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## Greedy Bastards

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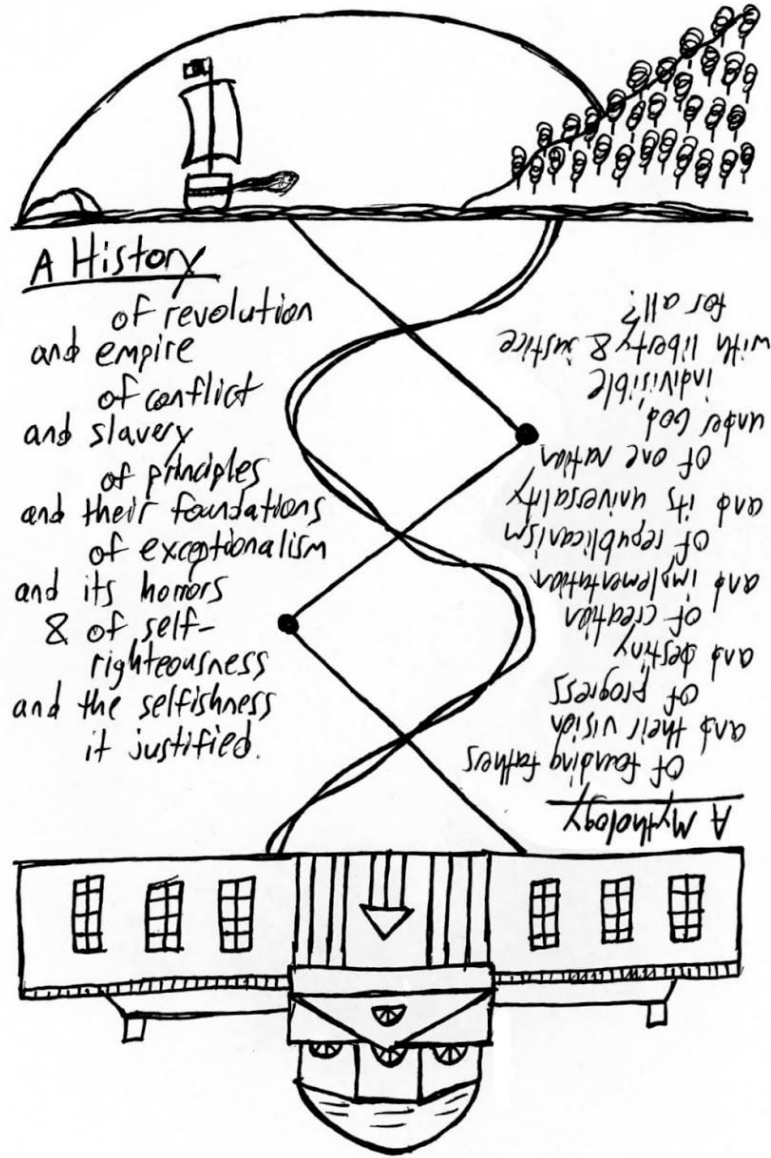
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# Greedy Bastards



A Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College

By  
Nathaniel Vergoz Carlsen

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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## Acknowledgements

Despite all the words that populate the pages below, these are the hardest to write, as I can find no adequate language for the depth of my thanks. To my mother, who gave to me a love of writing and the skills to follow it, a gift of inestimable value. To my father and Jen, whose advice I always find meaningful and whose happiness I admire. To my brother, for every inside joke and fond childhood memory. To Professor Duong, for all his insight and clarifying influence amidst my oftentimes confusing process. To Professor Crouch, for teaching me to look for the silences and guiding me through the intricacies of the past. To David and Ruth, for the gift of debate and the person it has made me. To Caila, for listening to my midnight rants, always having faith in me, and everything in between. And to all my friends at Bard, for making this time one of immeasurable joy. To you all I simply say that I would not be here without you and for this I feel unending gratitude.



*Но дружбы нет и той меж нами.  
Все предрассудки истребя,  
Мы почитаем всех нулями,  
А единицами — себя.  
Мы все глядим в Наполеоны;  
Двуногих тварей миллионы  
Для нас орудие одно;  
Нам чувство дико и смешно.*

*But even friendships like our heroes'  
Exist no more; for we've outgrown  
All sentiments and deem men zeroes—  
Except of course ourselves alone.  
We all take on Napoleon's features,  
And millions of our fellow creatures  
Are nothing more to us than tools....  
Since feelings are for freaks and fools.*

*-Alexander Pushkin*





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## Preface

History is often an admittedly bleak subject. When historians do their work best, they try to find a retrospective justice for an unjust past. Even as citizens of the present, we comfort ourselves with the knowledge that the powerful and corrupt today cannot escape the judgement of history tomorrow. In the course of this project, I have found every reason to believe this is often not true, that history reflects the biases of power more than it challenges them. Additionally, there is a kind of separateness to the past a historian sees which oftentimes softens their judgemental blows. Trouillot notes this when he writes that “The more historians wrote about past worlds, the more The Past became real as a separate world.”<sup>1</sup> The trouble is that the past is not a separate world. We live in a world built on the past and which, with every second, slips deeper into it. Walter Benjamin noted that history’s site “is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now.”<sup>2</sup> If we, as historians, treat history as empty time we not only drive ourselves into irrelevance, but we ignore the presence in the past.

Given this, it is right that we judge the past not only as historians, but as ordinary people. When figures such as my subjects, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, are raised to a pedestal which no judgement seems to shrink, historians cannot fight this by further entrenching the past as a separate world. Our judgement of these figures should not only be intelligent and considered, but humorous and demythologizing. These are daily figures in our lives, whether we like it or not, and we should treat them as such, with all the expectations and vernacular we would direct against figures of the present. Just as some poor and embittered Virginian sitting in a pub would curse them, so should we. They were, in no uncertain terms, *greedy bastards*, and we live in the world they created.

To understand our world, we cannot live in a world of ‘great but deeply flawed visionaries’ or ‘enlightened but imperfect revolutionaries’ or even a world of ‘founding fathers.’ To understand our world and grapple with our past, we need to live in a world of greedy bastards. This is not only because they were bastards, but because the bastards of our present gain their legitimacy from those of our past. The bite of judgement on past and present oppressors is softened by any mention of ‘visionaries,’ ‘revolutionaries,’ or ‘fathers.’ Historians love complexity, but for figures such as these there are no mixed legacies, for any positives will almost always be taken as outweighing the negatives. This does not mean historians need to take up their hatchets at the cost of ignoring the past, but it does mean they should not be timid in judgement because these bastards were not timid in their crimes.

Perhaps one day children will open their textbooks to the ‘Greedy Bastards’ section. On that day the tables will have turned and an admirable lens on these individuals will go against the grain, but until then we have a duty to push against the narrative of the powerful that continues to structure our world. Given that history is all that remains of us after we die, I think the best world we can create is one where the powerful live their lives in fear of being remembered as greedy bastards. This is the presence in the past and we must fight to make it just.

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<sup>1</sup>Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 152.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 261.

## Introduction-Condemn the Bastards

*“Silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded. ...In other words, the very mechanisms that make any historical recording possible also ensure that historical facts are not created equal.”<sup>3</sup>*

-Michel-Rolph Trouillot

If Trouillot is right, as I believe he is, then just as single events enter history with pieces missing, some events undergo a breadth of historical investigation in comparison to others, which are consigned to the purgatory of the unimportant. When scholars look at the ‘founding fathers’ and their relationships with republican projects outside the United States, they focus predominantly on the trans-Atlantic exchange between the United States and revolutionary France.<sup>4</sup> This focus is partly structural: these figures routinely travelled to France, exchanged letters with a variety of French notables,<sup>5</sup> and in their own writing portrayed the early period of the French revolution as a glorious continuation of their own republican moment. While these are understandable reasons, they also lead history to mimic the biases of its subjects. We see the importance of republican France like the founding fathers saw it. Or maybe, we see history like the founding fathers wanted us to see it. In short, this historical focus is a silence like any other silence. Something is left out and something else is recorded.

Left out are the revolutions which shaped the American world and, in previously overlooked ways, the very idea of republican government. While the old-world revolution in France played to the founding fathers’ hopes—that the ‘enlightenment’ they discovered could spread across the ocean to their ancestral continent—its failure sparked new-world revolutions that challenged their

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<sup>3</sup>Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 49.

<sup>4</sup> Although there has been work to diversify this focus. Brandon Mills’ “‘The United States of Africa’: Liberian Independence and the Contested Meaning of a Black Republic” is one example.

<sup>5</sup>Indeed, even when shifting one’s historical focus, one often has to rely on these same letters as, despite my shift to Latin America, I rely on letters to Lafayette and Roland.

ideology. Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian peninsula and the resulting collapse of the previously effective Spanish colonial system led to a wave of Latin American revolutions for both independence and, in many cases, representative government. The French revolution had, years earlier, been a far away cause for everyday Americans, but these new revolutions occurred in their own hemisphere and, as a result, shared many of the same challenges. Beyond the combination of independence and representative government,<sup>6</sup> Latin American revolutionaries faced a similar context to that of the United States because they possessed a colonial history, an active slave economy, populations that were indigenous, African, and European, and lived next to large swaths of land that were often seen as 'free' for expansion. When the founding fathers looked East, they saw a European revolution but when they looked South they were confronted with an American one. These situational similarities drive one shift of this project, away from an investigation of the founding fathers' reactions to the French revolution toward an investigation of their thoughts on Latin American revolutions.<sup>7</sup>

This shift drives this project largely because of one letter. Writing to Alexander Von Humboldt in 1814, Jefferson discussed what he thought about the prospects for republicanism in Latin America and the shape of the American hemisphere he hoped would emerge from this moment. Already interested in the later-life retrospective thoughts of founding figures on the governments they created, this letter was striking because Jefferson was not only implicitly expounding on his earlier ideas about the meaning of republicanism, but was engaging with its future

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<sup>6</sup>A combination which, in and of itself, merits the hemispheric investigation.

<sup>7</sup>As such, while scholars such as Patrice Higonnet in *Sister Republics: the Origins of French and American Republicanism*, James Kloppenberg in *Toward Democracy*, and Susan Dunn in *Sister Revolutions: French Lightning, American Light* have focused on the trans-Atlantic republican interaction, and while this project draws on the founders' experience with the French Revolution in order to better contextualize their views on Latin America, this East-West dialogue is not the focus of this project.

outside of his direct control. The letter, not prominently cited in most analyses of Jefferson's thought, shifted my focus to the moment of Latin American revolution. In effect, it showed me a silence which hid not only a significant historical moment, but a potential reconceptualization of republicanism itself.

However, this is not the only silence this project attempts to confront. The American mythology exerts a great deal of power over the historiographic process, particularly the mythology surrounding the 'founding moment.' In this historical rendering, the 1787 constitutional convention was a moment of 'pure creation' in which not only was the structure of the U.S. government created, but so too were the core tenets of U.S. republicanism in connection, of course, to the Declaration of Independence.<sup>8</sup> Although the United States would evolve over time, this core ideology would remain set in stone. This historical interpretation ignores a critical fact: those founders proceeded to govern the United States for the next thirty eight years. When history creates such a clear line between the founding and the early republic, it facilitates an overly rosy picture of U.S. republicanism by restricting its view only to doctrinal republicanism—the version put forward in words by the founders—which leads to ignorance of republicanism as an implemented practice and theory of rule. In essence, this periodic division treats the founders only as republican thinkers, when in fact they translated those thoughts into action and, in so doing, continued to expand, retract, and cement their republican ideology. To understand the true nature of U.S. republicanism, the period that counts as 'the founding' must be extended. As Gordon Wood notes, this early republican period is too often silenced by the founding that preceded it and the early national period that came after it.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Scholars that focus on this founding moment and the conceptual origins of republicanism include Gordon Wood (especially his book *The Creation of the American Republic*) and J.G.A. Pocock. This project, however, focuses on the post 1800 period in order to understand this republicanism better by investigating its realization through action.

<sup>9</sup>Gordon Wood, "The Significance of the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 8, no. 1 (1988): 5.

In fact, this early republican period not only further defined the republican ideology, but, even more importantly, defined it in the post-1815 moment where the U.S. was no longer a recently-liberated colony. What this republicanism meant to its founders when it was combined with the growth of U.S. power is a crucial question. In the moment of Latin American revolution we not only see the question of republicanism, but also the question of what an increasingly influential United States would do about it? Hence, the focal puzzle of this project surrounds what the founding fathers thought about the potential for representative government<sup>10</sup> in Latin America. What new picture of U.S. republicanism emerges when the investigative lens is shifted to focus on this North-South republican dialogue in the early republican period?

In answering this question, this project draws heavily on historians writing broader histories, namely Arthur Whitaker and his *The United States and the Independence of Latin America 1800-1830*. Although these works provide many of the facts this project will draw on, its focus will be much more narrow and its interpretive position will differ from many of these authors. Similarly, the diplomatic history of this period<sup>11</sup> is relevant context for this project because the founders were situated in a world rife with diplomatic concerns and many of these concerns influenced their views on Latin American republicanism. This project, however, shifts the focus onto how this diplomacy was relevant to their imaginations of representative government in Latin America, rather than focusing on the diplomacy itself. For example, Stephen Chambers' book *No God But Gain: The Untold*

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<sup>10</sup>A quick note: the term "republicanism" has been much debated in political science literature but in this project it will be largely used to denote a government structured around the election of representative leaders, interchangeable with "representative government." In this schema, republicanism also denotes a system in which the public good is prioritized over the private interest. This is to mirror the founders' own usage.

<sup>11</sup>Including, but not limited to: James Lewis-*The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, Don Coerver and Linda Hall-*Tangled Destinies: Latin America and the United States*, Charles Griffin-*The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire 1810-1822*, Alonso Aguilar-*Pan-Americanism from Monroe to the Present*, Harry Bernstein-*Origins of Inter-American Interest 1700-1812*, Jay Sexton-*The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth Century America*, and a variety of other works.



*Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Making of the United States* provides a useful historical retelling of the Monroe Doctrine but does not discuss the connection between this doctrine and republicanism, which is the focus of this project. The investigation of political culture by historians like Caitlin Fitz in her *Our Sister Republics* is critical for understanding the period, but this project focuses on the founders themselves due to their position in the national mythology and their connection to the ‘principles’ of the United States. In the same way, a great deal of scholarship looks into the the positions of U.S. politicians on the question of Latin American independence and representative government, however much of this literature focuses on figures who were not central to the founding of the U.S. republic, such as Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams. Although important figures in the history of this period, this project focuses on the founding fathers themselves in order to question the fundamental vision of U.S. republicanism.

This focus is limited to Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe for a variety of reasons. Holding power from the very start of the revolutions until their general success, these persons had the greatest ability to engage with the questions these revolutions raised. Additionally, given that Jefferson exited office as these revolutions were just getting of the ground, the general correspondence between these individuals even after their retirements provides a crucial area of investigation. These figures were a part of the same social class of Virginia Plantation owners, they all owned slaves, they were close friends and mentors to each other, and, perhaps because of these factors and as this project will show, they were engaged in a collective twenty four year project to define the future of the United States.<sup>12</sup> Finally, these were some of the figures most integral to the formation of the U.S. republican identity and the American creedal narrative.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> When I refer to the “Virginia Dynasty,” I refer to these three individuals.

<sup>13</sup> This is the case because Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence, Madison’s influence over the constitutional design, and Monroe’s Doctrine and its influence provide the foundations for this version of history.

This creedal narrative is precisely what this project seeks to push against, following in the footsteps of scholars such as Aziz Rana. Rana writes that as a consequence of understanding the United States in “civic rather than white settler terms”<sup>14</sup> “today’s vision of the country as intrinsically—if incompletely—liberal systemically deemphasizes those forms of economic and political subordination that continue to mark the experience of historically marginalized communities.”<sup>15</sup> He labels this “anticolonial, liberatory, and egalitarian” story the “American creedal narrative.”<sup>16</sup> This narrative smooths over various aspects of history as ‘imperfections’ in an otherwise pure ideology<sup>17</sup> and remains pervasive throughout historical writing. Gunnar Myrdal and his *An American Dilemma* helped codify the concept and scholars such as James Kloppenberg in his *Toward Democracy* further it. Outside the academy, the narrative may be found in the speeches and writings of President Obama in addition to most U.S. history textbooks. This influence is unfortunate because, as Trouillot would say, this narrative silences and it is this silence that this project attempts to confront. What story emerges when we stop engaging in this creedal narrative and search for a new view of United States history?

This story is found through the connection with Latin America. While the creedal narrative holds the universality of republicanism as a core tenet, the approaches of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe to the Latin American revolutions of independence reveal that this tenet was, rather than imperfectly applied, nonexistent. Instead of this universality guiding a robust support of Latin American republicanism, this ‘universal’ republicanism was itself structured around the self-interest

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<sup>14</sup>Allegra McLeod, “Police Violence, Constitutional Complicity, and Another Vantage,” *The Supreme Court Review 2016*, no. 1 (2017): 182.

<sup>15</sup>Aziz Rana, “Colonialism and Constitutional Memory,” *UC Irvine Law Review 5*, no. 2 (2015): 268.

<sup>16</sup>Allegra McLeod, “Police Violence, Constitutional Complicity, and Another Vantage,” *The Supreme Court Review 2016*, no. 1 (2017): 182.

<sup>17</sup>For example, the existence of slavery and its inequalities were an aberration from the founding egalitarian philosophy, rather than that philosophy having inequalities written into its core.

of the United States and especially around the Virginia Dynasty's collective project of U.S. territorial expansion. This expansionist project is addressed most directly in the third chapter, in which the creation and rationale of the Monroe Doctrine are analyzed. However, before putting forward his doctrine Monroe wrote to Thomas Jefferson and James Madison to ask their advice and so in order to fully connect the Monroe Doctrine to the conception of republicanism that undergirds it, the thoughts of both these figures on Latin American revolutions are analyzed in the first two chapters of this project. These chapters are unified by an approach that places diverse letters across many years in conversation so that a picture of the later-life republican vision of these figures may be developed. Given the nature of these letters, a synthetic approach is required to contextualize and extrapolate this picture from the varied and oftentimes elusive references to Latin American revolutions. This picture was translated into action in the Monroe Doctrine, and so the letters and the doctrine reflect on each other and both contribute to the continued evolution of the meaning of founding republicanism. This historical moment is used to critique the American creedal narrative. Rather than utilizing that moment to support the republican cause, the previously revealed preference for a self-interested, slave based, and territorially expansive vision of republicanism is realized in this foundational moment of foreign policy. This realization is then connected to the American project more broadly. With its core largely centered around self-interested territorial expansion, and with the actions of the founders surrounding republican Latin America centering around the same, the American creedal narrative is firmly called into question.

Ironically, to disprove the creedal narrative you must first reject it. This is why silences are so insidious: you do not find them unless you are looking but once you see them, they are everywhere. Aziz Rana's critique of the creedal narrative was highlighted in a Supreme Court Law Review

because the constitutionalism and the constitutional originalism that guide the court are founded on this creedal narrative. Open up any history textbook about the United States, and odds are one will find the creedal narrative and the silences that come with it. Stories of U.S. support for France will abound while the foundations for two centuries of U.S. exploitation in Latin America will remain absent. This creedal narrative forms the basis for the U.S. political system and its national mythology. While each disturbing fact about a founding father is levied against this narrative, they are often not placed within a narrative whole. Trouillot writes that his project of unearthing “required extra labor not so much in the production of new facts but in their transformation into a new narrative.”<sup>18</sup> This project attempts to take already-found letters and use them to weave a new American narrative.

This new narrative offers several contributions. First, it highlights the early foundations for U.S. imperialism in Latin America. This narrative also deepens the analysis of other scholars about the centrality of slavery and territorial expansion to the identity and history of the United States. Additionally, this project critiques the apotheosis of these figures in American political culture. Finally, the core mythology of the United States is challenged and the implications of this for future historical work are extrapolated. At stake is no less than our sense of what the United States means, what stories we tell our children,<sup>19</sup> and how we think about our collective responsibility.

This responsibility is at the heart of my interest in this topic. Growing up in the midst of domestic and international crises, some existential in character, the world seemed hopeless. As a younger person, I thought the problem was one of generational differences; I now know that it is more complicated. Our country is built on myths. This is what Ernest Renan meant when he said

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<sup>18</sup>Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 58.

