventing American ships from leaving the United States. Just as an unprepared nation confronted the possibility of war, the British eased their restrictions. President Washington took advantage of this opening to send John Jay to London for negotiations. The resulting Jay Treaty represented a concession to the old world diplomacy and a retreat from the revolutionary ideals of American foreign policy: It established regular trading relations between the two countries on a most-favored-nation basis; it had a broad definition of contraband; it did not recognize that free ships made free goods in neutral shipping; and it did not include a provision against impressment—the forced recruitment of seamen from Americans ships.<sup>20</sup>

Despite political opposition to the Jay Treaty, the British promise to evacuate their forts on American soil, and the close commercial relationship between the two nations marked by the treaty, had profound if incidental consequences on American expansion. Because of the improving Anglo–American relations, the British withdrew their support of the Native Americans in the Northwest, contributing to the defeat of an Indian confederation (including Miami, Shawnee, Delaware and others) at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in late 1794. A year later most of the same Indians agreed to the Treaty of Greenville, ceding much of modern Ohio to American settlement. Similarly, wary of what seemed like an Anglo–American alliance, weakened by the French Revolutionary Wars in Europe, and forced to ally itself with France, Spain signed a treaty with the United States with a generous boundary in the southwest, not

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20. Anna Cornelia Clauder, *American Commerce as Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1793–1812* (Philadelphia, 1932); James Sofka, “American Neutral Rights Reappraised: Identity or Interest in the Foreign Policy of the Early Republic?” *Review of International Studies* 26 (Oct. 2000), 599–622. Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 2: 245–74; Bemis, *Jay’s Treaty*, 161–271; Jerald A. Combs, *The Jay Treaty: Political Background of the Founding Fathers* (Berkeley, CA, 1970); Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 375–449; Todd Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture* (Amherst, MA, 2006); Robert W. Smith, *Keeping the Republic: Ideology and Early American Democracy* (DeKalb, IL, 2004).

only withdrawing from most of its claim to the east bank of the Mississippi, but also permitting Americans to ship goods through New Orleans. Moreover, the Jay Treaty spurred continued growth of trade: In 1790 most Anglo–American trade was in British ships; by 1800, 90 percent of a much larger commerce was in American ships.<sup>21</sup>

Regardless of this accidental expansion, commerce remained the main concern of American diplomacy. Better trade relations with one power, in this case Great Britain, led to a worsening of relations with another, France. Outraged by what they saw as a repudiation of both of the 1778 treaties, and the granting of most-favored-nation status to the British without any major concessions in return, the French seized more than 300 American ships beginning in 1796. The initial efforts to obtain a settlement imploded in the XYZ affair in which the French insisted on the payment of bribes before beginning negotiations. The United States expanded its military, fought several naval engagements, and prepared for war. President John Adams, however, after receiving some diplomatic signals that the French were willing to resume talks, sent a new delegation to Paris. They signed the Convention of 1800, declaring the military alliance to be defunct while resuming commercial relations between the two countries.<sup>22</sup>

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21. Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 109–33; 161–83. On the Treaty of Greenville, see *American State Papers: Indian Affairs* 1: 562–64; Andrew R. L. Cayton, “‘Noble Actors’ on ‘the Theatre of Honour’: Power and Civility in the Treaty of Greenville,” in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750–1830*, ed. Cayton and Frederika J. Teute (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 235–69. Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 2: 318–45. Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire*, 158–86; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier*, 271–91; Whitaker, *The Spanish–American Frontier, 1783–1795*. Combs, *Jay Treaty*, 121–23; Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 388–92; Bradford Perkins, *The First Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1795–1805* (Philadelphia, 1955); Gerard H. Clarfield, *Timothy Pickering and American Diplomacy, 1795–1800* (Columbia, MO, 1969).

22. Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 2: 457–87. Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France, 1797–1801* (New York, 1966); Allan Potofsky, “The Political Economy of the French–American Debt Debate: The Ideological Uses of Atlantic Commerce, 1787 to 1800,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (July 2006), 489–516; William Stinchcombe, “Tallyrand and the American Negotiations of 1797–1798,” *Journal of American History* 62 (Dec. 1975), 575–90; Stinchcombe, *XYZ Affair* (Westport, CT, 1980); Philipp Ziesche, “The End of a Beautiful Friendship:

