

“Go West, young man,  
and grow up with  
the country.”

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Newspaper editor Horace Greeley, 1851

### **BUILDING UNITY**

**T**he War of 1812 was, in a sense, a second war of independence that confirmed once and for all the American break with England. With its conclusion, many of the serious difficulties that the young republic had faced since the Revolution disappeared. National union under the Constitution brought a balance between liberty and order. With a low national debt and a continent awaiting exploration, the prospect of peace, prosperity, and social progress opened before the nation.

Commerce cemented national unity. The privations of war convinced many of the importance of protecting the manufacturers of America until they could stand alone against foreign competition. Economic independence, many argued,

was as essential as political independence. To foster self-sufficiency, congressional leaders Henry Clay of Kentucky and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina urged a policy of protectionism — imposition of restrictions on imported goods to foster the development of American industry.

The time was propitious for raising the customs tariff. The shepherds of Vermont and Ohio wanted protection against an influx of English wool. In Kentucky, a new industry of weaving local hemp into cotton bagging was threatened by the Scottish bagging industry. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, already a flourishing center of iron smelting, was eager to challenge British and Swedish iron suppliers. The tariff enacted in 1816 imposed duties high enough to give manufacturers real protection.

In addition, Westerners advocat-

ed a national system of roads and canals to link them with Eastern cities and ports, and to open frontier lands for settlement. However, they were unsuccessful in pressing their demands for a federal role in internal improvement because of opposition from New England and the South. Roads and canals remained the province of the states until the passage of the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916.

The position of the federal government at this time was greatly strengthened by several Supreme Court decisions. A committed Federalist, John Marshall of Virginia became chief justice in 1801 and held office until his death in 1835. The court — weak before his administration — was transformed into a powerful tribunal, occupying a position co-equal to the Congress and the president. In a succession of historic decisions, Marshall established the power of the Supreme Court and strengthened the national government.

Marshall was the first in a long line of Supreme Court justices whose decisions have molded the meaning and application of the Constitution. When he finished his long service, the court had decided nearly 50 cases clearly involving constitutional issues. In one of Marshall's most famous opinions — *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) — he decisively established the right of the Supreme Court to review the constitutionality of any law of Congress or of a state legislature. In *McCulloch v.*

*Maryland* (1819), he boldly upheld the Hamiltonian theory that the Constitution by implication gives the government powers beyond those expressly stated.

### EXTENSION OF SLAVERY

Slavery, which up to now had received little public attention, began to assume much greater importance as a national issue. In the early years of the republic, when the Northern states were providing for immediate or gradual emancipation of the slaves, many leaders had supposed that slavery would die out. In 1786 George Washington wrote that he devoutly wished some plan might be adopted "by which slavery may be abolished by slow, sure, and imperceptible degrees." Virginians Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe and other leading Southern statesmen made similar statements.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 had banned slavery in the Northwest Territory. As late as 1808, when the international slave trade was abolished, there were many Southerners who thought that slavery would soon end. The expectation proved false, for during the next generation, the South became solidly united behind the institution of slavery as new economic factors made slavery far more profitable than it had been before 1790.

Chief among these was the rise of a great cotton-growing industry in the South, stimulated by the introduction of new types of cotton and

by Eli Whitney's invention in 1793 of the cotton gin, which separated the seeds from cotton. At the same time, the Industrial Revolution, which made textile manufacturing a large-scale operation, vastly increased the demand for raw cotton. And the opening of new lands in the West after 1812 greatly extended the area available for cotton cultivation. Cotton culture moved rapidly from the Tidewater states on the East Coast through much of the lower South to the delta region of the Mississippi and eventually to Texas.

Sugar cane, another labor-intensive crop, also contributed to slavery's extension in the South. The rich, hot lands of southeastern Louisiana proved ideal for growing sugar cane profitably. By 1830 the state was supplying the nation with about half its sugar supply. Finally, tobacco growers moved westward, taking slavery with them.

As the free society of the North and the slave society of the South spread westward, it seemed politically expedient to maintain a rough equality among the new states carved out of western territories. In 1818, when Illinois was admitted to the Union, 10 states permitted slavery and 11 states prohibited it; but balance was restored after Alabama was admitted as a slave state. Population was growing faster in the North, which permitted Northern states to have a clear majority in the House of Representatives. However, equality between the North and the South was maintained in the Senate.