<sup>19</sup>Rogers Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 2003)

that “Getting history wrong is part of being a nation.”<sup>20</sup> But these myths have led us astray. How we have been getting history wrong makes us believe that this country is built upon principles rather than selfishness, egalitarianism rather than exploitation, cosmopolitanism rather than imperialism. We are now in a moment when, as the oppressive legacies of our history have gained more potency, these disconnects have matured into social rifts and, should we continue to hold on to the myths of our forebears, they will tear us apart. To build a new world we need a new story, and in my mind it is better that this story be truth rather than myth.

The truth is that the men who founded the United States were arrogant, selfish, greedy bastards. Where they saw the opportunity for gain, they took it and structured their principles to justify their actions. These principles are core to our old mythology, and their infallibility must be torn down if we are to have new stories and, through them, a new world. This moment of Latin American revolutions, of Monroe and his doctrine, of an extended founding, is one in which this truth can be highlighted. As long as we look to these bastards with pride, none of our issues can truly be solved. Their history is one we should be ashamed of, which is good not because of its existence, but because this shame might motivate us to make right the harms of our past. Pride in these ‘founding fathers’ and their principles have certainly not provided this motivation; rather, it has rendered us blind to the injustices of the present and their historical roots.

This is why historians must render judgement and condemn the bastards of the past rather than apologize for them. Hopelessness and its causes can only be fought if we accept the dark and disenchanting history that drives them. This acceptance does not result in a comforting story, but I think, or at least I hope, that it might result in a better world. Trouillot ends his book writing “we

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<sup>20</sup>Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation,” (conference, Paris, France, 11 March 1882).

may want to keep in mind that deeds and words are not as distinguishable as we often presume. History does not belong only to its narrators, professional or amateur. While some of us debate what history is or was, others take it in their own hands.”<sup>21</sup> With each of their words the founders enacted a deed: creating a narrative that we have yet to escape, silences that go unnoticed, moral responsibilities that are still avoided. This is the history I attempt to take into my own hands. I can only hope I will do justice to all who have a stake in it.

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<sup>21</sup>Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 153.

## Chapter I-Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was a man best known for the principles he helped codify in the Declaration of Independence, however an examination of his retirement letters about Latin American revolutions reveals that these principles were structured around the self-interest of the United States. Territorial expansion and slavery, rather than a faith in representative government, drove how Jefferson thought about republicanism in Latin America.

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### *Jefferson's Perspective*

As Thomas Jefferson's presidency was ending and he was preparing to enter his retirement, Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of the Iberian peninsula sparked the Latin American wars of independence. The uprisings in Latin America began in earnest around 1809; by then Jefferson had exited the presidency in March.<sup>22</sup> Jefferson looked forward to his retirement for a long time and, as such, sought to exit public life.<sup>23</sup> However, throughout his retirement Jefferson continued to exchange letters with his foreign and domestic acquaintances, namely Madison and Monroe who, due to their positions as the following Presidents, were forced to confront the issue of Latin American independence. These letters continue to highlight Jefferson's political thoughts after his political career. Latin American independence and the prospect of a free Western hemisphere attracted his most direct re-foray into the political realm. Having heard from then President James Monroe of George Canning's proposal for a joint-British and American guarantee of Latin American independence from European interference, Jefferson wrote:

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<sup>22</sup>Marcelo Borges, "Independence in Latin America-A Chronology," Dickinson College, accessed 4 December 2017, <http://users.dickinson.edu/~borges/chronologyindep.htm>.

<sup>23</sup>Joseph Ellis, *American Sphinx* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 137.

I have been so long weaned from political subjects, and have so long ceased to take any interest in them, that I am sensible I am not qualified to offer opinions on them worthy of any attention. But the question now proposed involves consequences so lasting, and effects so decisive of our future destinies, as to rekindle all the interest I have heretofore felt on such occasions, and to induce me to the hazard of opinions.<sup>24</sup>

By his own admission Jefferson was an apolitical individual, or at the very least sought to be. The question of Canning's proposal, a proposal which led to the Monroe doctrine and one which was impossible without the independence of Latin America, pulled Jefferson out of his apoliticism. For Jefferson, the independence of Latin America would be "decisive of our future destinies" and this fit into his overall imagination of the effects representative government would have on the world. Given that he saw this topic as enormously important, an investigation of his thoughts on the subject is clearly merited.

As this and the following section will make clear, Jefferson's views on republicanism in Latin America were founded not only on his prejudice towards Spanish colonial populations, but also on the self-interest of the United States and concerns about slavery. Because these foundations are subtextual, Jefferson's writings must be thoroughly scoured and compared in order to develop this picture. This section will highlight the relevant aspects of Jefferson's identity while the next section will use this information to develop a picture of Jefferson's thoughts on representative government in Latin America.

It is well known that, writing to Madison in 1809, Jefferson imagined the creation of an "empire of liberty"<sup>25</sup> by including Canada in the United States. However, this was somewhat of an understatement. Writing to Albert Gallatin fourteen years later, Jefferson declared that the advance

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<sup>24</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 24 October 1823, letter printed in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1481-1485.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 27 April 1809, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 26 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm022316/>.



of representative government “everywhere in a more or less perfect form...will insure the amelioration of the condition of the world. It will cost years of blood, and be well worth them.”<sup>26</sup>

Representative government was not only an ideal system of governance for Jefferson, its implementation over the course of history was the grand solution to the world’s problems.

Jefferson also approached the world from a specific background outside of his faith in the prospects of representative government. As scholars such as Caitlin Fitz and Joseph Ellis note, Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence defined the principles behind the American revolution;<sup>27</sup> no wonder Jefferson held the principle of representative government in such high esteem, he helped monumentalize it both on paper and in the North American cultural consciousness. However Jefferson was not simply a founding father, he was also a part of the Virginia plantation class and, as such, a slave owner. With the King of Haiti Henry I supporting Bolivar’s efforts and with emancipation becoming an ever more dominant theme in the Latin American wars of independence, Jefferson’s position on this issue is crucial to keep in mind. Additionally, Jefferson’s political philosophy was deeply rooted in his vision of an American republicanism founded on agrarianism. Writing to William Short Jefferson said that, contrary to Europe where wars were necessary to counter overpopulation, in America “room is abundant, population scanty, and peace the necessary means for producing men, to whom the redundant soil is offering the means of life and happiness.”

<sup>28</sup> This principle, he goes on to note, applies to both Americas which ought to preserve peace by

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, 2 August 1823, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 12*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 299-300.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Ellis, “Prologue: Jeffersonian Surge: America, 1992-93,” in *American Sphinx* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998): 3-27.; Caitlin Fitz, “An Imaginary Kindred,” in *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016): 194-240.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to William Short, 4 August 1820, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 4 December 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib021107/>.

avoiding the wars in Europe.<sup>29</sup> When Jefferson imagines an agrarian future, it is present throughout the entire hemisphere. Important to remember is that this agrarian future came at the cost of grave and genocidal consequences for the native inhabitants of the Americas. Jefferson's thoughts on representation and agrarian equality must be considered in conjunction with his opinions regarding enslaved and native persons in order for a complete portrait to guide an analysis of his views on Latin America.

Also important to consider is that this was not the first foreign revolution Jefferson witnessed. Jefferson watched the French revolution with initial enthusiasm, only to witness its failure with the reign of terror and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. Writing to Sir John Sinclair Jefferson voiced his worries about "the position in which Great Britain is placed, and [we, America] should be sincerely afflicted were any disaster to deprive mankind of the benefit of such a bulwark [Britain] against the torrent which has for some time been bearing down all before it."<sup>30</sup> He voiced a similar opinion to the Earl of Buchan, going so far as to "bless the almighty being who in gathering together the waters under the heavens into one place, divided the drylands of your hemisphere, from the dry lands of ours, and said, 'here, at least, be there peace.'"<sup>31,32</sup> Watching Napoleon's military conquests in Europe, Jefferson was both grateful for the distance the United States benefited from and worried about possible British failure to stop Napoleonic expansion and the implications this would have for America.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Sir John Sinclair, 30 June 1803, letter printed in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Vol. 40*, ed. Barbara Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 637-638.

<sup>31</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to the Earl of Buchan, 10 July 1803, letter printed in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Vol. 40*, ed. Barbara Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 708-710.

<sup>32</sup>The ironic and semi-gloating character of these comments should not be missed.

The French revolution also touched Jefferson more personally. Jefferson lamented to Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis “How many excellent friends have we lost in your efforts towards self-government, et cui bono?”<sup>33</sup> Jefferson had lost friends in the French revolution, many of whom he had presumably interacted with during his time as envoy to France<sup>34</sup> and who, given previous French support of the United States, had played a role in the U.S. revolutionary process. It was not solely his French colleagues who suffered; Thomas Paine himself was imprisoned and marked for execution during the revolution.<sup>35</sup> Not only had Jefferson watched a revolution he hoped would lead to a free and representative France descend into an Empire that encroached on the wellbeing of the U.S., but it had taken the lives of his friends for, as he notes in Latin, “whose benefit?”<sup>36</sup>

If these were the indirect aspects of Jefferson’s identity and experience informing his perspective on Latin America, he also had experience with the prospect of Latin American revolution during his political tenure. In 1805 the revolutionary Francisco de Miranda traveled throughout the United State to outfit and recruit for his effort to liberate what is now Venezuela from Spanish control.<sup>37</sup> Although his effort was thwarted by the Spanish coast guard,<sup>38</sup> the United States with Jefferson as its president still found itself in the sensitive position of having its weapons and citizens on board Miranda’s ships. In his 1806 message to Congress, Jefferson outlined a situation in which the Spanish and United States’ commanders withdrew their forces to either side of the Sabine river, marking that as a “temporary line of separation....until the issue of our

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<sup>33</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis, 13 July 1803, letter printed in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Vol. 41*, ed. Barbara Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 42-43.

<sup>34</sup>Joseph Ellis, “Paris: 1784-89,” in *American Sphinx* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998): 75-139.

<sup>35</sup>Kevin Duong, Senior Project Meeting with Author.

<sup>36</sup>“What is Cui Bono,” *The Law Dictionary*, accessed 4 December 2017, <https://thelawdictionary.org/cui-bono/>.

<sup>37</sup>Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016) 24-26.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

negotiations shall be known.”<sup>39</sup> Jefferson then went on to highlight his “measures for preventing and suppressing this [Miranda’s] enterprise....and for arresting and bringing to justice its authors and abettors.”<sup>40</sup> The positioning of this passage right after his description of a Spanish-U.S. territorial dispute indicates that Jefferson’s efforts to suppress the Miranda expedition, and his highlighting of them, were intimately connected to the territorial negotiations and maintenance of peace between the United States and Spain.<sup>41</sup> While in office Jefferson valued peace with Spain and the United States’ territorial success over the questionable prospects of a startup revolutionary. He also frowned upon U.S. citizens’ support for Miranda, clearly defining that it was not their role “to decide for their country the question of peace or war, by commencing active and unauthorized hostilities.”<sup>42</sup> Jefferson’s previous experience with the prospect of Latin American revolution was decidedly slanted toward U.S. neutrality and the suppression of attempts at private U.S. involvement.

After he left office Jefferson’s sources of information about events in Latin America began to wither. Writing to Madison in 1809, just after leaving the Presidency, Jefferson stated that he read the newspapers very little and that he was extraordinarily skeptical of what he did read.<sup>43</sup> However Caitlin Fitz in *Our Sister Republics* outlines, in remarkable detail, how news about the occurrences in Latin America came from merchants, revolutionary agents, and Spanish imperial officials who, after landing in the United States, went to newspaper printing presses and related what they knew about the revolutions, or at the very least what they wanted people to hear. These news clips would then

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Draft of Message to Congress, 2 December 1806, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 4 December 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjibib016629/>.

<sup>41</sup>Indeed, in his notes on the speech Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin commented that a passage requesting additional powers to suppress such enterprises, and the connection of that issue to the Miranda situation, should be moved and made more prominent.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 19 April 1809, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 11*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 106-107.

be reprinted in other papers across the country.<sup>44</sup> This, at least in Fitz's conception, is how people found out about the events of the southern revolutions. Given his limited exposure to newspapers, it is fair to assume that Jefferson was less informed on a variety of aspects and issues surrounding these revolutions, getting his news largely from those who wrote to him and only then when the information was deemed personally interesting in some fashion. This makes Jefferson an unusual candidate of study, in contrast to Madison and Monroe who were still involved in politics.

Jefferson did have one good source of news aside from his letters: those who paid him a visit, usually at Monticello. In 1809 Francisco de Miranda met with Jefferson although he still refused to support Miranda's cause.<sup>45</sup> For general knowledge about Latin America, Jefferson was largely reliant on his visitors as well as on the writings of Alexander von Humboldt, a German philosopher and naturalist who traveled throughout South America.<sup>46</sup> Jefferson was later visited by a Mr. Miralla from Buenos Aires who carried with him news of the Cuban position towards independence.<sup>47</sup> Jefferson, therefore, had no personal experience in Latin America and his engagement with the public discourse surrounding the issue was sparse. He was almost totally reliant on the personal information provided by others. This made him prone to mirroring the assumptions of those around him. In his analysis of Jefferson's position with regards to Spanish America, Zoltán Vajda notes that the positions of Jefferson and those around him oftentimes fell into an "image of Spain as a despotic power and Roman Catholicism as an institution entangled with it."<sup>48</sup> Vajda goes

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<sup>44</sup>Caitlin Fitz, "The News, in Black and White," in *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016): 80-116..

<sup>45</sup>Zoltán Vajda, "Thomas Jefferson on the Character of an Unfree People: The Case of Spanish America," *American Nineteenth Century History* 8, no. 3 (2007): 275.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 23 June 1823, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 12*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 296-298.

<sup>48</sup>Zoltán Vajda, "Thomas Jefferson on the Character of an Unfree People: The Case of Spanish America," *American Nineteenth Century History* 8, no. 3 (2007): 279.

on to connect this outlook to the Black Legend of Spanish cruelty in the Americas. Outside of following these views himself, Jefferson received much of his information from associates who would have fallen into similar if not identical biases.

Jefferson's perspective was, therefore, one defined not only by his political principles and faith in the ameliorative powers of representative government into the future, but also by his slave-ownership and agrarian philosophy dependent on the seizure of native land. He looked at these revolutions after having lost sleep and friends during the dramatic failure of French Revolution to live up to its promise. He disowned and attempted to prevent a previous revolutionary effort and received his information almost solely from acquaintances. However, now that the new revolutions were successful he would have to grapple with the reality of an independent Latin America. This was the man whose views and perspective the rest of this chapter will parse out and analyze.

#### *Prospects for Representative Government*

Jefferson's core view about the future of representative government in Latin America was that the newly independent states were destined to fail in their efforts to establish free governments and, as a result, fall into military "despotism."<sup>49</sup> In his letter to Anne Stael-Holstein Jefferson outlined exactly how he imagines this will happen given the situation at the time. He wrote that "in all those countries the most inveterate divisions have arisen, partly among the different casts, partly among rival-leaders. Constitution after constitution is made and broken and in the meantime everything is at the mercy of the military leaders."<sup>50</sup> Jefferson predicts military despotism largely because of the divisions present within Latin American society and, due to the general lack of order,

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<sup>49</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Alexander von Humboldt, 14 April 1811, letter printed in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1247-1248.

<sup>50</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Anne L. G. N. Stael-Holstein, 6 September 1816, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 2 November 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib022570/>.

assumes that the leaders of the military structures will seize control. While Jefferson references the contemporary situation to make this prediction, the reasons behind it are in fact much more structural and deeply rooted in Latin American society and history.

The crux of why Jefferson thought military despotism was inevitable in the Latin American context was the state of education. In 1813 Jefferson wrote to Alexander von Humboldt that geographic region was characterized by the “lowest grade of ignorance” and writing to P.S. Dupont de Nemours, Jefferson declared that “the degrading ignorance into which their priests and kings have sunk them, has disqualified them from the maintenance or *even the knowledge of their rights* and that much blood may be shed for little improvement in their condition.”<sup>51</sup> For Jefferson, the ignorance of the population is such that, even if the people had the power to institute free government over the opposition of other social forces, they would not know to do it because they were unaware of their rights: in essence, of what freedom is. This language is woven throughout dozens of Jefferson’s letters, though he does outline some possible exceptions. Having heard from Humboldt that Mexico is “not wanting” of “men of science”<sup>52</sup> he accepts a possibility that it “may revolutionize itself under better auspices.”<sup>53</sup> He also, in a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette in 1817, declares that “Brazil is more populous more wealthy, more energetic, and as wise as Portugal”<sup>54</sup> so perhaps Brazil would be excluded from Jefferson’s destiny of despotism. Even with these differing cases, Jefferson’s view on the Latin American populace was centered on the concept of ignorance.

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<sup>51</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Dupont De Nemours, 15 April 1811, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 11*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 196-204. (My emphasis)

<sup>52</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Alexander von Humboldt, 6 December 1813, letter printed in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1311-1314.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis De Lafayette, 14 May 1817, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 12*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 61-64.

Jefferson imagined the ignorance of the Latin American populace leading to despotic governments because of a maxim he describes to Lafayette. He declared it “one of the impossibilities of nature that ignorance should maintain itself free against cunning, where any government has once been admitted.”<sup>55</sup> This maxim leads to Jefferson’s questioning “How much liberty can they bear without intoxication?”<sup>56</sup> Written into this question through the word “intoxication” is a concern about the mob. The ignorance of the Latin American populace, in Jefferson’s mind, is clearly connected to the possibility for a drunken or crazed group of individuals to either seize power or cause general violence and mayhem. This concern was not entirely unfounded in past experience, especially considering examples such as Shays’ rebellion or the violence of the mob during the French Revolution. Here, Jefferson extends this intoxication to the entirety of the population, indicating the depth to which he was prejudiced against the ability of the Latin American people to govern and moderate themselves.

Jefferson imagined the harmful manifestation of this ignorance specifically in connection to questions of government structure and leadership. This is why he declared it impossible for ignorance to maintain freedom in the face of “cunning” specifically when “any government has once been admitted.”<sup>57</sup> This maxim is found in his earlier letter to Von Humboldt in which, after his questioning of liberty under intoxication, he went on to ask “Are their chiefs sufficiently enlightened to form a well-guarded government, and their people to watch their chiefs?”<sup>58</sup> Perhaps because of

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<sup>55</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis De Lafayette, 30 November 1813, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 11*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 356-360.

<sup>56</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Alexander von Humboldt, 14 April 1811, letter printed in Merrill Peterson, ed. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1248.

<sup>57</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis De Lafayette, 30 November 1813, letter printed in Paul Ford, ed. *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol 11* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 356-360.

<sup>58</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Alexander von Humboldt, 14 April 1811, letter printed in Merrill Peterson, ed. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1248.



his contribution to a rebellion against monarchical control, the problem of ignorance manifests itself most clearly in a fear of individual despotic rule. In this same letter Jefferson “‘imagine[s] they will copy our outlines of confederation and elective government” but that:

Their greatest difficulty will be in the construction of the executive. I suspect that, regardless of the experiment of France and of the United States....they will begin with a directory, and when the unavoidable schisms in that kind of executive shall drive them to something else, their great question will come on whether to substitute an executive elective for years, for life, or an hereditary one. But unless instruction can be spread among them more rapidly than experience promises, despotism may come upon them before they are qualified to save the ground they will have gained.<sup>59</sup>

Jefferson locates the effect of ignorance directly in the construction of the executive and his prediction is telling because he almost directly outlines the process through which the French Revolution fell apart, from directory to a despotic executive. Indeed Jefferson references the “‘experiment of France” in this passage, directly linking two revolutions quite different in their geographic locale and character. Even more telling is that Jefferson then asks whether Napoleon could secure the “‘independence of all the West India Islands.”<sup>60</sup>

Here Jefferson’s analytical structure fits under what might be termed a post-Napoleonic anxiety. Jefferson references the exact process in which the French revolution fell apart, attaches that process to South America’s future, then references Napoleon in the same breath. His compositional process reveals the origin of his worries surrounding Latin America. Indeed, when writing to Lafayette in 1817, Jefferson declared that “‘they [‘our southern brethren’] will fall under military despotism, and become the murderous tools of the ambition of their respective Bonapartes.”<sup>61</sup> In his earlier letter to Stael-Holstein, Jefferson links “‘ignorance and bigotry” to the

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis De Lafayette, 14 May 1817, letter printed in Paul Ford, ed. *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol 12* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 63.

end of “free government” in the region declaring that “it is excruciating to believe that all will end in military despotisms under the Bonapartes of their regions.”<sup>62</sup> The union between Jefferson’s terminology and his vision for how the newly independent south will descend into despotism reveals that his perspective on Latin America was rooted in the experience of watching the French revolution collapse and in the fear that Bonaparte may break through the British levee and negatively impact the United States in more tangible ways.