The Quasi War crisis brought a new variation to an old problem: trade with the richest of the French West Indies, St. Domingue. American merchants had been sailing illegally to Hispaniola since the colonial era and thought to extend their opportunities during the 1790s. However, that decade saw the colony racked by racial warfare between ex-slaves, white plantation owners, and French, Spanish, and British armies. This rebellion frightened slaveholders in the United States as emigrés flooded into North America in the wake of horrendous bloodshed. By 1798 much of the island had come under the sway of the ex-slave Toussaint Louverture. Although technically still loyal to France, Louverture ruled almost independently. He assumed a neutral stance during the Quasi War, agreeing not to let French privateers use his ports. He wanted American supplies; American merchants wanted the profits that came from shipping them. President John Adams supported this commerce and even allowed the United States Navy to aid Louverture in defeating a dissident general. Thomas Jefferson, however, took a different tack. When St. Domingue became the independent republic of Haiti in 1804, Jefferson treated this black nation as a pariah and refused to recognize it.<sup>23</sup>

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Americans in Paris and Public Diplomacy during the War Scare of 1798–99,” in *Old World, New World: America and Europe in the Age of Jefferson*, ed. Leonard J. Sadosky et al. (Charlottesville, VA, 2010), 223–46; Philipp Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots: Americans in Paris in the Age of Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA, 2010).

23. See the correspondence in [J. Franklin Jameson, ed.], “Letters of Toussaint Louverture and of Edward Stevens, 1798–1800,” *American Historical Review* 16 (Oct. 1910), 67–72. See also Robin Blackburn, “Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (Oct. 2006), 643–74; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2004); Dubois, “‘Troubled Water’: Rebellion and Republicanism in the Revolutionary French Caribbean,” in *The Revolution of 1800*, ed. Horn et al., 291–308; Dun, “‘What avenues of commerce, will you, Americans, not explore!’”; Douglas R. Egerton, “The Empire of Liberty Reconsidered,” in *The Revolution of 1800*, ed. Horn et al. 309–30; David P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, MO, 2001); Philippe R. Girard, “Black Talleyrand: Toussaint Louverture’s Diplomacy, 1798–1802,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (Jan. 2009), 87–124; C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York, 1963); Ronald Angelo Johnson, “A Revolutionary Dinner: U.S. Diplomacy toward Saint Domingue, 1798–1801,” *Early American Studies* 9 (Winter 2011), 114–41; Johnson, *Diplomacy in Black and White: John Adams, Toussaint Louver-*

Events in St. Domingue led directly to the greatest territorial acquisition for the United States—the purchase of Louisiana. Like the unanticipated consequences of the Jay Treaty, this doubling of the size of the American nation was not planned or the result of some grand vision. Instead it was an outgrowth of European intrigue and American interest in commerce. No sooner had Napoleon Bonaparte signed the accord ending the Quasi War than he compelled Spain to surrender the Louisiana Territory to France. The French had long coveted Louisiana. In 1793, the French minister to the United States, Edmond Genêt, had planned to send an army to conquer it, and during the Quasi War some French emigrés in the United States plotted to do the same. For Napoleon, Louisiana was part of a larger scheme to reestablish control over St. Domingue and create an American empire. His idea was that a French North American colony would ship food, lumber, and other material to supply the sugar, coffee, and cotton plantations in St. Domingue. Taking advantage of a brief peace with the British in 1802, Napoleon sent an army to St. Domingue, only to see it nearly wiped out by a combination of disease and resistance from the black insurgents. Jefferson, troubled by the potential loss of the Mississippi River as an outlet for American commerce, sent negotiators to Paris to purchase New Orleans. Defeated in St. Domingue, Napoleon decided Louisiana was a liability that might fall easily to the British when war was renewed. Needing money to fight that inevitable conflict, Napoleon offered the Americans a deal they could not refuse—all of Louisiana. Some Americans may have trumpeted this acquisition as inevitable, but it was not the result of an orchestrated diplomatic coup. Instead, it grew out of the failed intrigues of Napoleon, the success of a slave revolt in St. Domingue, and the desire to protect American commerce.<sup>24</sup>

Questions of commerce also continued to plague American relations

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*ture, and Their Atlantic World Alliance* (Athens, GA, 2014); Tim Matthewson, “Jefferson and Haiti,” *Journal of Southern History* 61 (May 1995), 209–48; Matthewson, *A Proslavery Foreign Policy: Haitian American Relations during the Early Republic* (Westport, CT, 2003).