In 1819 Missouri, which had 10,000 slaves, applied to enter the Union. Northerners rallied to oppose Missouri's entry except as a free state, and a storm of protest swept the country. For a time Congress was deadlocked, but Henry Clay arranged the so-called Missouri Compromise: Missouri was admitted as a slave state at the same time Maine came in as a free state. In addition, Congress banned slavery from the territory acquired by the Louisiana Purchase north of Missouri's southern boundary. At the time, this provision appeared to be a victory for the Southern states because it was thought unlikely that this "Great American Desert" would ever be settled. The controversy was temporarily resolved, but Thomas Jefferson wrote to a friend that "this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union."

### **LATIN AMERICA AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE**

**D**uring the opening decades of the 19th century, Central and South America turned to revolution. The idea of liberty had stirred the people of Latin America from the time the English colonies gained their freedom. Napoleon's conquest of Spain and Portugal in 1808 provided the signal for Latin Americans to rise in revolt. By 1822, ably led by Simón Bolívar, Francisco Miranda, José de San Martín and Miguel de Hidalgo,

most of Hispanic America — from Argentina and Chile in the south to Mexico in the north — had won independence.

The people of the United States took a deep interest in what seemed a repetition of their own experience in breaking away from European rule. The Latin American independence movements confirmed their own belief in self-government. In 1822 President James Monroe, under powerful public pressure, received authority to recognize the new countries of Latin America and soon exchanged ministers with them. He thereby confirmed their status as genuinely independent countries, entirely separated from their former European connections.

At just this point, Russia, Prussia, and Austria formed an association, the Holy Alliance, to protect themselves against revolution. By intervening in countries where popular movements threatened monarchies, the alliance — joined by post-Napoleonic France — hoped to prevent the spread of revolution. This policy was the antithesis of the American principle of self-determination.

As long as the Holy Alliance confined its activities to the Old World, it aroused no anxiety in the United States. But when the alliance announced its intention of restoring to Spain its former colonies, Americans became very concerned. Britain, to which Latin American trade had become of great importance, resolved to block any such action. London urged joint Anglo-American guarantees

to Latin America, but Secretary of State John Quincy Adams convinced Monroe to act unilaterally: "It would be more candid, as well as more dignified, to avow our principles explicitly to Russia and France, than to come in as a cock-boat in the wake of the British man-of-war."

In December 1823, with the knowledge that the British navy would defend Latin America from the Holy Alliance and France, President Monroe took the occasion of his annual message to Congress to pronounce what would become known as the Monroe Doctrine — the refusal to tolerate any further extension of European domination in the Americas:

*The American continents ... are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.*

*We should consider any attempt on their part to extend their [political] system to any portion of this hemisphere, as dangerous to our peace and safety.*

*With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered, and shall not interfere. But with the governments who have declared their independence, and maintained it, and whose independence we have ... acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling, in any other manner, their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of*

*an unfriendly disposition towards the United States.*

The Monroe Doctrine expressed a spirit of solidarity with the newly independent republics of Latin America. These nations in turn recognized their political affinity with the United States by basing their new constitutions, in many instances, on the North American model.

### **FACTIONALISM AND POLITICAL PARTIES**

**D**omestically, the presidency of Monroe (1817-1825) was termed the “era of good feelings.” The phrase acknowledged the political triumph of the Republican Party over the Federalist Party, which had collapsed as a national force. All the same, this was a period of vigorous factional and regional conflict.

The end of the Federalists led to a brief period of factional politics and brought disarray to the practice of choosing presidential nominees by congressional party caucuses. For a time, state legislatures nominated candidates. In 1824 Tennessee and Pennsylvania chose Andrew Jackson, with South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun as his running mate. Kentucky selected Speaker of the House Henry Clay; Massachusetts, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, son of the second president, John Adams. A congressional caucus, widely derided as undemocratic, picked Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford.

Personality and sectional allegiance played important roles in determining the outcome of the election. Adams won the electoral votes from New England and most of New York; Clay won Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri; Jackson won the Southeast, Illinois, Indiana, the Carolinas, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey; and Crawford won Virginia, Georgia, and Delaware. No candidate gained a majority in the Electoral College, so, according to the provisions of the Constitution, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives, where Clay was the most influential figure. He supported Adams, who gained the presidency.

During Adams’s administration, new party alignments appeared. Adams’s followers, some of whom were former Federalists, took the name of “National Republicans” as emblematic of their support of a federal government that would take a strong role in developing an expanding nation. Though he governed honestly and efficiently, Adams was not a popular president. He failed in his effort to institute a national system of roads and canals. His coldly intellectual temperament did not win friends. Jackson, by contrast, had enormous popular appeal and a strong political organization. His followers coalesced to establish the Democratic Party, claimed direct lineage from the Democratic-Republican Party of Jefferson, and in general advocated the principles of small, decentralized government.