Indeed Jefferson’s analyses of what might have prevented despotism in France and what might prevent despotism in Latin America bear considerable similarities. In his 1803 letter to Cabanis, Jefferson stated that if Napoleon gave France “as great a portion of liberty as the opinions, habits, & character of the nation are prepared for, progressive preparation may fit you for progressive portions of that first of blessings, and you may in time attain what we erred in supposing could be hastily siesed & maintained.”<sup>63</sup> Fifteen years later Jefferson wrote to Adams about the South American revolutions saying “I do believe it would be better for them to obtain freedom by degrees only; because that would bring on light and information, and qualify them to take charge of themselves understandingly”<sup>64</sup> while noting that in the interim they should be controlled because peace must be kept. Jefferson’s ideas about the proper process for the institution of representative government in Latin America are nearly identical to his retrospective thoughts on what ought to have been done in France. In his 1817 letter to Lafayette, Jefferson outlined some of the reforms he imagines happening in this time, including the gathering of “experience, their emancipation from

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<sup>62</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Anne L. G. N. Stael-Holstein, 6 September 1816, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 2 November 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib022570/>.

<sup>63</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis, 13 July 1803, letter printed in Barbara Oberg, ed. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Vol. 41* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 42-43.

<sup>64</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 17 May 1818, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 12*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 95-96.

their priests, and advancement in information.”<sup>65</sup> Jefferson imagines education, the experience of externally moderated self government, and release from the influence of the Catholic church as being the major components required for representative government to function in Latin America. His focus on priests emerges out of his general view, spread across the breadth of his writing on the subject, that priests contribute to the ignorance and bigotry of the population. This, again as Vajda notes, goes back to the Black Legend and the Spanish colonial experience.

These were Jefferson’s views, but their interrogation reveals the close relationship between the structure of these views and the self-interest of the United States. This self-interest manifests most clearly when, as will be shown, Jefferson’s views vary according to the possibility for U.S. territorial expansion. This expansionist focus is important to consider in connection to the Monroe Doctrine, a link which the third chapter of this project will draw.

Vadja locates the core of Jefferson’s position in a “theory of progress”<sup>66</sup> writing that Jefferson and his compatriots thought nations developed in the same ways and so particular levels of progress could be predicted as requirements for representative government.<sup>67</sup> However, there are strong contradictions in this position if we place Jefferson’s opinion on the ‘educational process’ together with his comments about Europe and the prospects for U.S. territorial expansion. Jefferson wrote that “I do not despair of Europe. The advance of mind which has taken place everywhere cannot retrograde”<sup>68</sup> before going on to describe the previously quoted ameliorative prospects of representative government. The “mind” of Europe is advancing even though Europe appears, in his

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<sup>65</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis De Lafayette, 14 May 1817, letter printed in Paul Ford, ed. *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol 12* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 64.

<sup>66</sup>Zoltán Vadja, “Thomas Jefferson on the Character of an Unfree People: The Case of Spanish America,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 8, no. 3 (2007): 276.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, 2 August 1823, letter printed in Paul Ford, ed. *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol 12* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 299-300.

time, still Catholic and still under the influence of kings, the two influences he notes as having the most harmful effects on the prospect of representative government in Latin America.

The contradiction gets even stronger when the self-interest of the United States becomes involved. Vajda uses Louisiana as an example of a Catholic region whose incorporative process into the United States reveals the implementation structure of Jefferson's theory of progress. Vajda walks through how Louisiana was structured as a territory in 1804, before being granted the power to elect federal representatives in 1805, and finally being given full statehood in 1812, although even then with limited autonomous control.<sup>69</sup> Outside of the retained restrictions, Louisiana effectively took about eight years to become a state with an equal federal role to the others. However Jefferson, in his 1811 letter to Dupont de Nemours declared that in Latin America even "should their new rulers lay their shoulders to remove the great obstacles of ignorance, and press the remedies of education and information, they will still be in jeopardy until another generation comes into place, and what may happen in the interval cannot be predicted."<sup>70</sup> Jefferson believes it will take at least a generation to fully ingrain the practice of representative government into the Spanish territorial population even though he helps personally oversee the eight year process of Louisiana becoming a state with relatively equal rights to the rest. The clear differentiating factor here is that Louisiana was to become a part of the United States, directly adding its territory and resources to the U.S., while Latin America was not.

This double-standard continues when Jefferson wrote about Florida and Cuba that "I have ever looked on Cuba as the most interesting addition which could be made to our system of States"

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<sup>69</sup>Zoltán Vajda, "Thomas Jefferson on the Character of an Unfree People: The Case of Spanish America," *American Nineteenth Century History* 8, no. 3 (2007): 277.

<sup>70</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Dupont De Nemours, 15 April 1811, letter printed in Paul Ford, ed. *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol 11* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 196-204.

<sup>71</sup> and earlier that “we may as well receive the offers of the Floridas & Cuba, which probably be made to us by their inhabitants.”<sup>72</sup> While Vajda notes reservations about Louisiana’s population, these reservations are overcome quite quickly and when Jefferson writes about Florida and Cuba he includes no mention of the populations not being able to maintain the representative government structure that would be imposed on them by the United States. This is in contrast to his constantly vocalized reservations about this ability in the revolutionary Latin American context. Once again, with the possibility of territorial expansion Jefferson overlooks the limitations that would otherwise restrict his belief in the capacity for representative government.

This rationale is reinforced in his outline of the benefits of Cuban inclusion into the United States in which Jefferson stated that “the control which, with Florida Point, this island would give us over the Gulf of Mexico and the countries and isthmus bordering on it, as well as all those whose waters flow into it, would fill up the measure of our political well-being.”<sup>73</sup> Here Jefferson focuses solely on the benefit for the United States rather than on the problems with implementing representative government in these populations. Vajda’s “theory of progress” cannot, therefore, be applied to Jefferson in all instances. In cases where the United States stood to gain territory and its corresponding advantage, Jefferson was clearly willing to overlook the downsides of what in his view ought to be an ‘ignorant and bigoted’ population incapable of liberty “without intoxication.” This exception is best explained by the gravity of the benefit Cuba and Florida would bestow on the United States. Jefferson was willing to diagnose and condemn those far away Latin American

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<sup>71</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 24 October 1823, letter printed in Merrill Peterson, ed. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1482.

<sup>72</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Wilson Cary Nicholas, 25 May 1809, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 2 November 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib019954/>.

<sup>73</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 24 October 1823, letter printed in Merrill Peterson, ed. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1484-1485.

revolutions but when the United States stood to territorially benefit, Jefferson's reservations about a Catholic colonial population were easily overcome.

There is, however, another explanation for this: slavery. Underneath all of Jefferson's commentary on Latin American revolutions is a complete silence regarding slavery. Although Jefferson assuredly knew about the anti-slavery projects that were included in Latin American independence—Fitz's outline of the American popular knowledge of this renders it nigh impossible that Jefferson could not know—he says absolutely nothing about it. Jefferson's double standard with regard to Southern Latin America as opposed to Florida and Cuba takes on a new light when placed next to another letter to Monroe. In this he stated “to us the province of Techas [Texas] will be the richest State of our Union, without any exception. Its southern part will make more sugar than we can consume, and the Red river, on its north, is the most luxuriant on earth.”<sup>74</sup> What Louisiana, Florida, Cuba, and Texas all had in common outside of their potential for U.S. expansion was that they were all viable slave states. The sugar plantations Jefferson envisions making Texas “the richest State of our Union, *without any exception*” would clearly be created through a drastic expansion of slavery into the region. During this time all sugar plantations had and continued to run using slaves and neither Jefferson nor any politician referencing the wealth of sugar production in the region would have assumed otherwise. One extraordinarily crucial difference, then, between the colonial Catholic populations revolting farther south and those living farther north is that the former were engaged in a process of emancipation while the latter presented the opportunity for a radical expansion of both territory and the economic engine of slavery. Jefferson's status as a slave owner himself only heightens slavery's validity as an explanation for his double standard regarding Catholic

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<sup>74</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 14 May 1820, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 12*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 160-161.

colonial populations. Ignorance and bigotry, it seems, were created under Catholic Spanish colonial rule but could be forgiven by U.S. expansionism.

Adding to this, Fitz's book does a great deal of work to prove the impact slavery had on American perceptions of the Latin American revolutions. While her book highlights that up until around 1826 most public statements about these revolutions avoided critiquing the deconstruction of slavery in these contexts, the book also relates how after 1826 the opposition to John Quincy Adams' delegation to the Panama Convention focused on slavery as a primary tactic of their opposition. Once Senator John Randolph and other politicians brought this issue to the forefront, it took hold in the American public and led to the questioning not only of support for the Panama Convention and the revolutions, but of the very principles of equality outlined in the Declaration of Independence.<sup>75</sup> Fitz tracks these changes using political speeches, newspapers, and Fourth of July toasts and while these get at public discourse, they do not provide direct insight into the individual's private thoughts. The rapidity of the shift from acceptance of emancipation as a tool of revolution to direct and extremely racialized critique can, however, serve as evidence for slavery's importance in Jefferson's perception of the revolutions. It was slave owners like Jefferson who, once this racialized pro-slavery rhetoric was begun, took to it with remarkable speed and what becomes clear from this speed was that slavery was always, in some fashion, a part of their private perceptions of Latin American revolutions. Fitz does not make this point and Jefferson died before the discourse-shift she outlines occurs, but given Jefferson's position as a slave owner within the same Virginia plantation class, it is reasonable to extend this racialized view of the revolutions to Jefferson, at least in part. Although he presumably would have opposed Randolph's attack on the principles he wrote

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<sup>75</sup>Caitlin Fitz, "An Imaginary Kindred," in *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016): 194-240.

into the Declaration, Jefferson's near-salivation at the wealth of sugar-producing Texas as opposed to his extreme skepticism regarding the revolutions farther South, combined with his position in a society that quickly embraced racialized rhetoric once it was made publicly acceptable, render slavery an excellent explanation for his skepticism of representative governments in this region.

Vadja's "theory of progress" explanation must, therefore, be contextualized within Jefferson's identity and the politics of slavery. Jefferson's reservations were clearly mitigated by the prospects of territorial expansion, profit, and strategic gain on the part of the United States, especially on the part of the Southern half of the United States. Jefferson's views were influenced by more than his Black Legend based biases and picture of the Latin American populace as undeveloped: they are deeply wrapped up with the experience of the French Revolution, the self-interest of the United States, and based around Jefferson's racialized perspective. These factors are not directly noted in Jefferson's writings but are present subtextually, in his allusions, choice of words, and unspoken realities. For Jefferson, the Latin American revolutions contained the potential for all of the things he fears most: the imposition of Catholicism, violent military despotism, and a violent end of slavery. They also, most crucially, had no potential for U.S. territorial expansion and, in fact, the formation of new states meant that the U.S. could not take over these territories after Spain ceded control. These were the imaginations that drove his perspective on the prospects for representative government in these new Latin American states.

#### *A Preferable Course of Events*

If slavery and territorial expansion drove Jefferson's ideas about whether Latin America was capable of representative government, they also informed the course he hoped history would take. The plan Jefferson laid out contradicted his support of independence but clearly advanced the



interests of the United States. This provides further proof that undergirding Jefferson's principles was a clear notion of this interest and its primacy. In order to discuss this plan in detail, this section will first extrapolate the factors motivating U.S. action as well as the potential benefits and downsides to such action. Jefferson's ideal course of events will then be analyzed in light of these factors and the self-interested nature of the scheme, and the implications of this, will then be extrapolated.

Jefferson was a participant in the U.S. act of revolution, calling for independence and engaging in the debates and political efforts surrounding its achievement. Therefore, his perspective extended beyond thoughts on representative government to the methods by which this government should be created. As was shown above, Jefferson thought that the people of Latin America were not ready for self-governance, however this belief did not prevent his support for their revolutions. In a letter to John Adams, Jefferson wrote that "it is our duty to wish them independence and self-government, because they wish it themselves, and they have the right, and we none, to chose for themselves and I wish, moreover, that our ideas may be erroneous, and theirs prove well founded."<sup>76</sup> Jefferson notes his doubts in this letter, but puts them aside to assert that the revolutionaries have the right to engage in their efforts. This attitude continues into his letter to Antoine Destutt de Tracy in which he declares that "prepared however, or not, for self-government, if it is their will to make the trial, it is our duty and desire to wish it cordially success, and of ultimate success there can be no doubt, and that it will richly repay all intermediate sufferings."<sup>77</sup> Jefferson goes farther in this letter, arguing that the revolutions and attempts at self-governance will eventually succeed and pay off.

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<sup>76</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 17 May 1818, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 95-96.

<sup>77</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to A.C.V.C. Destutt De Tracy, 26 December 1820, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 181-184.

However, he also notes his reservations about the preparations of the revolutionaries and these had a clear influence on the path Jefferson thinks the revolutions ought to take.

While political, economic, and strategic reasons motivating support will be discussed, Jefferson also put forward a core reason for this support whose logic would resonate into the actions of his presidential successors. Writing to James Monroe in 1816, Jefferson said that the Latin American revolutions should be extended “every kindness....every friendly office and aid within the limits of the law of nations” because “this is but an assertion of our own independence.”<sup>78</sup> Jefferson’s support goes beyond just wishing these nations well; for him their independence is innately tied to that of the United States. Having just exited the War of 1812, arguably the second and definitive war for American independence, the United States still wielded relatively little influence and so these Latin American revolutions presented both an opportunity and a problem. Jefferson’s use of “our independence” reveals that he framed these revolutions not only as important in and of themselves, but important especially because of how they related to the United States. This adds to the analysis in previous sections which also make clear that the self-interest of the United States is the lens through which Jefferson views these events. It also foreshadows the Monroe Doctrine’s perspective that the situation in Latin America was inherently linked to the concerns of the United States.

While the U.S. had reasons to support Latin American revolutions, it was also nudged into doing so by various factors. Firstly, the United States was put in the position of principally having to support these revolutions due to their similarity to its own. It would be hard for the United States to condemn revolutions based around the goals of independence from colonial control and

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<sup>78</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 4 February 1816, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 11, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 514-518.

representative government because doing so would be condemn the principles upon which its own revolution was founded. In *Our Sister Republics*, Fitz walks through how, by this time, a sense of these principles was already established in U.S. political culture.<sup>79</sup> This might have remained only a problem in theory if not for the second dilemma which was the incredible amount of public support for these revolutions in the United States. Using Fourth of July toasts, town names, baby names, and other metrics Fitz displays how incredibly popular these revolutions became as word of them spread throughout the United States. Additionally, revolutionary agents arriving in America went to the newspapers to drum up support for their cause, frequently referencing the American revolution as the inspiration and model for the southern revolutions. While this was often an exaggeration based on their audience, it emphasized the principled reasons why the United States should support the revolutions to the national public, making the contradiction of refusing support much harder for politicians to defend or electorally endure.<sup>80</sup>

Although support was motivated by the actions of these revolutionary agents and the will of the public, the U.S. also had its own political and economic reasons for supporting the further independence of the American hemisphere. Trade with Latin America presented a clear opportunity for economic expansion. Independence would release the colonies from their obligation to trade only within Spain's imperial network and, while the majority of U.S. southern trade was with Cuba, merchants sensed the potential profits to be reaped by the opening up of these additional regions to greater economic ties.<sup>81</sup> Especially if Cuba returned to its inter-imperial trading obligations, trade with an independent South America and Mexico could help offset the deficit this would create.

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<sup>79</sup>Caitlin Fitz, "An Imaginary Kindred," in *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016): 194-240.

<sup>80</sup>Caitlin Fitz, "Agents of Revolution," in *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016): 146-80.

<sup>81</sup>Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016) 19-21, 167-169.

Additionally, an independent South and Central America presented a clearly advantageous geopolitical situation for the U.S. In his 1813 letter to Von Humboldt Jefferson wrote that:

In whatever governments they end they will be *American* governments, no longer to be involved in the never-ceasing broils of Europe....America has a hemisphere to itself. It must have its separate system of interests, which must not be subordinated to those of Europe. The insulated state in which nature has placed the American continent should so far avail it that no spark of war kindled in the other quarters of the globe should be wafted across the wide oceans which separate us from them.<sup>82</sup>

With the independence of the Americas, Jefferson envisioned a future in which the metropole and colonial wars of Europe never disrupted the United States or the rest of the Americas. These new nations would be able to trade in peace, free from the threat of European embargo, leveraging of resources and men for war, and other disruptive activities. Furthermore, a continent free of European influence would relieve the United States of the possibility that actions around its own territory would draw it into war with a much stronger European state, a process that equally threatened to draw the United States into European alliance and all of the events Washington cautioned against in his farewell address.<sup>83</sup> This freedom of action would also allow for a smoother U.S. expansion throughout the Western hemisphere. This goal and theme is found throughout Jefferson's thought including in his 1823 letter to President Monroe which would be a part of the debate leading to the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>84</sup>

Jefferson also saw independence as eventually leading to peace with Spain, writing to Monroe that "their separation from Spain seals our everlasting peace with her."<sup>85</sup> He went on to

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<sup>82</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson to Alexander von Humboldt, December 6, 1813*, Letter printed in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1311-1312.

<sup>83</sup> George Washington, Farewell Address, 1796, Written Speech, retrieved from the Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed 4 December 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp).

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 24 October 1823, letter printed in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1481-1482.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 4 February 1816, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 11*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 515.

write that “so long as they are dependent, Spain from her jealousy, is our natural enemy and always in either open or secret hostility with us. These countries, too, in war, will be a powerful weight in her scale, and, in peace, totally shut to us.”<sup>86</sup> Jefferson thought the independence of Spain’s colonies was required in order for the U.S. to keep peace with Spain, an issue naturally on his mind after the devastation of the war of 1812 which had a personal effect on Jefferson’s finances as well as the entire nation.<sup>87</sup>

This goal of peace was also connected to the type of government Jefferson hoped these new states would enact. In 1822 Jefferson wrote that “it is lawful to wish to see no emperors nor king in our hemisphere, and that Brazil as well as Mexico will homologize with us.”<sup>88</sup> This theme continued into the 1823 letter in which he wrote that “our endeavor should surely be, to make our hemisphere that of freedom.”<sup>89</sup> While Jefferson was not a democratic peace theorist, he wrote about representative government and a peaceful future in the same pen stroke and so, in his imagination, these two things were closely linked. Writing to Lafayette in 1813, after presenting the threat of the revolutions ending in military despotism Jefferson asserted that “among these there can be no confederacy. A republic of kings is impossible. But their future wars and quarrels among themselves will oblige them to bring the people into action.”<sup>90</sup> This letter demonstrates that when Jefferson envisioned an independent Latin America, he thought that the only way it could be peaceful, and the

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Leroy and Bayard, 7 April 1816, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol 11*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 518.

<sup>88</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 1 December 1822, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 12*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 273-274.

<sup>89</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 24 October 1823, letter printed in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1481-1482.

<sup>90</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis De Lafayette, 30 November 1813, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 11*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 356-360.

least disruptive to the U.S. was if it were to be self-governed.<sup>91</sup> This combination of principle, public opinion, and economic and political incentives put the United States in a position where it had to support these revolutions in some way.

There were also significant dangers to this support. The first of these were the pitfalls involved with the U.S. making an enemy of Spain and it was Jefferson's firm opinion that the U.S. should avoid war. In his letter to Destutt de Tracy, Jefferson said that "we view Europe as covering at present a smothered fire, which may shortly burst forth and produce general conflagration. From this it is our duty to keep aloof."<sup>92</sup> Jefferson believed that this war would "hurt us more than it would help our brethren of the South" and that their generation had to pay its own war debts before more could be incurred which, he thought, would constitute "mortgaging posterity."<sup>93</sup> Jefferson saw the prospect of war with Spain as extraordinarily harmful to the United States, drawing it into a broader European conflict and creating a great deal of debt that would harm U.S. fiscal security into the future. Indeed, in an 1820 letter to Monroe Jefferson declared that "neither the state of our finances, the condition of our country, nor the public opinion, urges us to precipitation into war"<sup>94</sup> and voiced his support for the U.S. treaty with Spain. For Jefferson, then, all factors seemed bent against war. Having had three major wars-the Seven Years War, the War of U.S. Independence, and the War of 1812-occur within his own lifetime, part of Jefferson's hesitation to strongly support the revolutions seems to stem from war weariness. The prospect of triggering conflict with Spain was,

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<sup>91</sup>While this might seem counter-intuitive given Jefferson's doubts about Latin American self-governing capability, he thought that this could be developed over time thereby, in the long-term, leading to hemispheric peace.