24. Alexander DeConde, *The Affair of Louisiana* (New York, 1976); Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation’s Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven, CT, 2004); Jon Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America* (New York, 2003); Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, 87–171.



with the Barbary states. In 1793 Algiers had seized eleven American ships and over 100 seamen. Although Congress created a navy to meet this threat, Americans negotiated a settlement that included a payment of about one million dollars. American diplomats also made payments to the other Barbary states to obtain commercial treaties and the ability to sail in the Mediterranean unmolested. Dissatisfied with his smaller payments, the Bashaw of Tripoli declared war on the United States in 1801. Rather than pay tribute, Jefferson dispatched the American navy to the Mediterranean in a conflict that lasted until 1805.<sup>25</sup>

Trade remained the major foreign policy issue for the United States in the renewed Anglo–French war that began in 1804. Locked in a conflict of epic proportions, by 1806 France dominated the continent of Europe, while after the Battle of Trafalgar, Great Britain ruled the seas. Caught between them was the United States, the largest neutral trader in the world. Unable to deliver a knockout blow, both France and Great Britain issued a series of decrees and orders aimed at preventing neutral ships from reaching each other’s ports. Compounding this difficulty, Great Britain intensified its impressment of seamen from American vessels in its dire need to man its massive navy. Confronted by this hostile world, exacerbated when the British attacked the USS *Chesapeake* in 1807 to retrieve deserters from the king’s navy, the United States turned to commerce as a weapon to coerce more liberal trade policies from both powers. The Embargo of 1807, which prohibited American shipping from leaving the United States, was an economic disaster. Subsequent adjustments to this measure, including re-opening trade, brought little relief. In 1810 Napoleon suggested he might repeal his impositions on American commerce. Although Napoleon did not do so, Madison banned British trade, further aggravating strained relations. In mid June 1812, the British removed their restrictions on American neutral rights. By the time word of this change of policy arrived in Washington, the United States had already declared war on Great Britain.<sup>26</sup>

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25. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, 187–206; Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York, 2005); Joseph L. Wheelan, *Jefferson’s War: America’s First War on Terror, 1801–1805* (New York, 2003). On the commercial nature of the Algerian treaty, see Hannah Farber, “Millions for Credit: Peace with Algiers and the Establishment of America’s Commercial Reputation Overseas, 1795–96,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 34 (Summer 2014), 187–217.

26. Doron S. Ben-Atar, *The Origins of Jeffersonian Commercial Policy and Diplomacy* (New York, 1993); Roger H. Brown, *The Republic in Peril: 1812* (New

Americans fought the War of 1812 under the banner of “free trade and sailors’ rights,” proclaiming that they were defending neutral commerce and protecting sailors from impressment. Wars, however, are seldom explained so simply. Some Americans wished to drive the British from Canada, ending a longtime geopolitical menace. Many, however, argued that the only reason to seize Canada was to force the British to come to terms and allow neutral American trade and end impressment. Other Americans wanted to capture Spanish Florida, even though the United States was not at war with Spain. Despite a filibuster expedition against St. Augustine and incursions into western Florida, all that could be managed was the detachment of a snippet of territory surrounding Mobile Bay. The Americans who supported the war, and a strong minority objected to the conflict, believed that the honor of the nation was at stake. Although the war was a disaster, a few victories in 1814 and early 1815 allowed President James Madison to declare the Treaty of Ghent, which merely asserted the status quo that existed before the war, a great triumph.<sup>27</sup>

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York, 1964); Richard Buel, Jr., *America on the Brink: How the Political Struggle Over the War of 1812 Almost Destroyed the Young Republic* (New York, 2005); Reginald Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (Philadelphia, 1962); Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War, 1805-1812: England and the United States* (Berkeley, CA, 1968); Donald R. Hickey, “The Monroe-Pinkney Treaty of 1806: A Reappraisal,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (Jan. 1987), 65-88; Lawrence S. Kaplan, “Jefferson, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Balance of Power,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 14 (Apr. 1957), 196-217; Daniel George Lang, *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic: The Law of Nations and the Balance of Power* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1985); Spencer C. Tucker and Frank T. Reuter, *Injured Honor: The Chesapeake-Leopard Affair, June 22, 1807* (Annapolis, MD, 1996); James Duncan Phillips, “Jefferson’s ‘Wicked Tyrannical Embargo,’” *New England Quarterly* 18 (Dec. 1945), 466-78; Thorp Lanier Wolford, “Democratic-Republican Reaction in Massachusetts to the Embargo of 1807,” *New England Quarterly* 15 (Mar. 1942), 35-61; Walter W. Jennings, “The American Embargo, 1807-1809,” *University of Iowa Studies in Social Science* 8, no. 1 (Iowa City, IA, 1921); Louis Martin Sears, *Jefferson and the Embargo* (Durham, NC, 1927); Burton Spivak, *Jefferson’s English Crisis: Commerce, Embargo, and the Republican Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA, 1979).

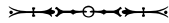
27. On the Origins of the War of 1812, see Brown, *The Republic in Peril: 1812*; Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailors’ Rights*; Warren H. Goodman, “The Origins of the War of 1812: A Survey of Changing Interpretations,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 28 (Sept. 1941), 171-86; Louis Morton Hacker, “Western Land Hunger and the War of 1812: A Conjecture,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 10 (Mar. 1924), 365-95; Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812*; Perkins,

During the earliest years of the American republic, the one area where a strident expansionism began to emerge was in the desire to take control over Native American lands. Even here, however, commerce remained a crucial component of American diplomacy. When Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark to explore the Far West he did not speak of searching for new lands to subdue. Instead he viewed the mission as a scientific expedition that would also determine if the Missouri River would serve as a “practicable” avenue “for the purposes of commerce.” Treaties signed by the United States and Native Americans, even when they included Indian land cessions, offered an exchange of goods as a part of the bargain. The most important congressional laws dealing with Native Americans were the trade and intercourse acts. The first of these measures, passed in 1790, set up a licensing system to regulate trade with Indians. Subsequent revisions created a factory system that lasted until 1822, with government agents responsible for overseeing commerce with Native Americans. Although this government-run program was often sidestepped by illegal traders, and the factories themselves encouraged Indian debt that would lead to the sale of land, the trade and intercourse acts represented an effort to define American-Indian relations in terms

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*Prologue to War*; Lawrence A. Peskin, “Conspiratorial Anglophobia and the War of 1812,” *Journal of American History* 98 (Dec. 2011), 647–69; Julius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812* (New York, 1925); Norman K. Risjord, “1812: Conservatives, War Hawks, and the Nation’s Honor,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 18 (Apr. 1961), 196–210; Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies* (New York, 2010); Steven Watts, *The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790–1820* (Baltimore, 1987). On the war itself, see Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana, IL, 1989); Jon Latimer, *1812: War with America* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); J. C. A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783–1820* (Princeton, NJ, 1983); Stagg, *The War of 1812: Conflict for a Continent* (Cambridge, UK, 2012). For a broader definition of the War of 1812 encompassing the entire 1810s and emphasizing expansion, especially at the expense of Native Americans, see Alan Taylor, “The War of 1812 and the Struggle for a Continent,” in *The World of the Revolutionary American Republic*, ed. Shankman, 246–67. On the end of the war, see Fred L. Engelman, *The Peace of Christmas Eve* (New York, 1960); Charles M. Gates, “The West in American Diplomacy, 1812–1815,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 26 (Mar. 1940), 499–510; Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailors’ Rights*, 244–61, 279–87.

of commerce and not conquest. The idea, which began under the Washington administration and was expanded by Thomas Jefferson, was to use trade to encourage the “civilization” of Native Americans and convince Indian men to take up farming. Limiting Indian men to farmsteads meant more land would be opened for sale to European American settlers. The commercial veneer of the treaties and the trade and intercourse acts hardly hid the baser truths—that whites wanted Indian lands and would do what it would take to obtain them. Jefferson’s plan for civilizing Indians quickly shaded into a program of removal. And armed conflict was often necessary to coax Indians into treaties. This harsh reality was as true of the battle for the Ohio Country in the 1790s that led to the Treaty of Greenville, as it was of the Indian wars that presaged and accompanied the War of 1812.<sup>28</sup>



After 1815, American foreign policy increasingly began to emphasize expansion. Oddly, just as expansion came into greater focus, American commercial diplomacy gained unprecedented success. In part this was a function of the end of the great Anglo–French conflict and a period of peace in Europe that left the issues of neutral rights and impressment moot. But it also was a result of the spread of the doctrine of free trade. In the spring of 1815 Congress passed a law offering merchants from other countries the same tariffs as its own merchants if those countries reciprocated. The British agreed to this arrangement in the Convention of 1815, renewing this provision in all subsequent Anglo–American commercial accords. Over the next decade most nations trading with the United States did the same. During the 1820s and the 1830s one European power after another opened its West Indies colonies to American