<sup>92</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to A.C.V.C. Destutt De Tracy, 26 December 1820, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 181-184.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 14 May 1820, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 160-161.

therefore, a powerful reason against clear and strong U.S. support of the Latin American revolutions.

With regards to Spain, other negative consequences were possible, either connected to the possibility of war or independent from it. During this period the United States was consistently engaged in negotiations with Spain over territory, namely the Floridas. Inciting Spanish anger would assuredly jeopardize those negotiations and the addition of future slave states to the U.S. There was also the matter of trade. The United States engaged in a great deal of trade with both Cuba and with the Iberian peninsula,<sup>95</sup> much more than with the rest of Spanish America and this trade could cease in the event of a conflict with, or the displeasure of, the Spanish crown. Economically and territorially the U.S. had a lot to lose by supporting these new revolutions.

These were largely the same concerns Jefferson faced when he made the decision not to aid Francisco de Miranda's attempted revolution and to disown and prosecute all those involved in it. Jefferson had previously made the calculation that these potential losses were not worth the risk of supporting an independence effort in the South, but now that these independence efforts were happening and were succeeding the issue was forced upon the U.S. in a way it was not by the Miranda affair. Although the same concerns were present with Bolivar's revolution if lessened by Napoleon's Iberian invasion, the U.S. was unable to base its position around the total neutrality that Jefferson had previously found so advantageous.

Because of the viability of these revolutions, a new set of threats emerged beyond just the Spanish reaction to U.S. support. When Jefferson looked at South and Central America, he saw an uncertain future and one whose structure was potentially hostile to U.S. interests. This potentially

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<sup>95</sup>Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016) 19-21, 167-169.

hostile structure had two main prongs, one economic and one political. Economically Jefferson saw the newly independent Latin American states as rivals. Writing to Monroe in 1816, Jefferson said that “when they are free, they will drive every article of our produce from every market, by underselling it, and change the condition of our existence, forcing us into other habits and pursuits. We shall, indeed, have in exchange some commerce with them, but in what I know not, for we shall have nothing to offer which they cannot raise cheaper.”<sup>96</sup> In Jefferson’s imagination of the future of American commerce, South and Central American goods provide direct competition to the economic well being of the U.S. He did think there would be some advantage gained in terms of commerce, but there would be significant downsides that this would have to be weighed against.

Additionally, and perhaps more worryingly, Jefferson was concerned with the potential political, and possibly military, rivalry of these Latin American nations still in the process of being created. Jefferson wrote that they will “perhaps have formed themselves into one or more confederacies; more than one I hope, as in single mass they would be a very formidable neighbor.”<sup>97</sup> In this passage Jefferson displays a clear anxiety about the possibility that his dream of hemispheric peace would be eradicated by a powerful polity to the South. This worry clearly emerged in part because he had watched the French Revolution lead to Napoleon’s conquest of Europe. This is backed up by all of the allusions to Napoleon highlighted earlier in this chapter and also by the realities of the situation. The U.S. did not benefit from the “bulwark”<sup>98</sup> of Britain nor the Atlantic Ocean as barriers preventing the revolutionary violence in the South from gradually extending north to its shores. Indeed this extension must have felt entirely possible given the proximity of Mexico.

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<sup>96</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 4 February 1816, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 11*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 515.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid, 516.

<sup>98</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to Sir John Sinclair, 30 June 1803, letter printed in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Vol. 40*, ed. Barbara Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 637-638.



The link to Napoleon is apt for another reason: Simon Bolivar. Bolivar conquered more territory than Napoleon<sup>99</sup> and oftentimes in harsher conditions. He was the hero of many U.S. songs,<sup>100</sup> but Jefferson's Napoleonic anxiety would presumably only be exponentially increased by Bolivar's success. While, in an 1823 letter to Monroe Jefferson declared that "of the brethren of our own hemisphere, none are yet, nor for an age to come will be, in a shape, condition, or disposition to war against us"<sup>101</sup> this letter comes after the concerns already outlined in this chapter and after the 1816 solution these concerns resulted in, which will be analyzed shortly. Jefferson, therefore, was worried about a strong South or Central American state which could at the very least exert an influence to challenge that of the U.S., and at the worst engage in Napoleonic, or perhaps better termed, Bolivarian actions aimed Northward. This fear was heightened by the possibility that such actions might violently destabilize the southern slave economy.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, even if unable to impact the U.S. itself, strong Latin American states would provide effective resistance to U.S. plans for territorial expansion.

These, then, were Jefferson's concerns about the situation. Jefferson noted that "on the question of our interest in their independence, were that alone a sufficient motive of action, much may be said on both sides."<sup>103</sup> As has been outlined in this section and as Jefferson's words themselves support, the question of U.S. interest was a mixed one. However, later on in that very same letter Jefferson goes on to write that "interest, then, on the whole, would wish their

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<sup>99</sup>Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016), 197.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid, 116-118.

<sup>101</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 24 October 1823, letter printed in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1481-1485.

<sup>102</sup>Donald Hickey, "America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806," *Journal of the Early Republic* 2, no. 4 (1982): 368.

<sup>103</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 4 February 1816, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 11*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 515.

independence, and justice makes the wish a duty.”<sup>104</sup> The overall interest of the U.S., justice, and the other reasons outlined above all motivate the U.S. to wish for Latin American success. In this case the question then becomes how representative government structures might most peacefully and effectively be instituted in Latin America. This question is closely connected to Jefferson’s doubts about the viability of this. In relation to these doubts, Jefferson says that while he might wish them to successfully implement self-government “the question is not what we wish, but what is practicable?”<sup>105</sup>

Jefferson had a very clear answer to what he thought was “practicable” which he communicated to Lafayette in the same 1817 letter. In this Jefferson declared that:

The best thing for them, would be for themselves to come to an accord with Spain, under the guarantee of France, Russia, Holland, and the United States, allowing to Spain a nominal supremacy, with authority only to keep the peace among them, leaving to them otherwise all the powers of self-government, until their experience in them, their emancipation from their priests, and advancement in information, shall prepare them for complete independence.<sup>106</sup>

Jefferson outlines a kind of multilateral state building and peacekeeping scheme that is unusual and the tenants of which must be parsed to reveal exactly why he thinks this would be the best way for independence and the creation of representative government to be structured. First of all, this was in no way “practicable” because Catholic Spain would never agree to a plan that hinged partially on the goal of ‘emancipating’ the Latin American populace from the influence of the Catholic Church. Secondly, no revolutionary leader knowing they were on the verge of victory would ever agree to live under the “nominal supremacy” of Spain even if it was with the goal of keeping the peace, largely because they would have no reason to trust Spain or the other nations’ willingness to go to war with

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid, 516.

<sup>105</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis De Lafayette, 14 May 1817, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 12*, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 62.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

Spain to keep it in check. This plan, then, makes no practical sense but it has one crucial, basic effect: it gives the U.S. more leverage and control over the future of its hemispheric neighbors than it otherwise would have.

Analyzed through this lens, Jefferson's scheme seems to solve all of the potential downsides to Latin American independence while retaining the benefits. By including Spain in its structure, this plan would allow the U.S. to fully support the spread of representative government into the rest of the Americas without the risk of angering Spain and triggering negative responses in the spheres of trade or war. Furthermore, it would assure peace is maintained in the region. These new states would not have to support Spain in the event of a conflict with the U.S. and Spain would act as a check on any violence they might seek to impose on each other or on the U.S. In creating this structure, the U.S. might have a voice as to whether Latin America would be divided, as Jefferson thought it ought to be in order to prevent the formation of an effective rival to the U.S. Helping to broker a deal, the United States would be at the negotiating table and could attach provisions to the arrangement to mitigate the potential political and military harms these new states might create for the United States. Negotiating this arrangement might allow the U.S. to try and structure trade in such a way as to guard against the harmful flow of Latin American goods into the market. Finally, the creation of such a structure might give the U.S. the opportunity, as was common in such conferences, to arrange for a transfer of some Spanish territory into U.S. control. Regardless of whether these things would happen, the U.S. would be able to play a greater role in designing the future were it part of such an structure.

This plan might also protect American slavery because Spain's profits from slavery and the slave trade, especially through its sugar plantations in Cuba, meant Spain had a great deal of

incentive to ensure that further emancipation was halted. Giving Spain “nominal supremacy” and the ability to “keep the peace” would allow these incentives to be harnessed towards the guarantee of slavery’s continuation in the United States and the Caribbean, including Cuba which was greatly coveted by the U.S. Additionally, the exclusion of Britain, perhaps the most important state at the time, from this scheme is noteworthy and could be explained by the previous history of conflict but the more likely explanation concerns the slave trade. Excluding Britain from the hemisphere meant excluding its campaign against the slave trade and protecting deeply entrenched U.S. interests in the illegal slave trade. This connection will be expanded upon in chapter three but is worth noting here. Analyzed in light of what the U.S. stood to gain and lose from supporting these revolutions, or simply from their existence, it is clear that Jefferson’s scheme reduced all of the downsides and dilemmas the United States faced while allowing for the full leveraging of the opportunity these revolutions presented for furthering U.S. interests.

This was not implemented, but the basic idea that the U.S. ought to have a role in determining the future of the American hemisphere was clearly present in the arguments in favor of the U.S. attending the 1826 Congress of Panama organized by Simon Bolivar. Henry Clay argued that the United States should attend because it would allow the U.S. to try to prevent any further emancipatory efforts on the part of Latin American revolutionaries, namely the invasion and freeing of Cuba.<sup>107</sup> U.S. politics around these meetings largely revolved around questions of how to moderate these anti-slavery impulses and we can see the same outcome is achievable in Jefferson’s plan. Jefferson was mirroring the ‘moderating force’ reasoning driving the U.S. mission to Panama.

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<sup>107</sup>Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016), 214.

That this was Jefferson's preferred course of events and that it directly lined up with the U.S. interest is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the plan he outlined directly contradicts his principled stance on independence. Jefferson stated that "they have a right to be free" and that "justice"<sup>108</sup> is behind the duty of the U.S. to wish these states success, but then advocated for a system in which he gave Spain "nominal supremacy" over these states. His contradiction of the principle is explained largely by this principle being conditional on the favorability of its outcome to the United States, especially its ambitions for territorial expansion and the slave economy. This spilled over into how he evaluated the prospects for representative government itself. Jefferson's plan for gradual independence comes right after his questioning of the ability of the South and Central American populace to govern itself. This questioning, then, is closely linked to his U.S. advantageous solution. By doubting their ability, Jefferson creates a convenient rationale for devising a system to give the U.S. greater control over the future of its neighbors. Whether a people is capable of governing themselves and the methods through which they should go about doing it were, in Jefferson's thoughts, dependent on the interests of the United States. Although he did not directly say this, the contradictions and patterns in his thought reveal that although he held up the principle of freedom, he did so when it was convenient and called its viability into question whenever it was not.

### *Conclusion*

Both Jefferson's views on the possibility for the success of republicanism in Latin America and his thoughts on how this would best be created were subservient to the interests of the United States. Freedom, self-governance, and independence were, even in the mind of one of their most

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<sup>108</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 4 February 1816, letter printed in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 11, ed. Paul Ford (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 516.

famous authors, principles that were to be adhered to only if it was advantageous to do so. Jefferson's position as the creator of the broader American ideology makes this subservience even more striking. He was a unique actor whose perspective on this moment manifested in two areas: his vision for territorial expansion and his position as a slaveholder. This is important because these lenses inform his vision for what Latin American independence ought to look like. Fitz' *Our Sister Republics* highlights an explosion in slave owner concern about Latin American emancipation efforts that could not have emerged out of a void. More probable is that these concerns were latent, removed from the public sphere and Jefferson, as a slave owner, was party to these very concerns. Furthermore, only a few years after these letters were written the U.S. became preoccupied with halting the spread of Latin American emancipation into Cuba and given that Jefferson was writing and conversing with the same political class that would debate this, it is unlikely he was not privy to these same concerns and that he did not share them. Jefferson looked toward both Cuba and Texas as territories whose inclusion into the U.S. would yield slave-based economies of immense value, and he owned slaves himself. Jefferson's perspective was inherently wrapped up in slavery.

When he wrote about the possibility of military despotisms, alluded to the fear of Napoleonic leaders, and devised plans in which the slave-based Spanish Empire would keep the newly independent nations in check, it was from this perspective. In this moment Jefferson was an actor uncertain about what the future of his hemisphere would be. So when Jefferson looked south, he imagined what for him was the worst: seeing the possibility for military despotism, Latin American unity, and the rise of a military leader whose further conquests could bring emancipation to the United States' very doorstep or, at the very least, halt U.S. plans for territorial expansion. Indeed, Bolivar conquered more territory than Napoleon based partly on the strategy of

emancipation and Toussaint L'Ouverture was one of the few leaders successful in standing up to Napoleon. Jefferson imagined a Latin America based on emancipation with the resources to enact this ideology of freedom throughout the hemisphere if not kept on the Spanish leash. This fear fits within Jefferson's general psychological perspective. Slave owners were constantly terrified of slave rebellions and poisoning, and this was so deeply a part of their perspective that they might have worried about publishing information about Latin American emancipation for fear that the example would motivate U.S. slaves to their own rebellion.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, Britain's previous use of the promise of emancipation to leverage U.S. slaves against their masters, and the presence of black military leaders throughout the wars in Latin America, assuredly only heightened this concern. Jefferson's, then, was a perspective defined by a much larger version of slave rebellion phobia: the fear of intra-hemispheric emancipatory conquest. While at times he might have doubted the ability of these new states to wage war against the U.S., the possibility stemming from Bolivar's unlikely success and future likelihood of this ability meant that this was still a very reasonable concern. Even if it was not reasonable, Jefferson's perspective being so deeply rooted in slave owner fears made even improbable possibilities seem terrifying and Jefferson's preferred vision of Latin American government was informed by this fear.

Outside of this fear, Jefferson's differentiation between Mexico and Cuba, Florida and Venezuela, Louisiana and La Plata demonstrates that, for him, U.S. expansion was a key concern. Latin America was a possible venue for this expansion, but it could also be a hindrance. Looking to the future, Jefferson preferred a world where Latin America could be reigned in by the U.S. so that his vision of territorial growth, including a radical expansion of slave-based agriculture, could be

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<sup>109</sup>Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016), 88.

realized. Not only was his vision of when representative government was viable driven by this goal, but so was his plan to implement this government in the long-term. Jefferson preferred Spain keep a monarchical hold on an increasingly republican Latin America because otherwise the U.S. might lose its status as the increasingly dominant power in the hemisphere, and all the potential for expansion that went along with it.



## Chapter II-Madison

James Madison, a primary designer of the U.S. constitution, is a figure one would expect to have much to say about representative government in Latin America. However, Madison actually had little to say on the topic. Compared to his reaction to the French revolution, Madison's approach to Latin American revolutions was more strategic than principled, focused around the geopolitical interests of the United States. This strategic focus was rooted in Madison's identity as a slave owner, a perspective through which he viewed the southern revolutions that were undertaken, in large part, by persons of color.

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### *Madison's Perspective*

Born in Orange County Virginia not far from Monticello, James Madison came from the same Virginia planter class as Jefferson. His father, James Madison Sr., owned about five-thousand acres of land that were cultivated by a large population of slaves.<sup>110</sup> Madison grew up in this environment, eventually leaving to attend what would later be called Princeton and enter into a prominent place in Virginia's politics. From this position he would become embroiled in the U.S. war of independence and the creation of the United States constitution, eventually grappling with the implications of Latin American independence both as President of the United States and as a confidant of James Monroe.

Madison's thoughts on representative government were focused around his mistrust of 'the people's' ability to govern themselves. Entering the constitutional convention in 1787, Madison brought this mistrust into his roles as an important thinker behind the United States Constitution

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<sup>110</sup>Paris Spies-Gans, "James Madison," Princeton and Slavery, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://slavery.princeton.edu/stories/james-madison#ref-12>.

and as a federalist defender of the resulting document. In Federalist 10, Madison stated that “it may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the purpose.”<sup>111</sup> Even in the United States, Madison believed that groups of people should not be relied upon to act responsibly and that government should be structured to mitigate the harm these groups might cause. There is no reason to believe this same concern would not be a factor in how Madison thought about representative government in Latin America.

Indeed, writing about the Spanish and Portuguese populations on the other side of the Atlantic, Madison declared they “need still further light & heat too from the American example before they will be a Match for the armies, the intrigues & the bribes of their Enemies, the treachery of their leaders, and what is most of all to be dreaded, their Priests & their Prejudices.”<sup>112</sup> While this statement focuses on the Iberian population, it mirrors the Black Legend to which Jefferson also subscribed and, therefore, Madison’s doubts about the “Priests” and “Prejudices” of the Iberian Catholic population assuredly transferred to the Latin American colonial populace. In a separate letter Madison declared that “in the Papal System, Government and Religion are in a manner consolidated, & that is found to be the worst of Govts.”<sup>113</sup> The new South American states, maintaining the Catholic faith they were colonized under, would fall within this categorization. Therefore as Madison confronted South American independence, he did so not only doubting the self-governing ability of all groups, but especially doubting the ability of Catholic populations.

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<sup>111</sup>James Madison, Federalist Paper: No. 10, Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed 19 April 2018, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/fed10.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed10.asp).

<sup>112</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 6 September 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019251/>.

<sup>113</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Rev. Adams, 1832, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm021170/>.

This confrontation began with his role as Secretary of State for then President Jefferson, but continued through his own presidency. Writing just over a month after his inauguration, Madison told Jefferson that France “must be equally aware of the importance of our relations to Spanish America” and that “the most probable source of conflict will be in his [Napoleon’s] extending the principle on which he required a *prohibition* of the Trade with St. Domingo to the case of the Spanish Colonies.”<sup>114</sup> Madison, therefore, entered the presidency with a clear sense of the value of Spanish America to the United States, especially with regard to trade between the two regions. Two and a half years later, in 1811 Madison wrote to Joel Barlow that “Venezuela however has thrown off this mask, [of “nominal adherence to Ferdinand”] has communicated to us its declaration of Independence, and solicits our acknowledging it by receiving a Pub. Minister &c.”<sup>115</sup> This was one of Madison’s first statements about South American independence and, while it would be a part of the politics Madison dealt with as President, with the start of the War of 1812 the issue of South American independence declined in relative importance. Additionally, due to continuous efforts to acquire the East Florida peninsula and other complicating factors, U.S. support of South America was delayed until 1822. For these reasons much of what Madison says about independence is located in the correspondence after his presidency.<sup>116</sup>

In his retirement Madison returned to his plantation at Montpelier where he continued to oversee its operations and correspond with his various political connections, including Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe. Similar to Jefferson, Madison’s information about the situation in South America would have come from these letters and the newspapers passing information from

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<sup>114</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 24 April 1809, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm015439/>.

<sup>115</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Joel Barlow, 17 November 1811, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm015875/>.

<sup>116</sup>This correspondence was, however, also highly edited by Madison in the years before his death.

the coast through to the interior. Indeed, in a letter to Jefferson, Madison notes his intention to pass on some of Alexander von Humboldt's "draughts, or other maps"<sup>117</sup> that were sent to Washington but were bound for Monticello. Madison was cued into the same networks of information as Jefferson, participated in the same revolutionary moment, and, like Jefferson, was Secretary of State before becoming President. However his reaction to Latin American independence, while similar to Jefferson's in certain respects, is also characterized by distinct differences. It is this unique reaction, and its comparative counterparts, that the remainder of this chapter will focus on.