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28. Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis, June 20, 1803, Instructions, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Series I, General Correspondence, 1651–1827, Digital Archives, Library of Congress; Landon Y. Jones, *William Clark and the Shaping of the West* (New York, 2004); James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln, NE, 1984); Thomas P. Slaughter, *Exploring Lewis and Clark: Reflections on Men and Wilderness* (New York, 2003). *U.S. Statutes at Large* 1 (1790), 137–38; Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790–1834* (Cambridge, MA, 1962); Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1973); Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

merchants, while throughout Latin America a host of new states gained their independence. Beginning in 1822 the United States not only recognized these countries but also signed commercial agreements with them on liberal trade terms. In the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, Americans extended their commercial reach even further, set up consulates throughout the world, and established diplomatic and trade relations with China, Siam, and even Japan. Regardless of these global horizons, it was territorial expansion across a continent that became the driving force behind American foreign policy.<sup>29</sup>

We can see this new emphasis on acquisition in Florida. American interest in the region began before the War of 1812. Jefferson and his Republican successors claimed that Spanish Florida was a part of the Louisiana Purchase. This fabrication was not driven by any desire for rich new lands to settle—most of Florida was a swamp. Rather, Florida was the outlet of a series of rivers that emptied into the Gulf of Mexico that had the potential to be avenues of commerce for the cotton-producing lands that were being settled in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Florida was also a haven for bandits and smugglers, as well as

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29. Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams: England and the United States, 1812–1823* (Berkeley, CA, 1964), 253–58; Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1949); Eliga H. Gould, “The Making of an Atlantic System: Britain and the United States,” in *Britain and America Go to War: The Impact of War and Warfare in Anglo-America, 1754–1815*, ed. Julie Flavell and Stephen Conway (Gainesville, FL, 2004), 241–65. Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 2: 595–600; Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailors’ Rights*, 300–307; Vernon G. Setser, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy of the United States, 1774–1829* (Philadelphia, 1937), 184–251. Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in the Age of American Revolutions* (New York, 2016); Lester D. Langley, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1850* (New Haven, CT, 1996); 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, NC, 1998). John M. Belohlavek, “*Let the Eagle Soar!*”: *The Foreign Policy of Andrew Jackson* (Lincoln, NE, 1985); Caitlin A. Fitz, “The Hemispheric Dimensions of Early U.S. Nationalism: The War of 1812, Its Aftermath, and Spanish American Independence,” *Journal of American History* 102 (Sept. 2015), 356–79; Mary W. M. Hargreaves, *The Presidency of John Quincy Adams* (Lawrence, KS, 1985); Weeks, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, Volume I*, 121–49. See also Kinley Brauer, “The Need for a Synthesis of American Foreign Relations, 1815–1861,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 14 (Winter 1994), 467–76.

Native Americans and escaped slaves. As long as the Gulf Coast was controlled by another power, the situation remained tenuous. Native Americans in the Old Southwest could use the presence of a European outpost in Florida in the old game of playing one power off of another. Spain might have had a weak hold on Florida, but there was always the possibility of a renewed French interest in North America through Florida. A more real threat was a return of the British to the region. In 1810 the United States began annexing Florida piecemeal, occupying an area on the east bank of the Mississippi.<sup>30</sup>

Problems connected to this borderland reached a climax in the years immediately after the War of 1812, as escaped slaves created a haven for themselves in an outpost called the Negro Fort, and as Seminoles sought refuge in Florida after raiding in the United States. American forces destroyed the Negro Fort in 1816. Two years later General Andrew Jackson without qualms crossed the border, executed two British subjects he claimed had been encouraging Indian hostilities, and drove the Spanish out of Pensacola. If Spain could not keep the peace, Jackson would. Such strident action reflected more a mentality of conquest than an interest in protecting commerce. It also provoked a diplomatic crisis with both Great Britain and Spain. Concerned that Jackson's bravado might lead to war, President James Monroe and his cabinet considered disavowing the Hero of the Battle of New Orleans. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams disagreed. Instead of a diplomatic disaster, Adams saw a diplomatic opportunity. Adams, like some Americans before him, had an expansionist vision for the future of the United States. Unlike those who had occasionally expressed such ideas earlier, Adams in the post-war period could take concerted action. Adams proclaimed his expansionist vision with reference to the "Law of Nature," but did so

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30. Thomas Dionysius Clark and John D. W. Guice, *Frontiers in Conflict: The Old Southwest, 1795-1830* (Albuquerque, NM, 1989); James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American Invasion of Spanish East Florida* (Gainesville, FL, 2003); Robert L. Gold, *Borderland Empires in Transition: The Triple-Nation Transfer of Florida* (Carbondale, IL, 1969); David Head, "Slave Smuggling by Foreign Privateers: The Illegal Slave Trade and the Geopolitics of the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 33 (Fall 2013), 433-62; Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr. and Gene A. Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1997), 7-31; Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, 108-88; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier*.

less in the rational language of the Enlightenment, and more in the emotive character of Romanticism. Adams wrote that “From the time when we became an independent people” it was “a Law of Nature” that North America would be “annexed to the United States.” This expansion, Adams argued, would not depend on “any spirit of encroachment or ambition” since it was “a physical, moral, and political absurdity that such fragments of territory” could long remain attached to distant nations when they were “contiguous to a great, powerful, enterprising, and rapidly growing nation.” Not a proponent of an ideology of conquest, Adams assumed that the remnants of the Spanish empire would inevitably and almost magically fall into American hands. From this perspective, Jackson had taken “*defensive* acts of hostility” that were justifiable under both the law of nations and the Constitution. Spain had failed to abide by its 1795 treaty when it did not prevent Indians from raiding across the border. Florida had become “open to the occupancy of every enemy, civilized or savage, of the United States, and serving no other earthly purpose than as a post of annoyance to them.” Ultimately Spain recognized its own inability to control Florida as it was in the midst of losing its American colonial empire. The Spanish negotiated a settlement in 1819 granting the United States Florida while placing limits on American ambitions to the southwest in Texas. In the process Spain ratified America’s ambiguous claims to parts of the Pacific Coast.<sup>31</sup>

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31. Clark and Guice, *Frontiers in Conflict*; Gold, *Borderland Empires in Transition*; Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and Course of American Empire, 1767–1821* (New York, 1977), 341–77; Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 195–209. John Quincy Adams, Diary, 31, Nov. 16, 1819 (electronic edition), Massachusetts Historical Society. John Quincy Adams, Diary, 30, July 15, 1818 (electronic edition), Massachusetts Historical Society. *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, 4: 542. The Monroe Doctrine represented a hybrid policy that sought to keep Latin American markets open for American merchants, while also insisting on having no new European claims to territory in the Western Hemisphere, clearing the decks for expansion by the United States. Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 3: 3–64; Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 300–62; Charles N. Edel, *Nation Builder: John Quincy Adams and the Grand Strategy of the Republic* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 107–84; James E. Lewis, Jr., *John Quincy Adams: Policymaker for the Union* (Wilmington, DE, 2001), 43–69; Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 2011); William Earl Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire* (Lexington KY, 1992).

The same boisterous and aggressive attitude that lay behind Jackson's venture into Florida, and a strong interest in expansion, came to mark relations between the United States and Native Americans. Throughout the early republic era there was a move away from treating Native Americans within the normal realm of foreign relations. A series of Supreme Court decisions confirmed these developments. In *Johnson v. M'Intosh* (1823) the Court asserted the so-called "discovery doctrine," which claimed that the European powers, and the subsequent government of the United States, gained title to the lands that were first discovered by people from that nation, "notwithstanding the occupancy of the natives, who were heathens." Eight years later the Supreme Court in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* pronounced the Cherokee nothing more than a "domestic dependent nation." Even though in a subsequent ruling (*Worcester v. Georgia*), John Marshall declared the national government had complete control over Indian relations, thus theoretically preventing individual states from seizing Indian land, all three decisions left Native Americans in a vulnerable position when President Andrew Jackson determined to compel Indians east of the Mississippi to remove further west. Jackson posed this policy as "benevolent," "progressive," "liberal," and even "generous." Underpinning this language was a not too veiled threat since Jackson explained that he was merely trying to "save" the Indian from "submitting to the laws of the States" or "the alternative, perhaps utter annihilation."<sup>32</sup>

During the 1830s the biggest brake on an unbridled expansion was the issue of slavery. Questions about slavery had long been intertwined

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32. Leonard J. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America* (Charlottesville, VA, 2010); Bethel Saler, *The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (Philadelphia, 2015). *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, (1823); *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831); *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832). Lindsay Gordon Robertson, *Conquest by Law: How the Discovery of America Dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of Their Lands* (New York, 2005); Robertson, "The Judicial Conquest of Native America: The Story of *Johnson v. M'Intosh*," in *Indian Law Stories*, ed. Carol E. Goldberg et al. (New York, 2011), 29-59. James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 20 vols. (New York, 1917) 3: 1082-86. Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln, NE, 1982); Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Democracy*; Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York, 1993).