### *Madison's Thoughts*

As has been noted, in 1811 Madison wrote to Joel Barlow in response to the Venezuelan declaration of independence and the structure of this letter highlights a strategic approach that consistently guides Madison's perspective on Latin American revolutions. After noting that Venezuela sent a public minister to the United States to solicit recognition and that the revolution in Mexico was ongoing, Madison shifts to a strategic analysis noting that "in what manner G.B. [Great Britain] will proceed in the case of Venezuela, & other districts following its example does not yet appear."<sup>118</sup> He goes on to outline the possible reactions that Spain will have to these events before shifting to the question of "E. Florida" and "the game she will play with Cuba."<sup>119</sup> Upon first hearing of Venezuela's revolution, a revolution for independence similar to that of the United States, Madison's initial reaction was to ponder the strategic effects of this revolution rather than its connection to the principles upon which Madison's constitution and country were based. This focus

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<sup>117</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 3 April 1812, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm016614/>.

<sup>118</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Joel Barlow, 17 November 1811, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm015875/>.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

on strategy, as will be shown in this and the ensuing sections, defines Madison's perspective on Latin American revolutions.

Madison's strategic focus did not mean that principled rhetoric was wholly absent from his writings. In 1822 he wrote to Monroe defending his principled position after Joaquin de Anduaga, then Spanish Minister to the United States,<sup>120</sup> accused the U.S. of waiting to diplomatically recognize an independent Spanish America until after the "cessation of Florida was secured."<sup>121</sup> In this letter Madison declared that:

An historical view of the early sentiments expressed here in favor of our neighbors, the successive steps openly taken, manifesting our sympathy with their cause, & our anticipation of its success, more especially our declarations of neutrality towards the contending parties as engaged in a civil, not an insurrectionary, war, would shew the world that we never *concealed the principles that governed us.*<sup>122</sup>

Here Madison clearly believes that the United States' position throughout the revolutionary period in Latin America was visibly guided by principles, principles which, in his own words, were "in favor of our neighbors," the newly independent Latin American states. This principled language continues into several other letters he wrote around this time. Writing to Monroe a year later about Canning's proposal, Madison referenced the "great struggle of the Epoch between liberty and despotism" and the United States' "sympathies with their [the "Revolutionized Colonies"] liberties & independence."

<sup>123</sup> In a later letter to Richard Rush, Monroe declared the Spanish American cause to be "righteous & glorious"<sup>124</sup> while about a week later he told William Taylor that the governments preparing to act

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<sup>120</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 6 May 1822, Manuscript/Mixed Material, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/04-02-02-0441>.

<sup>121</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 6 May 1822, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm018329/>.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid. (My emphasis)

<sup>123</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 30 October 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019279/>.

<sup>124</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Richard Rush, 13 November 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019288/>.

against Mexican independence were “confederated agst. the rights of man and the reforms of nations.”<sup>125</sup> It would seem, then, that principles consistently run through Madison’s thinking about Latin American revolutions.

However, when read in their entirety these letters show that principles are given relatively little weight in comparison to Madison’s strategic analysis and that they are oftentimes focused around the United States rather than on the prospects of a representatively governed Latin America.

Writing to Jefferson in 1809, Madison declared that “the difficulty most likely to threaten our relations with France lies in the effort she may make to render us in some way subservient to the reduction of Spanish America; particularly by withholding our commerce.”<sup>126</sup> In a letter to William Pinkney, Madison said that “the position of Cuba gives the United States so deep an interest in the destiny, even, of that Island, that although they might be an inactive, they could not be a satisfied spectator of its falling under any European Government, which might make a fulcrum of that position against the commerce and security of the United States.”<sup>127</sup> These letters demonstrate Madison’s appraisal of the importance the Latin American region played in the United States’ commercial and security interests. While Cuba was not a space of revolution, with the Napoleonic invasion of Iberia the United States experienced a commercial windfall from the general opening of the Latin American region to non-imperial trade. In addition to shipping vast quantities of foodstuffs and other goods to Latin America, the U.S. had an interest in expanding its military

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<sup>125</sup>James Madison, James Madison to William Taylor, 22 November 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019293/>.

<sup>126</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 1 May 1809, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm015380/>.

<sup>127</sup>James Madison, James Madison to William Pinkney, 30 October 1810, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm022951/>.

presence in strategically important locales.<sup>128</sup> Madison was keenly aware of the commercial and military expansion Latin American independence enabled and this is what he referred to when he highlighted the United States' "deep interest" in a good relationship with Latin America. In fact, the very word "interest" had a specific connotation central to Madison's political philosophy. Historian Gordon Wood notes in his essay "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution" that the founders "knew too well about 'interest,' which Madison defined 'in the popular sense' as the 'immediate augmentation of property and wealth.'"<sup>129</sup> When Madison declared that the United States had a "deep interest" in relations with Latin America, it was an interest that he himself defined as centered around material gain.

After this commercially centered phrase, in this same letter to Monroe Madison ended his justification of U.S. action by outlining the increased threat the "Great Powers" would pose if they controlled the resources of Latin America. Here, we see Madison's initial appeal to principles morph into a strategic focus which continues throughout the rest of the letter. Latin America is introduced as a cause of liberty and independence, but quickly becomes an area of profit whose defeat would result in a grave threat to the United States. The ensuing page of strategic analysis about the various positions of Great Britain and Spain serves to highlight the relative lack of importance a free Spanish America had for Madison in comparison to the strategic intricacies of the situation and the possible benefits the United States could accrue. This compositional trend, of opening with a small measure

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<sup>128</sup>This analysis is derived from Arthur Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 298-299. Although these pages describe the formation of U.S. naval stations in Latin America during the 1820s, Madison's earlier knowledge of the strategic benefits of Latin American naval deployment may be reasonably extrapolated backward from this later policy, especially given its relative status as common policy knowledge.

<sup>129</sup>Gordon Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness," in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward Carter II (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 81.

of principled support for Latin America before focusing on the United States and moving to a more strategic focus, is a trend that continues into the next decade of Madison's letters.

For example, in the midst of the 1822 debate surrounding whether the U.S. should diplomatically recognize the Latin American states, Madison wrote to Monroe and defended the role principles played in U.S. action toward Latin America, before shifting his focus to the U.S. stating that "altho' there may be no danger of hostile consequences from the Recognising act, it is desirable that our Republic should stand fair in the eyes of the world, not only for its own sake, but for that of Republicanism itself."<sup>130</sup> Here Madison's previously stated principled commitment to the Latin American states contrasts with his reality, in which the reputation of the United States is declared to be central to the wellbeing of "Republicanism itself." It was the United States, rather than the prospects for the creation of new republics in Latin America, that was the primary focus of Madison's assessment of what is best for "republicanism" as a principle. Madison then begins to look at the situation strategically, analysing the "possible collisions with Spain on the Ocean, & the backing she may receive from some of the great powers friendly or unfriendly to us."<sup>131</sup> Immediately after defending the United States' principled commitment to Latin American independence, Madison positions the United States at the crux of the entire category of republicanism and goes on to analyze how the situation resulting from recognition could affect the wellbeing of the United States and its relations to other nations.

In his October letter to Monroe which would contribute to the formation of the Monroe Doctrine, Madison declared that "in the great struggle of the Epoch between liberty and despotism,

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<sup>130</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 6 May 1822, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm018329/>.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid.



we owe it *to ourselves* to sustain the former in this hemisphere at least.”<sup>132</sup> The ‘struggle of principles’ is, in actuality, a conflict Madison views through the lens of what the United States owes ‘to themselves,’ rather than what it might owe the Latin American revolutionizing colonies as a fellow former colony and proponent of representative government. Later on in this letter, Madison said that:

The professions we have made to these neighbors, our sympathies with their liberties & independence, the deep interest we have in the most friendly relations with them, and the consequences threatened by a command of their resources by the Great Powers confederated agst. the rights & reforms, of which we have given so conspicuous & pervasive an example, all unite in calling for our efforts to defeat the meditated crusade.<sup>133</sup>

This passage is important because in it Madison outlines the reasons that the United States should take action to defeat the “mediated crusade.” While he does attribute some influence to the ideas of liberty and independence, this is immediately followed by the “interest” the United States has in relating to these neighbors and the danger of the “Great Powers” gaining access to the resources of Latin America. Behind Madison’s language of the “deep interest” is the reality of what this meant, namely commercial and political benefits.

This same approach characterizes Madison’s 1823 letter to Richard Rush in which he wrote “our principles & our sympathies, the stand we have taken in their behalf, the deep interest we have in friendly relations with them, and even our security agst. the Great Powers”<sup>134</sup> motivate accepting the Canning’s proposal. Here again “interest” appears as a crucial reason for U.S. action as does the “security” of the United States against the threat from the Great Powers. What is striking about this

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<sup>132</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 30 October 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019279/>.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Richard Rush, 13 November 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019288/>.

letter, however, is the clear process of strategic calculation that immediately follows this statement.

Madison proclaimed that:

The good that wd. result to the World from such an invitation [Canning's invitation] if accepted, and the honor to our Country even if declined, outweigh the sacrifices that would be required, or the risks that wd. be incurred. With the British fleets & fiscal resources associated with our own we should be safe agst. the rest of the World, and at liberty to pursue whatever course might be prescribed by a just estimate of our moral & political obligations.<sup>135</sup>

Madison's use of "outweigh" is noteworthy because it emphasizes the strategic calculation central to his approach. While he might support Latin American independence in principle, that support is subservient to strategic calculation and it is the freedom of action this proposal would give the United States, rather than the freedom it would bring to Latin America, which is the focus of the latter half of this passage. Similar to Jefferson, this freedom of action can be connected to the possibility for territorial expansion and the third chapter will extrapolate on this connection.

Furthermore, this passage highlights that in Madison's mind U.S. action should be conditional on a low cost. In an earlier letter to Monroe, Madison stated his belief that if the United States could get France and Russia to support Spanish American independence, the "great work of its emancipation would then be completed per saltum,"<sup>136</sup> for Great Britain could not hold back if so disposed, and Spain would have no choice but acquiescence."<sup>137</sup> This statement is followed by more strategic analysis about Britain centered around impressment and Canada. The structure here is striking because, after outlining a path for the guaranteed independence of Spanish America, Madison does not acknowledge the principled implications of this, but immediately moves on to the broader strategic landscape in which this prospect exists. In combination with his 1823 statement

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>"Per Saltum" meaning skipping steps, hopping.

<sup>137</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 28 November 1818, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm018575/>.

about the benefits of “British fleets & fiscal resources,” this passage demonstrates Madison’s distinct preference for action when it incurs little to no cost on the United States.

Madison’s approach to Latin American revolution was characterized by a preferencing of the strategic concerns of the United States over the principled issues involved in these revolutions. The principles Madison cited were often then related not to the revolutionizing Spanish colonies, but to the wellbeing of the United States. For Madison, principles were either subservient to strategic concerns or replaced with them. Madison’s writings on the situation in Latin America are proportionally dominated by strategic concerns, with principled issues being rare and oftentimes related to the United States rather than its neighbors. However there is one final peculiarity to Madison’s viewpoint: his focus on independence rather than representative government.

As a designer of the U.S. constitution, one would expect Madison to have a great deal to say about the prospects for, and progress toward, representative government in Latin America. This is not the case. Writing to the Marquis de Lafayette in 1826, Madison stated his opinion that “Bolivar appears to have given a Constitution to the new State in Peru, of a countenance not altogether belonging to the American family. I have not yet seen its details; whether it shews him an apostate, or the people there, in his view, too benighted as yet for self-government, may possibly be a question.”<sup>138</sup> Here Madison says that Peru’s constitution is not in accordance with the “American family,” but this statement is notable because Madison says little else about what would constitute an “American” governmental design. This is seemingly the only direct reference made in his correspondence to the issue of whether the governments in Latin America would be representative and, if so, what specific design that representative government would take and if it would be viable.

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<sup>138</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, November 1826, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019857/>.

This absence is striking and becomes more pronounced when it is connected to a letter Madison wrote to the Marquis six years earlier.

In this earlier letter, Madison said that “free states seem indeed to be propagated in Europe, as rapidly as new States are on this side of the Atlantic.”<sup>139</sup> Madison’s language crafts a distinction between the “free” states in Europe and “new” states in Latin America, new but seemingly not free. If this is the case, why would Madison not have more to say about the ‘un-freedom’ of the new American states? The answer arrives in the language he uses in his other letters. In his 1823 letter to Rush, Madison declared his support for “defeating the efforts of the Holy Alliance to restore our *Independent* neighbors to the condition of Spanish Provinces.”<sup>140</sup> Then in his 1823 letter to Monroe, he outlined the “sympathies with their liberties & independence”<sup>141</sup> while never specifying the cause of representative government. In fact, in his 1822 letter to Monroe, Madison explicitly mentioned “republicanism”<sup>142</sup> only in the context of the United States, even though immediately beforehand he was discussing the Mexican revolution and the South American revolutions more broadly. Madison’s omission cannot be boiled down to ignorance. Jefferson himself wrote about the prospect of representative government in Latin America, and Madison, as a designer of the constitution, ought to have even more to say on the prospect of his representative model being applied to other newly independent regions. The explanation, then, must be that whether or not Latin America was representatively governed did not concern Madison so long as it was independent.

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<sup>139</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, 25 November 1820, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm018788/>.

<sup>140</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Richard Rush, 13 November 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019288/>. (My emphasis)

<sup>141</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 30 October 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed April 19, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019279/>.

<sup>142</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 6 May 1822, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm018329/>.

This reasoning is evidenced by how Madison talks about the 1817 revolution in Pernambuco, Brazil. In 1817 the state of Pernambuco, then controlled by the Portuguese monarch, revolted, declared its independence, and proclaimed itself a republic. Writing about this event, Madison worried about the reaction of European leaders to the revolt:

The struggle of the Spanish part of it having the appearance of shaking off a *foreign yolk*, appeals merely to the interest & sympathy of those Sovereigns. That in the Brazils, may be viewed by them as an attack on a *domestic* throne.<sup>143</sup>

Here Madison distinguishes between revolutions of independence and those which are more focused on a domestic separation which, in the case of Pernambuco, was partly with the goal of establishing a republic. Furthermore, in the same letter Madison issues his regrets “that any difficulties should have arisen with Portugal, the only recognized nation, beside ourselves, on this Hemisphere.”<sup>144</sup> Rather than the revolution in Pernambuco being a reason for celebrating the expansion of republicanism in the Western Hemisphere, it had the opposite effect: causing Madison strategic concern as to the European reaction and regret that it had put a strain on the United States’ relationship with Portugal. Madison assuredly knew about the republican rhetoric surrounding Pernambuco, its prevalence in the newspapers and popular discourse would have made his ignorance of this quite unlikely.<sup>145</sup> In spite of this, Madison drew a distinction between the Spanish revolutions, which were focused around the question of independence, and the Pernambuco revolution which, while “*domestic*,” was centered largely on the question of representative government. Here Madison was analyzing the possible reactions of European monarchs, but this analysis precisely proves his indifference to representative government in Latin America. Madison

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<sup>143</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Richard Rush, 27 June 1817, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm018453/>. (My emphasis)

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016), 54-79.

not only views this republican revolution through a distinctly strategic lens, but worries that it will have a negative effect on the Spanish revolutions of independence. In essence, the republican revolt in Pernambuco is a worrying occurrence because it threatens the *independence* of the Spanish colonies elsewhere in the hemisphere.

*The French Revolution and the Question of Race*

Madison's perspective on Latin American revolutions was characterized by a mixture of principles and strategy focused around U.S. political and commercial interests. The previous section sought to emphasize the prevalence of strategy over principles, but this prevalence becomes notable only when this perspective on Latin American revolutions is positioned against Madison's reaction to the French revolution. This comparison to the French Revolution reveals not only the degree to which strategy dominated Madison's perspective on Latin American revolutions, but also the reason behind this domination. This section will first focus on the comparative prevalence of strategy in the Latin American case before moving on to the racial lens motivating this strategic approach.

Writing to Jean Marie Roland in April 1793, Madison's reaction to the French revolution was comparatively enthusiastic. Madison proclaimed that "in the catalogue of sublime truths and precious sentiments recorded in the revolution of France, none is more to be admired than the renunciation of those prejudices which have perverted the artificial boundaries of nations into exclusions of the philanthropy which ought to cement the whole into one great family"<sup>146</sup> Here Madison engages with the principles characterizing the French revolution in a way he never did for Latin American revolutions. Moreover, Madison is not only supportive, but admiring of the French revolution and communicates a sense of unity with France in his declaration that the revolution is

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<sup>146</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Jean Marie Roland, April 1793, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm012915/>.

guiding nations into the “one great family” they ought to be. Madison went on to declare that “the recitals of the act which you communicate contain the best comment on the great principle of humanity: and in proportion as they speak the magnanimity of the French nation.”<sup>147</sup> Madison’s characterizing of the “recitals of the act” as containing the “best comment on the great principle of humanity” makes a universal and deeply principled claim that is almost entirely absent from his language surrounding Latin American revolutions. In fact, when Madison mentions a universal principle in the context of Latin American revolution, the principle is in connection with the United States rather than the revolting colonies, including his statement that “altho’ there may be no danger of hostile consequences from the Recognising act, it is desirable that *our* Republic should stand fair in the eyes of the world, not only for its own sake, but for that of Republicanism itself.”<sup>148</sup> Here it is the reputation of the United States, rather than the act of recognizing Latin America, which is republican whereas the French context involved the “great principle of humanity.” Clearly principles play a much stronger role in Madison’s perspective toward France in comparison to Latin America.

In the same letter Madison went on to personalize his statements, saying that “for myself I feel these sentiments with all the force which that reflection can inspire; and I present them with peculiar satisfaction as a citizen of the U.S.”<sup>149</sup> Madison not only focuses on principles with a specificity and praise that never enters his language about Latin America, but he also goes out of his way to connect them with his own feelings. Furthermore, in contrast to his Latin American letters, strategy is wholly absent from his letter to Roland despite there being a variety of contemporary strategic uncertainties which Roland might have been able to speak to. Madison’s reaction to the

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid.

<sup>148</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 6 May 1822, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm018329/>. (My emphasis)

<sup>149</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Jean Marie Roland, April 1793, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm012915/>.

French Revolution was, therefore, markedly different than his reaction to Latin American revolutions, being less strategic, more principled, and generally more enthusiastic.

Madison also believed that a certain perspective on the French Revolution was the correct one for an American citizen to hold. Writing to Jefferson a few weeks after his letter to Roland, Madison commented that Edmund Randolph's "sentiments are right & firm on the French Revoln., and in other respects I discovered no symptoms of heresy."<sup>150</sup> Madison not only describes the sentiments as correct, but implies that were Randolph's views divergent from what they should be, they would qualify as "heresy." This word choice highlights that, for Madison, the French Revolution was a quasi-religious cause, thereby reinforcing the connection he makes between this revolution and its 'higher principles.' Madison expected that other Americans support the revolution with the same verve and purity as himself, an element completely lacking in his approach to Latin American revolutions.

The contrast becomes most clear in Madison's letter to Jefferson written in September of 1793. This letter concerns American citizens' reactions to the disagreeable actions of the French Minister to the United States, Edmond-Charles Genet. Here Madison writes:

The only antidote for their poison [those who tried to use Genet to divide the U.S. and France] is to distinguish between the nation & its agent, between principles and events; and to impress the well meaning with the fact that the enemies of Prance & of Liberty are at work to lead them from their honorable connection with these into the arms and ultimately into the Government, of G.B.<sup>151</sup>

While Madison does attribute a strategic effect to "their poison," he also emphasizes the distinction between "principles and events" regarding the French Revolution. Here, Madison believed that the

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<sup>150</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 22 July 1793, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 26 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm012944/>.

<sup>151</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Containing Resolutions on Franco - American Resolutions for Genet, 2 September 1793, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm012963/>.



principles were not only separate, but were more important than the events in question. In the case of the French Revolution, he prioritized principles over concrete events and advocated that others do the same.