with foreign affairs. Revolutionary Americans had sought to limit the importation of slaves into North America. After one of the most hotly contested debates in the Philadelphia Convention in 1787, the delegates agreed to delay congressional prohibition of the international slave trade for twenty years. The slave trade continued as an important diplomatic issue: Congress outlawed it in 1807, the Treaty of Ghent included a provision for the United States and Great Britain to act in concert against the international slave trade, and in the 1820s Congress labeled the transportation of slaves from Africa as piracy. After the War of 1812, slavery itself entered diplomatic discussions and became a stumbling block to expansion. Many northerners feared that adding territory in the West would bring more slave states into the Union, upsetting a precarious balance between the slave and free states. In 1837 William Ellery Channing decried the movement to annex Texas as equivalent to making war on Mexico and engaging in an “unrighteous” conquest for the extension of slavery. As president, Andrew Jackson wanted to bring Texas into the union, but decided not to push for it believing that it would lead to war, harm America’s image in Europe, and create serious divisions within the United States. Too preoccupied with the financial fallout from the Panic of 1837, and fearful of the divisions within the United States attendant with annexation, Jackson’s successor, Martin Van Buren, also left Texas alone. President John Tyler did not share these concerns and, despite his own Whig Party’s opposition, he persuaded Congress in 1845 to pass a joint resolution admitting Texas into the union.<sup>33</sup>

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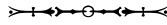
33. Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006); Matthew Mason, “The Battle of the Slaveholding Liberators: Great Britain, the United States, and Slavery in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (July 2002), 665–96; Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 423–32; Patrick S. Brady, “The Slave Trade and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 1787–1808,” *Journal of Southern History* 38 (Nov. 1972), 601–20. William Ellery Channing, *Thoughts on the Evils of a Spirit of Conquest and on Slavery: A Letter on the Annexation of Texas to the United States* (London, 1837). Belohlavek, “Let the Eagles Soar!” 214–38; Christopher Childers, *The Failure of Popular Sovereignty: Slavery, Manifest Destiny, and the Realization of Southern Politics* (Lawrence, KS, 2012), 74–101; Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire*, rev. ed. (1985; Ithaca, NY, 2003), 10–54; Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), 13–64; Morrison, “Westward the Curse of Empire: Texas Annexation and the American Whig Party,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (Summer 1990),

By then many Americans had come to see that expansion had pride of place in their nation's foreign relations. Even though he was reluctant to view expansion as connected to conquest, John Louis O'Sullivan gave voice to the prominence of expansionism when he used the phrase "manifest destiny." O'Sullivan denied that making Texas a state was "a measure of spoilation, unrightful and unrighteous." He believed the Texas Revolution had been justified by Mexican autocracy and backwardness, whereas the United States represented the future and therefore had a God-given right to Texas and even California. By the same token he wrote that the American claim to Oregon was based on "the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative self government entrusted to us." Manifest Destiny, however, was more than an expression of a democratic nationalism and a mystical romantic spirit. It had an economic component that included the spread of American commercial tentacles throughout the continent and beyond. Commerce, in other words, remained an important factor in American diplomacy. President James Polk urged the occupation of California during the Mexican War because its ports "would in a short period become the marts of an extensive and profitable commerce with China and other countries of the East." Equally important, manifest destiny contained a racist edge that assumed the superiority of the white race. As historian Thomas R. Hietala explains, "the expansionists looked forward to the time when blacks, Indians, and Mexicans would completely disappear from the continent and whites would take sole possession of it."<sup>34</sup>

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221–49; Lyon Rathbun, "The Debate over Annexing Texas and the Emergence of Manifest Destiny," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 4 (Fall 2001), 459–94; Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Democracy*, 347–68; Andrew J. Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800–1850* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015). For the role of slavery in antebellum diplomacy, see Matthew Karp, *The Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA, 2016).

34. *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17 (July 1845), 6; manifest destiny reference quoted in Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation*, foreword by John Mack Faragher (1963; Cambridge, MA, 1995), 32. On manifest destiny, see Robert W. Johansen, "The Meaning of Manifest Destiny," in *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism*, ed. Sam W. Haynes and Christopher Morris (College Station,



This essay has sketched an interpretive framework for understanding American foreign relations moving into and then moving away from the American Revolution that emphasizes commerce, at least through the War of 1812. Beginning with the vision of an empire of commerce rather than of conquest during the late colonial period, and continuing through the revolution and the first years of the early republic, Americans pursued a diplomacy that revolved around trade even as they abandoned the mercantilism of the British Empire and embraced revolutionary and enlightened ideas about free trade. At times the interest in commerce accidentally led to expansion, as in the incidental benefits of the Jay Treaty that contributed to land cessions in Ohio by the Northwest Indians and the favorable boundary agreement with Spain that also provided an outlet to the sea on the Mississippi. Similarly, the United States stumbled into the Louisiana Purchase hoping only to guarantee that commerce could flow through New Orleans. There were many causes to the War of 1812, but the most salient reason for America's second war with Great Britain was the call for free trade and sailors' rights—issues intimately

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TX, 1997), 7–19; Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge, UK, 2005); Sam Haynes and Christopher Morris, eds., *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism* (College Station, TX, 1997); Hietala, *Manifest Design*; Merk, *Manifest Destiny*; Nugent, *Habits of Empire*; Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Baltimore, 1935). Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers*, 6: 2390. For race and expansionism, see also John Craig Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom and Expansion in the Early American West* (Charlottesville, VA, 2007); Reginald Horsman; *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA, 1981); Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West 1800–1860* (Lincoln, NE, 2011); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006); Dane A. Morrison, *True Yankees: The South Seas and the Discovery of American Identity* (Baltimore, 2014); Morrison, *Slavery and the American West*; Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Empire* (Ithaca, NY, 2014); Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union: Cotton, Federal Policies, and the Global Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore, 2009).

connected to a diplomacy centered on commerce. In the years after 1815, American foreign relations took a new turn. No longer so closely wedded to the Atlantic, Americans had continental and even global horizons, as they broke away from their post-colonial bonds, defined their own national identity, and established a new republican empire. The shift from a diplomacy of trade to a diplomacy of acquisition can be seen in Florida where problems along a borderland, as well as an interest in obtaining outlets for commerce, gave way to military adventurism and a treaty that not only ceded the contested region to the United States, but also staked an American claim to the Far West. This same acquisitive aggressiveness appeared in relations with Indians. Although Native Americans west of the Mississippi resisted the United States, the state and federal governments ceased to consider Indians as separate nations. Despite voices of protest over the extension of slavery into the West, Americans increasingly embraced expansion as a God-given right, “re-annexing” Texas, asserting their sole claim to Oregon, fighting a war against Mexico, and seizing California and New Mexico. Although trade remained important, and although few Americans confessed to the militaristic nature of expansion, commerce had ceded its pride of place to conquest in American foreign relations.

There were multiple reasons for this change. First, when Americans established the United States they believed that they were merely substituting the British commercial empire with an American commercial empire. The British commercial empire, however, was attached to a monarchy and dependent on mercantilism, while the American commercial empire was republican and was based on free trade. This ideological bent to American diplomacy strengthened a sense of American exceptionalism. Almost every nation believes that it has an exceptional role in history. The British had a highly defined sense of exceptionalism based on their institutions, balanced government, and the notion of English liberty. Americans inherited and enhanced this sense of exceptionalism by emphasizing their uniqueness as a republic in a world packed with monarchies and their embracing of an idealistic foreign policy. Faith in an exceptionalism based on commerce shaded into faith in an exceptionalism based on expansion. Second, and connected to this developing sense of exceptionalism, was the emergence of a strident nationalism in the nineteenth century as the rationality of the Enlightenment gave way to the emotionalism of Romanticism. The diplomacy of republican free

trade was born out of the Age of Reason and represented an internationalist mind set. Free trade promised to tear down borders, which it ultimately did within the united states. That internationalism failed on a global level. The diplomacy of expansion reflected the Age of Romanticism and a spiritual faith in a new America that was inevitably going to spread its republican values across a continent. Third, the accidental acquisitions—the Mississippi Boundary of 1783, the surrender of territory by Spain in 1795, and the Louisiana Purchase in 1803—fostered a culture of expansion. Before the inception of the United States, there had been some Americans who spoke in continental terms. Even if these individuals did not dictate the mainsprings of American diplomacy, their prophecy seemed to be coming true. Reinforcing this experience was the great migration west. The growth of the British American population and the repeated extension of settlement along the frontier before 1776 created a trajectory that was accelerated in the years of the early republic as Americans streamed into the trans-Appalachian west. During the colonial period repeated wars with Native Americans yielded some hard-fought territory, but whatever the gains, they paled in comparison to the grants of native land that began in the 1790s and continued into the nineteenth century. Fourth was an ethnocentrism that became racist in tone in the nineteenth century. The English, like many a people, had long believed themselves superior to others. Americans inherited that sense of superiority and ran with it, asserting the primacy of the white race both in the North and the South. White Americans viewed people of all other hues—be they African American, Native American, or Mexican—as inferior and incapable of sustaining republican values. Taken together these forces combined to allow conquest to trump commerce in American foreign policy.