In response to American anger toward Genet, Madison felt obliged to compose a “train of ideas”<sup>152</sup> to help structure county meetings on the issue. In this composition, Madison used language similar to some found in his discussion of Latin America, calling the French revolution a “severe & glorious contest in which it is now engaged for its own liberty” that “must be peculiarly interesting to the wishes, the friendship & the sympathy of the people of America.”<sup>153</sup> This language is in his reactions to both revolutions, but Madison continued by saying that “all attempts which may be made in whatever form or disguise to alienate the good will of the people of America from the cause of liberty & republ Govt in F. have a tendency to weaken ye affection to the free principles of ye own Govt, and manifest designs wch ought to be narrowly watched & seasonably countered.”<sup>154</sup>

This passage presents the most crucial distinction between how Madison treats the French and Latin American revolutions. In the context of France, Madison directly references the cause of “repubn Govt” in a manner totally absent from his correspondence surrounding Latin American revolutions. However, Madison goes even further, directly tying the republican cause in France with the wellbeing of republican government in the United States. As opposed to the Latin American case, where Madison does not mention republican government and where the question of republicanism revolves solely around the United States, the dual republics of the U.S. and France are linked such that not supporting French republicanism is akin to not supporting U.S. republicanism. Indeed, Madison went on in the letter to emphasize that the United States and France are “mutually attached

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid.

to the cause of liberty” and that France is “an example that may open the eyes of all mankind to their natl & pol rights.”<sup>155</sup> This equitable mutualism Madison approaches the French revolution with is nowhere to be found in his discussion of Latin American revolutions. Whereas Madison sees the United States as the focus of republican principles in the Latin American case and approaches those revolutions with a focus on U.S. strategic interests, the French revolution is a beacon of universal principles that ties the U.S. and France together. With this comparison, the degree to which strategic interest, as opposed to republican principles, guided Madison’s approach to Latin American revolution becomes clear.

Why would Madison so vehemently support the republican cause of France, going out of his way to separate principles and events, and yet prioritize U.S. strategy so completely with regards to Latin American revolutions? While there were a variety of situational differences, the key difference becomes clear when Madison describes his thoughts on the Latin American population. Writing to Frances Wright about the question of abolition, Madison declared that certain “physical peculiarities” make the “incorporation”<sup>156</sup> of freed slaves into the white population impossible. He goes on to specify that “these peculiarities, it wd. seem are not of equal force in the South American States, owing in part perhaps to a former degradation produced by colonial vassalage, but principally to the lesser contrast of colours. The difference is not striking between that of many of the Spanish & Portuguese Creoles & that of many of the mixed breed.”<sup>157</sup> This comment reaches its full meaning in connection to Madison’s answer to Jedidiah Morse’s question: “what is their [free blacks] general character with respect to industry and order?” Madison responds that their character is “generally

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid.

<sup>156</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Frances Wright, 1 September 1825, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019655/>.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid.

idle and depraved; appearing to retain the bad qualities of the slaves with whom they continue to associate, without acquiring any of the good ones of the whites, from whom [they] continue separated by prejudices.”<sup>158</sup> Madison sees Latin America as a region populated predominantly by persons who are not white, and also sees freed slaves as a population characterized by personal defects. As has already been stated, Latin American revolutions were deeply connected to emancipatory efforts so, when Madison looked south to Latin America, he saw a population that was not white and, therefore, a population whose character with regards to “industry and order” was questionable at best. This type of population might, in Madison’s mind, be wholly undeserving or incapable of self-government to the point where that prospect was not even worth mentioning.

While racism might begin to explain why self-government played a lesser role in Madison’s views on Latin America, it does not fully explain why the strategic lens so completely replaced a principled viewpoint. Madison’s upbringing and position within the Virginian planter class provide a reason for this replacement. Madison spent his entire life as a slave owner, viewing persons of color through the lens of personal utility: how their existence might benefit himself. When Madison went to the Continental Congress he took his slave Billey with him but, after the convention wrote his father to declare that:

On a view of all circumstances I have judged it most prudent not to force Billey back to Va. even if could be done....I am persuaded his mind is too thoroughly tainted to be a fit companion for fellow slaves in Virga....I do not expect to get near the worth of him; but cannot think of punishing him by transportation merely for coveting that liberty for which we have paid the price of so much blood, and have proclaimed so often to be the right, & worthy the pursuit, of every human being.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Jedidiah Morse, 28 March 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/04-03-02-0020>.

<sup>159</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Madison Sr., 8 September 1783, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm012487/>.

Madison believed it impossible to bring Billey back to Virginia, believed liberty was a right that all human beings deserved, and yet still sold Billey in Philadelphia despite a limited financial return. Even when he had the least to lose from freeing Billey and clear principled reasons for doing so, Madison still viewed him through a lens of personal utility, acting only upon what he could gain from Billey's existence.

Madison's lifetime identity as a slaveholder, combined with this demonstration of his lens of personal utility in Billey's case, suggest the reasons behind Madison's strategic approach to Latin American revolution. When Madison looked south, he not only saw populations he considered "idle and depraved,"<sup>160</sup> but also saw populations of color who looked, to him, much like the slaves he had lived his entire life viewing through this lens of utility.<sup>161</sup> Madison approached Latin American revolutions with a focus on strategic self-interest because this was the same way he had always approached populations of color, wondering how they might be useful to him. The French population, being predominantly white, were a 'good in themselves' and so his support of their revolution was principled while the Latin American revolutions, with largely non-white populations, were a 'means' to Madison's self-interested strategic ends. This analysis helps explain Madison's focus on Latin American independence over representative government: independence lead to commerce and European exclusion from the Western hemisphere that benefited the United States and so was a principle strategically worth supporting while representative government, especially to a man who deeply mistrusted the ability of people to govern themselves (to say nothing of this ability in non-white populations) might be a strategic liability or, at the very least, a principle not worth focusing on in comparison to the more beneficial independence.

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<sup>160</sup>James Madison, James Madison to Jedidiah Morse, 28 March 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/04-03-02-0020>.

<sup>161</sup>Or who he imagined to look this way, having never traveled to Latin America.

*Madison and Jefferson*

Madison, then, saw Latin American revolutions in a self-interested strategic manner, almost entirely unconcerned with the success or possibility of representative government in Latin America. This perspective is different than Jefferson's, which included a great deal of speculation about representative government in Latin America. Jefferson doubted the ability of former Spanish colonial populations to effectively govern themselves, but was willing to overlook this doubt depending on the advantages this exception would have for the United States. Additionally, Jefferson's position was tied with his desire to preserve the lucrative profits of slavery and his desire for territorial expansion. Like Jefferson, Madison's position was influenced by the self-interest of the U.S. and his identity as a Virginia slaveholder, even if in a different way. While self-interest guided Jefferson's principles and their application, outside of a few small references that constitute little more than a meaningless refrain in comparison to the French revolution, Madison approached Latin American revolution with very little concern for the prospects of representative government. Instead Madison focused almost exclusively on the strategic benefits and harms these revolutions might present for the United States. While it may have manifested differently, in Jefferson's case undergirding his principled outlook, in Madison's supplanting his principles for a strategic focus, the self-interest of the United States, focused on expansion, firmly guided how both figures approached Latin American revolution.

Jefferson and Madison, articulator of the supposed principles of the United States and designer of the government to enact those principles, both approached Latin American revolutions not as an expansion of these principles, but as an opportunity for U.S. gain. Self interest, rather than

a commitment to representative government, provided the foundation for how these ‘founding fathers’ viewed Latin American revolution and their perspectives would, on October 17, 1823,<sup>162</sup> gain an importance beyond themselves.

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<sup>162</sup>James Monroe, James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, 17 October 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, accessed 23 April 2018, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-3814>.

### Chapter III-Monroe and his Doctrine

The Monroe Doctrine has undergone a critical re-interpretation, with many accepting that it operated more as a geo-political document rather than being centered on principle. While certainly valid, to fully understand the significance of the Monroe Doctrine in United States' history it must be analyzed in light of the 'founding fathers' opinions regarding Latin American representative government and in conjunction with an examination not just of what the Monroe Doctrine was, but of what it was not. This reading makes clear that the American Creedal narrative would expect Monroe to choose a different path, while in reality the Monroe Doctrine was rooted in a denial of the importance of representative government in Latin America.

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#### *The Road to 1823*

There is a tendency to look back on United States history and see the progress of this country as inevitable; however until 1815 the very existence of the United States was consistently uncertain. In 1783, the United States won independence but that by no means meant the country was stable. Independence did not, for instance, mean that the union between the states was guaranteed and during the first decades of the country's existence, its leaders spent a great deal of energy worrying that the union would split. After the Articles of Confederation proved inadequate, the drafting and ratification of a new constitution became the focus of the country's leadership and it was not until 1790 that the last of the original colonies ratified the document. Even after ratification, westward expansion proved a divisive subject, especially with regard to slavery. Many of the original Atlantic states worried about the decline of their relative power as new states were

added.<sup>163</sup> With the new system of government still being adjusted in accordance to experience and crisis, as Jefferson and Madison assumed the presidency the continued internal cohesion of the country was very much up for debate. This is not to mention the country's finances which, after the accumulation of large war debts, were in dire straits.

More worrying was the latent British threat. While the United States won the 1776 war, the final treaty was hardly in its favor. Britain never pulled back from its forts on the United States' northwestern border. In fact, it used these forts to support Native American raids into U.S. territory.

<sup>164</sup> This, coupled with the continued harassment of U.S. shipping, highlights the United States' precarious situation. The British military was far superior to that of the United States and, while the United States had won the war, the possibility of a British re-incursion remained daunting in the minds of the founders.

Britain was not, however, the only threat facing the U.S. The French revolution and U.S. refusal to pay its war debt led to the "quasi-war" with France between 1798 and 1800.<sup>165</sup> This revolution and subsequent war distanced the United States from its earlier ally and put yet another strain on its cohesion and stability. The last years of the 18th century were anything but stable.

The dawn of a new century did not, however, inaugurate a new existential certainty. It was only after the conclusion of the War of 1812, otherwise known as the Second War of Independence, that one could gain confidence in the future existence of the U.S. That this war is now known by this other name highlights that before 1815 the United States was threading the needle under the

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<sup>163</sup>Reginald Horsman, "Dimensions of an 'Empire for Liberty': Expansion and Republicanism, 1775-1825," *Journal of the Early Republic* 9, no. 1 (1989): 1-20.

<sup>164</sup>François Furstenberg, "The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (2008): 647-677.

<sup>165</sup>Miranda Spieler, "Abolition and Reenslavement in the Caribbean: The Revolution in French Guiana," in *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*, eds. Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William Nelson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 138.



British threat and remained, in large part, an independent but highly economically integrated and diplomatically coerced piece in the British empire. The success of British troops in the war, including the burning of the U.S. Capitol, reveals that the existential uncertainty in the country's early years was merited. However, at the conclusion of the war, Britain finally pulled back from its threatening position in the Northwest and the continuance of the United States began to seem more certain. While the Treaty of Ghent would continue to be debated between the two nations, Monroe's speech in 1823 notes the ongoing negotiations over the realized meaning and enforcement of the treaty, these disagreements would not spark a similarly dire conflict. After the war the United States fortified its coastline,<sup>166</sup> thereby decreasing the threat of foreign incursion.

This was the condition of the U.S. through Jefferson's presidency and most of Madison's. Burdened by debt, grappling with internal debates and political strife, and constantly threatened by British might and French military power, the United States had little ability to take proactive action, especially in the international sphere. Perhaps most importantly, the chaos resulting from the Napoleonic wars occupied a great deal of the U.S. government's attention. Jefferson's embargo and its ensuing consequences, coupled with Madison's War of 1812, left the United States responding to crises instead of taking additional foreign policy measures to influence the surrounding world. Jefferson and Madison assuredly had actions they would have taken had circumstances not forced their hands, but the energy of the United States government was preoccupied for much of the time the Virginia dynasty held power.

The situation began to change with Monroe's entrance into the presidency and the dawn of the 1820s. By this time internal cohesion had increased with the decline of the Federalist party,

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<sup>166</sup>James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message, 2 December 1823, The American Presidency Project, accessed 19 April 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29465>.

temporarily ending partisan strife and leading to this period's denomination as the 'Era of Good Feelings.' Monroe's speech in December 1823, in which he outlines what would later be named the Monroe Doctrine, provides an excellent picture of exactly how he and his administration saw the wellbeing of the country they presided over. Though Monroe's speech outlines points of contention with Britain and Russia, there is no rhetoric describing a probable conflict and these disagreements were the subject of peaceful negotiations rather than increasing tensions. He stated that "the actual condition of the public finances more than realizes the favorable anticipations that were entertained of it at the opening of the last session of Congress" estimating that there would be a surplus of nine million dollars at the start of the new year.<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, Monroe said that "The state of the Army....has now attained a high degree of perfection."<sup>168</sup> Lastly, at the end of his speech Monroe declared that "our population has expanded in every direction, and new States have been established....This expansion of our population and accession of new States to our Union have had the happiest effect on all its highest interests."<sup>169</sup> After forty years of independence, the United States was diplomatically, financially, militarily, and politically stable. This stability allowed for westward expansion and prosperity which, in turn, augmented the very stability that created it.<sup>170</sup> None of this is to say that there were not dilemmas or worries during this period, but that relative to the history preceding it, Monroe presided over a period of remarkable stability.

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<sup>167</sup>Ibid.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

<sup>170</sup>All of this stability was, however, limited to certain privileged segments of the population. Slaves, native peoples, and many other groups saw their lives constantly upended and characterized by suffering in the creation of this stability. While this suffering is not to be ignored, in this case I am attempting to access the national condition as perceived by figures who were, incontestably, the privileged and so this paragraph's approach, while exclusionary, is analytically necessary to establish this particular critique of these individuals.

As these broader strokes of U.S. history were playing out, the United States' relationship with revolutionary South America remained somewhat stagnant. Jefferson's presidency had established that, in the opinion of the United States, "Spain should be left in possession of her American colonies, since they could not be in better hands until the United States was ready to take those that it needed."<sup>171</sup> While the United States looked covetously at its southern neighbors, it lacked the capability to take decisive action on these impulses and its expansionism was relegated toward the acquisition of Florida and, eventually, the Louisiana Territory. The Latin American independence movements began at the very end of Jefferson's presidency, leaving the responsibility of dealing with these movements with his friends, mentees, and successors: James Madison and James Monroe.<sup>172</sup>

Madison's ability to influence the situation in Latin America would be severely limited by the War of 1812. When he entered the presidency, Madison initially stuck to a strict policy of neutrality with regard to the southern revolutions. Whitaker discusses how Madison "held unofficial correspondence"<sup>173</sup> with the agents of revolution lobbying for support, while also permitting these individuals to purchase "munitions"<sup>174</sup> to be shipped southward. This open policy to munitions sales was extended to Spanish officials residing in America as well.<sup>175</sup> Though neutrality was Madison's position, the uncertain situation necessitated some response by the United States. What resulted is known as the "No Transfer Principle of 1811" which stated that the United States would not allow any territory in the Americas to pass from the hands of one colonial power to another. The

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<sup>171</sup> Arthur Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 32.

<sup>172</sup> Aka: The Jameses

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 67.

statement declared that “a due regard to their own safety compels them [the United States] to provide under certain contingencies, for the temporary occupation of the said territory” and that this territory would be held “subject to a future negotiation.”<sup>176</sup> In his book *No God But Gain*, Stephen Chambers notes that this statement was one of the foundations for the establishment of the Monroe Doctrine twelve years later.<sup>177</sup>

Although this was a bold statement, suggesting that Madison sought to take action focused on the Latin American revolutions, this effort was brought to a stop by the War of 1812 during which time the existential nature of the conflict prohibited the United States from taking such action.<sup>178</sup> Whitaker goes on to lay out the reasons for the “sacrifice” of the “interests of the United States in Latin America....to its desire for territory.”<sup>179</sup> He writes both that Canada and Florida were “contiguous with the United States” and “familiar” while Latin America was relatively unknown, far away, and seemed to be of less possible advantage to the United States. While the existential nature of the war easily explains the United States’ inaction in Latin America better than these reasons, the confluence of these factors meant that through the rest of Madison’s presidency the United States took little action to influence the southern conflicts.

Monroe taking office, in combination with the end of the War of 1812 and the start of the period of relative stability described earlier in this chapter, led to more definitive action culminating in the decision to put forward the Monroe Doctrine. In his traditional historiographic treatment of Monroe, Whitaker describes him as a “devout republican....[who] was fired by a missionary zeal for

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<sup>176</sup>U.S. Congress, No Transfer Resolution, 15 January 1811, San Diego State University, accessed 25 April 2018, [https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/No\\_Transfer\\_Resolution.pdf](https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/No_Transfer_Resolution.pdf).

<sup>177</sup>Stephen Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine & the Making of the United States* (London: Verso, 2017), 118.

<sup>178</sup>Arthur Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 95.

<sup>179</sup>*Ibid*, 95-96.

propagating the republican faith in foreign parts.”<sup>180</sup> Whitaker’s view of Monroe will be subject to critique later on in this chapter, suffice it to say that for all his “zeal,” Monroe had a limited view of Latin American liberty. Writing to Andrew Jackson in 1818, Monroe declared that “*by keeping the Allies out of the quarrel, Florida must soon be ours and the Colonies must be independent, for if they cannot beat Spain, they do not deserve to be free.*”<sup>181</sup> In addition to his clear focus on the self-interest of the United States, in this case pertaining to the acquisition of Florida, Monroe also mirrored Jefferson’s opinion that to deserve freedom Latin America had to succeed in military conflict. Monroe, therefore, did not consider it the job of the United States to interfere in this conflict, believing that independence and representative government had to be earned through self-reliant bloodshed.<sup>182</sup>

If bloodshed was how freedom was earned, it would be earned with, and resisted by, weapons and munitions of U.S. manufacture. While the United States would not send its own forces into the conflict, it was also unwilling to cease its business with Spanish forces. Whitaker notes that Monroe believed selling weapons to Spain, as well as to the Spanish American colonies, was the only way to maintain neutrality and not “court....war....and ruin to the Spanish American cause.”<sup>183</sup> While this may have been the case, it was also the case that the United States was making a good deal of money selling weapons and supplies to both sides of the conflict, a reality that Latin America would not forget once its independence was achieved and the United States sought to reposition itself as an ever-present supporter of the revolutionary cause.

Part of this positioning involved, in 1822, U.S. diplomatic recognition of the new Latin American states as independent and sovereign. While Monroe attempted to collaborate with Britain

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid, 56.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid, 211.

<sup>182</sup>Seemingly ignoring French military assistance given to the United States during its own revolution.

<sup>183</sup>Arthur Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 211.

on joint recognition, in the end he recognized these nations unilaterally although how he went about this recognition is telling. Whitaker himself remarks that “the national interest, not political idealism, was the mainspring of that policy.”<sup>184</sup> He reaches this conclusion as a result of Monroe’s initially sending a U.S. minister only to Mexico, finding this surprising due to the newness and monarchical character of the Mexican state. Whitaker goes on to say that Monroe believed that all American states would eventually become republican and that Monroe hoped this would render his action less offensive to the European powers.<sup>185</sup> Regardless of the validity of this statement, with this maneuver Monroe devalued representative government as a metric upon which United States policy would be based.

The debate and path toward diplomatic recognition was long, however after this was achieved Monroe began searching for another action the United States could take. Whitaker writes that Monroe’s letters show “he was suffering keenly from the feeling that his administration lacked popular support and that he attributed this lack to the absence of any great and pressing issue, foreign or domestic, to focus public sentiment.”<sup>186</sup> Post-recognition, with a newly secure nation, and having achieved a longstanding goal of many Latin American advocates, Monroe now had a free hand to take additional action to fire up public sentiment and, as will be shown, re-trench and forward his and his predecessors’ long standing goals.

#### *The Decision*

The Monroe Doctrine was not the action the American Creedal narrative would lead one to expect. Given the narrative’s focus on the spread of representative government abroad, the self-interested and expansionist tint to the Monroe Doctrine directly contradicts this version of

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid, 378-379.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 378-379.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 394.

history. To understand this, one must look at the actions the United States did not take in conjunction with, or in the place of, the Monroe Doctrine but which were open to it at the time, given the strategic opening Monroe clearly knew he had and which this section will describe.

After communicating the core aspect of his doctrine, Monroe stated that “In the war between those new Governments and Spain we declared our neutrality at the time of their recognition, and to this we have adhered, and shall continue to adhere.”<sup>187</sup> Monroe’s Doctrine did not alter U.S. neutrality, and here Monroe specifically rejects such an alteration which would have, in practice, led the United States to support its republican neighbors in their fight against Spanish monarchy. This neutrality was not restricted to the avoidance of war for, as was stated earlier in this chapter, part of Monroe’s neutrality entailed selling weapons to both sides of the conflict. Even as Monroe declared the Americas free of additional European intrusion, he was allowing the sale of weapons to a European power bent on an intrusion that, while outside of the bounds of the doctrine, clearly went against his principle of an American system based on representative government. Spain was in no position to pose a significant threat to the United State, nevertheless Monroe made no moves to end a neutrality that was, ostensibly, based around this non-existent threat and the wellbeing of the Latin American states which were striving for independence against the flow of U.S. bullets.

Additionally, Monroe rejected all possibilities of alliances with the newly independent states. Whitaker writes that “The idea that the American system was to be implemented by the negotiation of inter-American alliances was a natural inference from Monroe’s message.”<sup>188</sup> Indeed, after the

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<sup>187</sup>James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message, 2 December 1823, The American Presidency Project, accessed 19 April 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29465>.

<sup>188</sup>Arthur Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 539.

1823 speech Columbia's minister in Washington, José María Salazar wrote to John Quincy Adams asking how the United States would resist European interference, if the U.S. would enter into a defensive alliance with Columbia, and if Spanish forces qualified as the kind of interference Monroe's address focused on?<sup>189</sup> After a cabinet meeting, the administration's reply was sent which, among other things, downplayed the European threat and emphasized that should the doctrine be violated, the United States was not obliged to go to war for it could only do so with Congressional approval.<sup>190</sup> Beyond these qualifications, the response also "showed that the traditional opposition against entangling alliances had been carried over into the new Latin American policy."<sup>191</sup> Whitaker goes on to note that Monroe "had never said that his system included cooperation with the new states....Now that the threat from Europe was no longer causing great uneasiness at Washington, the chief care of the administration was to avoid involvements with the new states that might prove embarrassing at a later period."<sup>192</sup> Rather than engaging in a robust defense of representative government through a system of alliances that his doctrine led Latin American states to infer and propose, Monroe's administration distinctly avoided this path. There was not, however, much reason for doing so because though Washington's farewell address emphasized the avoidance of alliances in an era of European colonization, Monroe's American system created a new space where these alliances might have proved advantageous. Instead, Monroe refused these alliances based on nebulous future complications.

These were a few of the other paths open to Monroe in the later part of 1823. Some, like alterations to neutrality, were enthusiastically advocated for by members of Congress while others,

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<sup>189</sup>Ibid, 555-556.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid, 557.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid, 559.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid, 559.



like alliances, were put forward by the newly recognized Latin American nations themselves. Nevertheless, in the end Monroe chose to put forward the doctrine for which he is now famous. There is strong reason to believe these paths were open to Monroe due to the circumstances from which his doctrine emerged. These circumstances and the process by which Monroe came to his ultimate decision will be the subject of the remainder of this section.

The Monroe Doctrine was put forward after many years of hesitation on the part of the United States. Indeed, in the lead up to recognition, Monroe wrote to Jonathan Russell that “the object is to serve the provinces essentially, by promoting the independence of all, with the establishment of free Republican Governments, and with that view, to obtain their recognition by other powers, as soon as possible. If we alarm these powers, we may defeat our own objects.”<sup>193</sup> Here Monroe was clearly concerned with how the European powers might react to U.S. action, and yet a year and a half later Monroe would put forward his doctrine banning future European colonization and systemic expansion in the Americas. Monroe’s nervousness in March 1822 contrasts with the brashness of the Monroe Doctrine. Where in 1822 he formalized a long contemplated action, in 1823 Monroe leapt forward leading one to wonder why he felt comfortable taking this action.

The Monroe Doctrine was not, in fact, sparked by Monroe or his administration but instead was a mutation of a proposal made by George Canning, the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs, to the U.S. emissary to Britain, Richard Rush.<sup>194</sup> In 1823, Canning suggested that the United States and Britain issue a joint declaration to warn “the European powers not to attempt the reconquest of Spanish America or the transfer of any part of it from Spain to another power.”<sup>195</sup> The proposal also

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<sup>193</sup>Ibid, 375-376.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid, 438.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid, 439.

contained a clause forbidding Britain and the United States from taking portions of Spanish America for themselves. Unable to agree to the proposal himself, Rush sent word of the opportunity to Monroe whose first step was to send letters to both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison asking for their opinions on the matter.<sup>196</sup> As Whitaker notes, the administrations of these three individuals overlap with the entirety of the Latin American independence movements making this moment a coming together not only of the Virginia Dynasty, but of the entire U.S. approach to the possibility of Latin American independence and representative government.<sup>197</sup>

Jefferson's letter, which has been analyzed earlier in this paper, noted that "this sets our compass and points the course which we are to steer through the ocean of time opening on us."<sup>198</sup> Jefferson clearly sees Monroe's decision in this moment as fortuitous of the future course of the nation he helped to found, and as such had a great deal to say in the matter. Jefferson wrote that "our endeavour should surely be, to make our hemisphere that of freedom. One nation, most of all, could disturb us in this pursuit; she now offers to lead, aid, and accompany us in it...with her on our side we need not fear the whole world."<sup>199</sup> Jefferson accurately portrays how meaningful Canning's proposal was, for it signalled a moment when U.S. action to separate the American sphere from European influence was agreeable to the nation most able to usurp and resist such a separation. This, in Jefferson's words, presented a great opportunity for freedom.

However, as the first chapter of this project demonstrated, while Jefferson's rhetoric may have revolved around freedom, self-interest was the actual foundation upon which his politics were built and this is clear in his letter to Monroe. First, Jefferson said that "its object [of the proposition]

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<sup>196</sup>Ibid, 456.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid, 456.

<sup>198</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 24 October 1823, letter printed in Merrill Peterson, ed. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1482.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid.

is to introduce and establish the American system, of keeping out of *our* land all foreign powers, of never permitting those of Europe to intermeddle with the affairs of *our* nations.”<sup>200</sup> Jefferson’s possessive language here is telling, for although Canning’s proposal forbade U.S. acquisition of Spanish American territory, Jefferson speaks of “our land” and “our nations.” These phrases indicate that while he speaks of hemispheric freedom, Jefferson views the entirety of the hemisphere as subject to the leadership of the United States and collaboration with Canning was a means to legitimize and secure this leadership. After all, what could legitimize U.S. hemispheric leadership more than its recognition by Britain, the nation to whom many Latin American nations already looked for protection and commercial prosperity.<sup>201</sup>

Furthermore, Jefferson’s only qualm with the arrangement is revealed in his advice that “we have first to ask ourselves a question. Do we wish to acquire to our own confederacy any one or more of the Spanish provinces? I candidly confess, that I have ever looked on Cuba as the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of States.”<sup>202</sup> While unstated, Jefferson’s interest in Cuba was assuredly based in the vast wealth which the United States could gain through ownership of the island and the lucrative slave-based plantation system that scholars have termed an “agro-industrial graveyard.”<sup>203</sup> In spite of his statement that Monroe’s question was “the most momentous which has ever been offered to my contemplation since that of Independence,”<sup>204</sup> Jefferson paused to contemplate the loss of the potential ownership of Cuba and its brutal slave

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<sup>200</sup>Ibid.

<sup>201</sup>Arthur Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 535-536.

<sup>202</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 24 October 1823, letter printed in Merrill Peterson, ed. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1482.

<sup>203</sup>Stephen Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine & the Making of the United States* (London: Verso, 2017), 160.

<sup>204</sup>Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 24 October 1823, letter printed in Merrill Peterson, ed. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 1482.

economy. This, in and of itself, is telling of Jefferson's approach to the trade off between liberty and profit, but in the end Jefferson recommended that Monroe go along with Canning's proposal.

Similar to Jefferson, Madison's response mirrors the pre-existing pattern of his thoughts on Latin America, in which strategy trumps principle. Noting the same advantage to cooperation which Jefferson pointed out, Madison declared that:

The professions we have made to these neighbours, our sympathies with their liberties & independence, the deep interest we have in the most friendly relations with them, and the consequences threatened by a command of their resources by the Great Powers confederated agst. the rights & reforms, of which we have given so conspicuous & persuasive an example, all unite in calling for our efforts to defeat the meditated crusade.<sup>205</sup>

Just as he had throughout his writings on this subject, Madison starts with a focus on "these neighbors" before moving on to the strategic threat the Great Powers could pose to the United States if they commanded the resources of Latin America. While Jefferson emphasized the momentousness of the occasion but in the end based his hesitations and justifications in U.S. self interest, for Madison the question was firmly one of interest. This interest guided him, like Jefferson, to advise Monroe to agree to the declaration provided an eye was kept on constitutional adherence. However, before ending his letter Madison had one last question. He wrote asking "What is the extent of Mr. Canning's disclaimer as to 'the remaining possessions of Spain in America?' Does it exclude future views of acquiring Porto Rico &c, as well as Cuba? It leaves G. Britain free as I understand it in relation to other Quarters of the Globe."<sup>206</sup> Focusing on Cuba like Jefferson had six days earlier, Madison wonders whether there might be a way for the United States to make this declaration and still expand into Cuba. It was assuredly for the same reasons.

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<sup>205</sup>James Madison, James Madison to James Monroe, 30 October 1823, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm019279/>.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid.

Monroe received these letters of advice from his fellow Virginia plantation owners and promptly submitted them to his cabinet at the start of the meetings that would culminate in the Monroe Doctrine. The significance of this cannot be overstated. While they might not have been in the room, Jefferson and Madison's opinions and biases were certainly present and held the full weight of their former-presidential and already semi-mythological statuses. These letters, like their authors, focused on the self-interest of the United States and so Monroe and his cabinet could move toward a self-interested approach with the support of the author of the Declaration of Independence and the 'father of the constitution.' This validation cannot be causally linked to Monroe's decision, but a careful examination of the Monroe Doctrine will reveal that it did correspond to many of the patterns found in Jefferson and Madison's thoughts on Latin American republicanism, which they communicated to Monroe in these letters and, assuredly, in prior conversations.

Importantly, the Monroe Doctrine was a unilateral statement rather than a bilateral one, with the United States acting alone, without the cooperation of Britain or its navy. Accounts on exactly why this is differ: with Whitaker arguing that Canning soured on the action he had proposed and Chambers arguing that Monroe abandoned the prospect of a joint statement himself. Regardless of the reason, Monroe makes his statement on behalf of the United States alone.

This statement, presented in his seventh annual message to Congress on December 2, 1823, contains, as Arthur Whitaker points out, two parts: "the negative principle of non-colonization and the positive principle of the American system" in addition to a warning to Europe not to violate these principles.<sup>207</sup> On non-colonization, Monroe declared that:

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<sup>207</sup> Arthur Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 492

The occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.<sup>208</sup>

Similar to Jefferson's general approach to the Latin American question, Monroe's language presents a 'principle' that is firmly rooted in U.S. self interest. Monroe bases this "principle" not on the well-being of a continent of newly free persons, but on the "rights and interests of the United States." The importance of this approach becomes clear with the ending of this sentence, in which "future colonization *by any European powers*" is prohibited. As many scholars have noted, this prohibition avoids restricting the possibility for future U.S. colonization in the Americas. While Canning's proposal would have restricted this, Monroe's statement maintains an opening for U.S. expansion. Nowhere in this section can the 'grand moment for freedom' that Jefferson described be found; the non-colonization principle is plainly and self-admittingly centered on the self interest of the United States.

Principled language can, however, be found in the second section of the Monroe Doctrine which separates the "American system" from the "European system." This is no coincidence for, as Whitaker points out, "from Jefferson's reply he [Monroe] took the idea of an American system separate and distinct from the European system."<sup>209</sup> Monroe said that:

The political system of the allied powers is essentially different...from that of America...We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup>James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message, 2 December 1823, The American Presidency Project, accessed 19 April 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29465>.

<sup>209</sup>Arthur Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 486

<sup>210</sup>James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message, 2 December 1823, The American Presidency Project, accessed 19 April 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29465>.

This is the core of the Monroe Doctrine and what historians focus on most. That the contents of Jefferson's letter made it into such an important passage confirms the collaboration in this moment. Continuing on the same theme, Monroe proclaimed that "we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them [free Latin American states], or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as a manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."<sup>211</sup> This statement has often been read as based on the principle of the two spheres which preceded it, a reading which suggests that the difference between the two systems informs the meaning of "unfriendly disposition." The reality is that any interference by European powers could constitute such a disposition for a host of other reasons. Looking south, Monroe and his predecessors saw the opportunity for U.S. commercial and territorial expansion and so any European action that might impede those prospects would, assuredly, fall under the category of an unfriendly disposition. This, in fact, is how the doctrine would be interpreted and utilized by U.S. leaders moving forward. Once again, what appears to be a statement of principle is, in fact, carefully built to leverage the veneer of principle on behalf of the self-interest of the United States.

The exclusionary message the Monroe Doctrine communicated to the European powers indicates that, at this time, Monroe saw an opening for the United States to take dramatic action and he chose to do so for the United States' own self-interest. Regardless of whether Canning or Monroe abandoned the joint proposal, in this proposal Monroe saw that Britain might tolerate unilateral U.S. action and, freed from the proclamation Britain had planned, he chose the path most advantageous to the United States and mimicked Britain's proposal while leaving room for the

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<sup>211</sup>Ibid.

United States to expand and colonize throughout the Americas. Indeed, this alleviated the concern both Jefferson and Madison had that the joint-proclamation would prevent the United States from acquiring Cuba. The Doctrine's construction was, therefore, firmly based in self-interest and this conclusion is backed up by a host of scholarship. Indeed, John Murrin states that "The zeal for expansion trumped a willingness to support other republics in the hemisphere. By the 1840s, if not earlier, the Monroe Doctrine had become a hegemonic text, far more than a statement of republican principle."<sup>212</sup> Rather than being a statement of republican principle and allyship, the Monroe Doctrine used the room the United States had to maneuver to its own distinct advantage.

If Monroe had followed American Creedal expectations, he might have engaged in alliances with these other republican states, not sold weapons to their monarchical enemies, or at the very least not left so much room in his doctrine for U.S. colonizing action against them. Instead, he bucked his stated support to these republican states with the structure of his doctrine: both in what it did and in what it did not do. Jefferson and Madison, prioritizing U.S. interest over the republican cause and doubting the ability of Latin America to govern itself, wrote to advise Monroe on this path and so these roads not taken beg the question of why Monroe choose the path he did. What, exactly, was the purpose of his doctrine and why did it usurp the republican cause?

#### *The Realization of a Dream*

While many scholars have connected the self-interested aspects of the Monroe Doctrine to its purpose, this connection actually runs deeper than self-interest to link with the Virginia Dynasty's vision of republicanism itself. Their goal of transforming the United States into an ever-expanding

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<sup>212</sup>John Murrin, "The Jeffersonian Triumph and American Exceptionalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no. 1 (2000): 22.



“Empire of Liberty” was the central motivator behind the Monroe Doctrine, and for them this goal was worth sacrificing the republican prospects in Latin America.

The purpose of the doctrine can be traced, in part, to Jefferson and Madison’s questions concerning Cuba in the replies they sent back to Monroe. Whether or not these questions proved crucial to Monroe’s decision making, in the end Monroe left a clear opening in his doctrine for the United States to take Cuba and whatever other American territory it coveted. Indeed, Monroe himself stated that “we ought if possible to incorporate it [Cuba] into our union.”<sup>213</sup> Why did Cuba feature so prominently in the thoughts of all three actors?

This question has largely been answered by Stephen Chambers in his book *No God But Gain*. Chambers writes that “by this time [1808], North Americans had already established a de facto informal empire on the much closer Spanish island [of Cuba].”<sup>214</sup> With its plantations supplying the world’s coffee and sugar additions, Cuban agro-industry was experiencing rapid growth and tremendous profit, all of which was dependent on the continuation of the slave trade due to the brutal labor conditions on the island. Chambers notes that “fully 25 percent (3.2 million) of all the enslaved Africans to arrive in the Americas were brought *after* the U.S. ban”<sup>215</sup> continuing to say that “If coffee, sugar and specie unlocked the doors of European and Asian markets for U.S. capitalists, slave ships were their key. The modern system of global capitalism originated as a machine that ran on the engine of the slave trade.”<sup>216</sup> When Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, all plantations owners, looked to Cuba they saw a lucrative system whose economic effects were critical to enabling the prosperity of the United States. This is why, when Monroe wrote to them, both Jefferson and

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<sup>213</sup>Stephen Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine & the Making of the United States* (London: Verso, 2017), 122.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

Madison expressed concern over the enshrinement of Cuba's separation from the U.S. under Canning's system.

This Cuban money provided an incredible benefit to the United States: the alleviation of its debt. Chambers writes that:

The Spanish economist Javier Cuenca Esteban has calculated that from 1790 through 1811 U.S. trade surpluses with Spanish colonies—primarily Cuba—offset 90 per cent of U.S. trade deficits with the rest of the world, which historian Linda Salvucci has suggested ‘went a long way toward reducing the international indebtedness of the young United States.’ U.S. policymakers were well aware that by 1800 the U.S.-Cuba trade and slave trade also represented a significant portion of total customs receipts, which were the lifeblood of government revenue.<sup>217</sup>

U.S. connections to the Cuban slave economy were, therefore, extraordinarily important to its financial and economic stability. When Monroe remarked in his last address to Congress that the entirety of the United States' public debt could be paid off in a decade,<sup>218</sup> he did so only because of the favorable commerce with Cuba and the resulting government revenue. All Monroe's plans for construction, fortification, and other government endeavors he outlined were also premised on this trade with Cuba. Jefferson and Madison's focus on Cuba makes perfect sense in light of these facts: the growth of the United States was, in large part, entirely dependent on Cuban slavery.

Chambers goes on to connect this illegal slave trade to the Monroe Doctrine itself. He writes that:

The doctrine was crafted to protect the illegal slave trade and was entirely consistent with the existing anti-British pro-slavery foreign policy of the administration. It was, moreover, the next logical step in the incorporation of the apparatus of U.S. foreign policy into the private trade networks of elite Americans invested in Cuba....The ‘No Transfer Principle of 1811’ had now become a hemispheric, ‘status quo,’ non-annexation policy writ large.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>217</sup>Ibid, 21.

<sup>218</sup>James Monroe, 8th Annual Message, 7 December 1824, The American Presidency Project, accessed 26 April 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29466>.

<sup>219</sup>Stephen Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine & the Making of the United States* (London: Verso, 2017), 118.

By warning European powers against playing an active role in the Americas, Monroe was proclaiming Cuba off limits to the ongoing British crusade to end the slave trade.<sup>220</sup> This policy would also protect Brazil's slave trade and help to insulate American slavery from foreign interference. This may be why Monroe refused alliances with Latin American states after his 1823 speech; this refusal was part of a broader refusal to work alongside abolitionist actors. If the Americas were to be separated from Europe, this separation would be maintained by a state with an active stake in the continuation of slavery, the illicit slave trade, and the profits derived from them.

This reasoning is evidenced by other parts of Monroe's 1823 address. In that address he claims that "not one [U.S. ship] so employed [in the slave trade] has been discovered, and there is good reason to believe that our flag is now seldom, if at all, disgraced by that traffic."<sup>221</sup> Monroe's statement only highlights the degree to which his administration and the U.S. government were uninterested in enforcing the ban on the slave trade. As Chambers points out, it was an open secret that Senator James D'Wolff was engaged in the illegal slave trade.<sup>222</sup> If Monroe had been searching for U.S. slave ships, he assuredly could have found them. The fact that he did not highlights Chambers' point about Monroe's protection of the Cuban slave economy, passively, through non-enforcement, and actively, through the Monroe Doctrine.

This protection was also deeply connected to the ongoing project of westward expansion. The government revenue collected from trade with Cuba allowed for, as Monroe himself suggested, "the extinguishment of the Indian title to large tracts of fertile territory" and "the acquisition of

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<sup>220</sup>Chaim Kaufmann and Robert Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-year Campaign Against the Atlantic Slave Trade," *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999): 631-668.

<sup>221</sup>James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message, 2 December 1823, The American Presidency Project, accessed 19 April 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29465>.

<sup>222</sup>Stephen Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine & the Making of the United States* (London: Verso, 2017), 7-8.

Florida.”<sup>223</sup> The money gained from the U.S.-protected Cuban slave economy directly financed government efforts to expand westward. Chambers also supports this connection, writing that “As Americans became intimately involved in every aspect of the Cuban slave regime—including the slave trade—they routed the profits north to back the development of the financial infrastructure of the United States and fund westward expansion.”<sup>224</sup> This was a vicious cycle: U.S. agricultural surplus was shipped south to feed the Cuban slave population who were brought to the island by U.S. slavers, Cuban goods and money were then sent North to the United States where they, and the government revenue they created, helped enable the westward expansion that, in turn, resulted in more farmland and, therefore, more foodstuffs to send to Cuba. Monroe was not ignorant of this fact. Chambers notes that in “September 1816 General Jessup, a high-profile officer hailed for his recent military service, advised soon-to-be president James Monroe that ‘Cuba is, therefore, the key to all Western America, whether we consider it in a military, a commercial, or a political point of view.’”<sup>225</sup> When Monroe created his doctrine, he did so in full knowledge of the importance of Cuba to U.S. westward expansion and of the possibility that British anti-slavery efforts might shut down this economic structure and expansion as a result.

While protecting the Cuban slave-economy was part of how the Monroe Doctrine protected expansion, it also did so in other ways. Monroe’s non-colonization principle is located directly after his reference to a proposal by the Russian government for a negotiation of “the respective rights and interests of the two nations on the North West coast of this continent.”<sup>226</sup> Britain, Monroe notes,

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<sup>223</sup>James Monroe, 8th Annual Message, 7 December 1824, The American Presidency Project, accessed 26 April 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29466>.

<sup>224</sup>Stephen Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine & the Making of the United States* (London: Verso, 2017), 100.

<sup>225</sup>Ibid, 92.

<sup>226</sup>James Monroe, “Seventh Annual Message,” 2 December 1823, The American Presidency Project, accessed 19 April 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29465>.

issued a similar request. This structure indicates that the Monroe Doctrine was meant to deter these governments from further expansion in the North West, thereby leaving more room for the U.S. Indeed, the connection between the Monroe Doctrine and westward expansion is reinforced later on in the speech when Monroe directly followed his doctrine of the two different systems by outlining the “new territory” that had “been acquired of vast extent.”<sup>227</sup> He went on to note that “by enlarging the basis of our system increasing the number of States the system itself has been greatly strengthened in both its branches. Consolidation and disunion have thereby been rendered equally impracticable.”<sup>228</sup> The Monroe Doctrine was not only connected to the project of westward expansion but, through this, to the internal cohesion and stability of the United States.

Stephen Chambers’ analysis is extraordinarily useful, but it misses the depth to which the self-interested nature of the Monroe doctrine is connected to the project of the United States itself. While his portrayal of the “incorporation of the apparatus of U.S. foreign policy into the private trade networks of elite Americans invested in Cuba”<sup>229</sup> is accurate, it fails to grasp the connection between the Monroe Doctrine and the ongoing project of the Virginia plantation class and its governing dynasty: Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe.

Properly understood, the Monroe Doctrine represented a distinct turn away from the ideology of extra-national republican growth. With the post 1815 stability and Canning’s proposal, Monroe saw an opportunity for the U.S. to take proactive and decisive action abroad but rather than leverage this moment to aid in the spread of representative government, he turned the energy the U.S. government previously spent on survival toward the longstanding Jeffersonian project of

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<sup>227</sup>Ibid.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid.

<sup>229</sup>Stephen Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine & the Making of the United States* (London: Verso, 2017), 118.

westward expansion. Jefferson imagined a sprawling agrarian republic and Monroe, having negotiated the Louisiana Purchase and attempted to negotiate the sale of Florida, had been instrumental in enacting that vision even before his presidency. John Murrin writes that Jefferson's project centered around "indefinite continental expansionism...hegemony for the United States at least in North America, and perhaps in the whole western hemisphere, and a determination to accomplish these goals without building a centralized warmaking government."<sup>230</sup> Murrin calls this vision both "Jefferson's *Lebensraum*" and his "Malthusian diplomacy" going on to state that Jefferson "assumed that the new republic's unlimited supply of food would make possible a maximum rate of expansion for the indefinite future and eventually take over Spain's possessions."<sup>231</sup> Murrin then quotes Jefferson: "We should take care not to think it for the interest of that great continent to press too soon on the Spaniards. Those countries cannot be in better hands. My fear is that they are too feeble to hold them till our population can be sufficiently advanced to take it from them peice by peice."<sup>232</sup>

Jefferson's vision for the United States was characterized by constant expansion, even into Latin America. The prospect of Latin American representative government held no sway in his mind because, to him, it simultaneously hindered his expansionist vision and was secondary to it. Indeed, Monroe's statement directly after his doctrine that "Consolidation and disunion have thereby [through the addition of new states] been rendered equally impracticable" fits neatly into Jefferson's expansionist project. Monroe saw the stability of the United States as directly tied to its expansion. This was also Madison's view, whose constitutional design was famously premised on the viability

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<sup>230</sup>John Murrin, "The Jeffersonian Triumph and American Exceptionalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no. 1 (2000): 2.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>232</sup>Ibid, 10.

and advantage of a large republic which, in hindsight, could easily be read as an argument for expansion.

There was an even more insidious side to this project. Writing to Monroe in 1801, Jefferson declared that “it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, & cover the whole northern, if not the southern, continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, & by similar laws; none can we contemplate with satisfaction either blot or mixture on that surface.”<sup>233</sup> The “Empire of Liberty” Jefferson envisioned was not only characterized by constant expansion, but also by complete uniformity, including racial uniformity. Jefferson’s language of dissatisfaction with a “mixture on that surface” subtextually alludes to concepts of racial mixture and “blot” points to a darker spot on an otherwise lighter whole. These cues further highlight why Monroe avoided alliances with Latin American states and why Madison treated Latin American republics so differently from European ones: there was no room for abolitionist and non-white republics on the hemisphere these individuals considered theirs. Murrin notes this when he writes that “The ‘Empire for liberty’ was for whites only. The twin goals of Indian removal and African colonization were essentially components of the project, at least in Jefferson’s imagination.”<sup>234</sup> Indeed, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe all supported African colonization and oversaw the large-scale removal of Native peoples from their land. The expansionist republic of the Virginia Dynasty was meant to be white, English-speaking, and politically uniform.

These three ‘founding fathers’ stood united in their vision of this pure expansionist republic and they had a cumulative twenty four years in the presidency to realize their dream. Jefferson

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<sup>233</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid, 4.

bought the Louisiana Purchase with Monroe's diplomatic assistance and the revolutions in Latin America created an opportunity for United States' commercial and territorial expansion, but the War of 1812 put a halt to such considerations. After the war, the United States gained a stability that neither Jefferson nor, for the most part, Madison had the opportunity to take advantage of. Luckily their fellow Virginian, Monroe, succeeded Madison and was in place to continue to enact their collective vision with the benefit of stability. Monroe was waiting for an opening from which he could accelerate this enactment, in the same way Jefferson had with the Louisiana Purchase, and form his own legacy. So when Canning made his proposal, the opening presented itself. After this sign of British acceptance of the exclusion of European powers from the Americas, Monroe forged his own path and declared the Western Hemisphere off limits to European colonization and interference, thereby protecting the slave-based Cuban economic engine fueling western expansion while simultaneously acting to prevent European expansion from colliding with that of the United States.

The Monroe Doctrine was a leap forward in a project that these individuals, and the Virginia plantation class more broadly, had been advancing since before independence. The Seven Years War began, in large part, because of the westward expansion of Virginia land speculators<sup>235</sup> into Native American territory. The actions of these speculators sparked a world war which, in turn, led Britain to restrict westward expansion with the Proclamation Line of 1763.<sup>236</sup> Thirteen years later due in large part to the restrictions of this line, the colonies revolted, declared their independence, and established the United States whose mythology of freedom and governing framework would be

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<sup>235</sup>These speculators were looking for land to fuel the growth of the Virginia plantation economy, hence their connection with Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe.

<sup>236</sup>Woody Holton, "Land Speculators versus Indians and the Privy Council," in *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999): 3-38.



created, in large part, by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison respectively. After Washington and Adams' presidencies, these individuals finally controlled the government they had built and set about enacting their republican vision. Despite setbacks, in 1823 Monroe put forward his doctrine to make the Virginia Dynasty's vision for eventual hemispheric domination by the 'pure' republican United States a reality. This doctrine would live on throughout the rest of the country's history, enabling the use of republican rhetoric to justify intervention, expansion, and genocide exactly as intended.

While the American Creedal narrative can excuse away certain aspects of the founders as 'imperfections' in an otherwise righteous vision for the expansion of freedom, it cannot hold up to the reality that these 'perfect' political ideals were themselves deeply imperfect. The thoughts of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe on representative government, the heart of the American creed, were profoundly shaped by the self-interest of the United States and the expansionist and genocidal vision they sought to enact. They used the principle of representative government to justify aspects of their project, including the exclusion of European influence in the Monroe Doctrine, but this principle was never the compass for their actions. It was not that their greed, expansionism, and disregard for representative government outside the U.S. were aberrations from an otherwise admirable republican philosophy, but instead these 'aberrations' were integral to their core vision of representative government and its future. Furthermore, whenever they had the possibility to act, these individuals chose to abandon their "sister republics"<sup>237</sup> for this self-interested vision. When Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe looked southward, they saw an opportunity for representative government so long as it was theirs.

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<sup>237</sup>Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016), 248.

### Conclusion-The Presence in the Past

*“A Klee painting named ‘Angelus Novus’ shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.”<sup>238</sup>*

Walter Benjamin writes that to the angel of history, the past is not a chain of events, but rather one single catastrophe. Trouillot’s suggestion, that rather than just new facts we need a new narrative, is a call to open our eyes to this catastrophe. The American creedal narrative is “the storm [that] we call progress.” It says the United States has been on the path of improvement, striving to live up to its ‘founding ideals,’ and pulls us into the future. But the history of the United States is not a chain of events in which the harms of the past are separable from these ideals. Rather, it is a catastrophe that stretches back before independence, the roots of which are integral to republicanism itself.

This integral relationship is core to what the previous chapters have attempted to demonstrate. When historians and political scientists separate the ‘founding’ of the United States from the ensuing history, especially the period during which the founders governed, they limit themselves to a partial view of republicanism. In order to gain a fuller view, the lens of investigation must be widened to encompass the years after the founding in which the meaning of republicanism was extrapolated. The views of Jefferson and Madison on Latin America, and their further incarnation in the Monroe Doctrine, were a part of the continuing codification of founding

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<sup>238</sup>Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257-258.

republicanism. Just as the protection of slavery and expansionism were core to the Monroe Doctrine, so too were they core to the founders' republican vision. When they looked south, they saw a population whose struggle toward republicanism was not worthy of assistance, especially not at the cost of their domestic vision. Given the opportunity to enact the kind of universalist republican change the American creedal narrative would expect, these figures not only abandoned that action but declared their abandonment 'for the sake of Republicanism itself.' By the founders' own admission this was not a divergence from the United States' principles but was in accordance with the real founding principles of the United States which they leave unsaid: expansionism and greed.

This evidence demands a reinterpretation of what 'republicanism' meant for these 'founding fathers' and, through them, what it means as a foundation for the United States. Doctrinal republicanism, the republicanism of the American creedal narrative, is characterized both by universalism, the idea that the U.S. was an example of a republicanism that could spread throughout the world, and by the juxtaposition between the public good and self-interest. This is why Gordon Wood in "Interests and Disinterestedness" notes the volatile nature of being labeled as an 'interested' politician: to be interested was akin to not being a devout republican.<sup>239</sup> The validity of this universalism and this public good/self-interest juxtaposition as central tenets to founding republicanism falls away when the scope of investigation is widened to the early republic and republicanism as a theory and practice of rule is taken seriously. What emerges from this investigation is an image of the United States as less of an exemplar "city on a hill"<sup>240</sup> and more of a

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<sup>239</sup>Gordon Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness," in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward Carter II (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 98.

<sup>240</sup>John Winthrop, "Dreams of a City on a Hill," 1630, The American Yawp Reader, accessed 27 April 2018, <http://www.americanyawp.com/reader/colliding-cultures/john-winthrop-dreams-of-a-city-on-a-hill-1630/>

chosen people in a quasi-theological sense. To the founders, as the ‘first republic’ the interest of the United States maintained hierarchical dominance in their definition of republicanism. Representative government could spread to Latin America, but the principle of republicanism would only apply if this spread was consistent with the perceived interests of the United States which, in most cases, involved slavery and territorial expansion.

We see this pattern not only in their language, but in their actions. As Haiti revolted and became a free republic, this revolution troubled the slave-based interests of United States and so the revolution was condemned and its republican connection was denied.<sup>241,242</sup> However, when Madison was annexing West Florida he not only saw his actions as in accordance with republicanism, but manipulated the situation so that the self-determination based republican justification for U.S. annexation was more prominent.<sup>243</sup>

U.S. republicanism cannot be characterized by the dichotomy between self-interest and the public good. While this dichotomy may have structured domestic U.S. politics as Wood outlines, globally the founders saw the republican public good and the self-interest of the United States as essentially the same. Anything that promoted the expansion and through this the interest of the ‘first republic’ was justified as republican in nature. The U.S. was a “city on a hill” not in the sense that others would eventually ascend to its level, but in the sense that it was ‘a city above all other cities.’ To the founders, the U.S. and the white citizens who inhabited it were a chosen people and this gave them supremacy over other republican populations. It was not that other places could not become

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<sup>241</sup>Indeed, much of the response surrounded the harms the Haitian revolution would bring to the interests of the United States. Jefferson notes his concern that Haitian revolutionary violence would spread into the southern part of the United States.

<sup>242</sup>Donald Hickey, “America’s Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 2, no. 4 (1982): 368.

<sup>243</sup>William Belko, “The Origins of the Monroe Doctrine Revisited: The Madison Administration, the West Florida Revolt, and the No Transfer Policy,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 90, no. 2 (2011): 157-192.

republican, but that they would always be less republican than the U.S., especially if they were not white. Rather than being an independent ideal with its own definition of good, the core idea of founding republicanism was that the U.S. good was equitable to the republican good. The American creedal narrative uses republican ideals to justify U.S. exceptionalism but this is mistaken: the founders' notion of the U.S. as exceptional is exactly what makes it unexceptional.

This self-centered worldview directly contributed to the catastrophe of U.S. history. The Monroe Doctrine was the culmination of the Virginia Dynasty's project, combining 'principled rhetoric' with the expansionist reality of those principles. However, Monroe and the United States were still limited by the realities of their time. While powerful, the United States was still a new country, lacking the capability to fully realize its interventionist and expansionist potential. What is significant about this history is that it set up a culture of expansionism and growth rooted in the belief that because the republican good was defined by U.S. interest, furthering this interest was always principally just. The Virginia Dynasty never travelled West, living on the coast and returning to Europe rather than venturing deeper into the American continent. When Jefferson envisioned the future of the United States, he saw a country of small-scale agrarianism rather than rampaging finance, burgeoning capitalism, and the Cotton Kingdom. He and his compatriots might not have foreseen this world, but we should not mistake their hand in creating it.

Given this creation, at the level of ideas the divide between the 'founding fathers' and the post-Jacksonian U.S. is probably smaller than most historians believe. Jackson and the presidents that followed were more strongly oriented Westward, but their vision was not restricted to small scale agrarianism and so Manifest Destiny became the United States' governing dynamic. When Polk re-articulated the Monroe Doctrine and called for further expansion culminating in the Mexican

American war and the annexation of the North-American West,<sup>244</sup> he did so using the tools the founders had left for him. At this point historians acknowledge that the Monroe Doctrine was one of these tools, created with expansionist openings and ambitions, but republicanism was another. It defined the principled lens which the U.S. government would use to justify its power and through which the U.S. populace would come see themselves. These trends were made viable in part by the centrality of expansionism and racial prejudice to the republican philosophy. Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe may not have had the opportunity to annex the far-west, intervene in Cuba, nor dictate politics in central-America, but the republican ideology they created was there for the leaders with those opportunities.

Seen from this perspective, the foundations that guide U.S. hegemonic power extend farther back than many presume. The pre-independence Virginian project of westward expansion guided the republican principles that would be harnessed by the Monroe Doctrine and future U.S. leaders. U.S. hegemony was not a diversion from the founding ideals, but was completely in line with these ideals as they were further defined by the founders during their years in office and subsequent correspondence. The legacy of this dynamic is visible even in this century, especially with President Bush's democratic justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. With the end of the frontier, these principled tools now justify U.S. action on a global scale.<sup>245</sup> The exact course of history might differ from the vision of the founders, but it was a history built using their principled mechanisms.

This is no chain of events, it is a single catastrophe. With republicanism at its beck and call, the expansionist engine fueled the radical growth of Cotton Kingdom slavery in the south and the genocide of Native peoples to the west, the legacies of which still haunt the present. Next, the

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<sup>244</sup>James Polk, First Annual Address, 2 December 1845, The American Presidency Project, accessed 22 April 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29486>.

<sup>245</sup>Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America 1877-1920* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009).

United States engaged in near constant intervention in Latin America, eventually intervening in other hemispheres, but always drawing on the same republican ideology. These were not diversions from the creedal path of progress, they were actions built upon the legacy of the founding, a legacy constructed to enable this type of action. Benjamin writes that “there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another.”<sup>246</sup> The creedal narrative sees only the barbarism of transmission, remaining blind to the barbarism of the document. In fact they are one and the same.

This is only one new story, meant to challenge the creedal narrative that has become a kind of U.S. mythology. I am open to the possibility that this narrative might be wrong, though its core elements feel well founded. I am certain that the complexities of its full articulation have been missed in this project and the work of others will and already has begun filling in the gaps of this new story. Even as this vital work goes on, the American creedal narrative remains a key element in United States history, both in education and scholarship. In this position, the creedal narrative reinforces silences. It is imperative that we look through these silences, not only to deconstruct them as Trouillot does, but to weave a new history.

There are many obstacles to this task, the first of which pertains to the archive itself. Trouillot’s analysis about the bias of the archive is well taken, but there are also basic problems with accessibility. Jefferson and Madison’s collected writings have been sorted by the Library of Congress, but no such work has been done for Monroe despite his importance. The more accessible these archives become, the less historians will be forced to content ourselves with the ‘famous’ letters

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<sup>246</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 256.

and addresses. This will allow other writings to be investigated and leveraged against those more accessible sources the creedal narrative has deemed important. If it structures the archive, as I am sure it does, the archive must be broadened not only to bring in a greater diversity of historical voices, but to challenge the creedal narrative itself. Finding additional, and more critical, analytical angles on powerful historical figures is one way to do this.

Furthermore, the investigative lens has to shift to better encompass private correspondence. Today we are increasingly aware of the informal mechanisms through which power, and the elite that wield it, operate. Jefferson's retirement letters to Monroe do not seem core to the republican ideology, but that is only because the creedal narrative says they are not. Jefferson's words echoed even then with the authority of his position in history. Given that Jefferson helped found the United States with certain words, all his other words must be taken seriously as shedding light on the meaning of this founding. This project has shown the kind of perspective this light can reveal.

At a deeper level, however, this historiographic silencing may be attributed to the artificial distinction between thought and action. Not only does the creedal narrative separate the founding from what came after it, but in doing so it draws this thought/action distinction. The thought-foundation of the U.S. remains moral despite the immoral actions of its thinkers. This is a distinction created by the creedal narrative for its own benefit. Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe presided over a republic they helped found; we should, therefore, take the periods of their governance as extended evidence of their founding vision. For example, Madison's writing about the viability and advantage of large republics has become important to the literature on the founding and the U.S. political system. What this project reveals is that during and after his time in office, Madison concentrated on the expansion of the United States, making an already large republic even



larger. Perhaps, rather than a case for a large republic, Madison's original argument was already looking forward to the expansion he and his Virginian companions would enable. Beginning to take the later thoughts and actions of the founders seriously, scholars can gain a new perspective on the original conception of the United States. Founding a country is not simply about establishing mechanisms of government, but is largely about creating a justification for the founding itself. The mythological history emerging from this justificatory moment must be juxtaposed and synthesized with what came afterwards.

However, after these texts are uncovered and analyzed they cannot be pushed aside as an imperfection in an otherwise pure vision. To challenge the creedal narrative, the immoral aspects of history must be connected into a coherent whole. The racial vision of the Virginia dynasty was not separate from their expansionist aims nor their self-righteous perspectives; these all wound together in a twenty four year period during which time they influenced policy and cemented what U.S. governing norms would be. The creedal narrative succeeds by connecting certain dots while denying the connections of others. Better efforts must be made to fold morally questionable and uncomfortable elements of history back into the general narrative because it was through these immoral means that this general narrative was created.

Additionally, silences must be sought out. The tricky thing about silences is that they go unnoticed if not searched for. Indeed, I only arrived at this project's analysis of slavery after my advisor told me to look into the silences, to look into what Jefferson was not saying. One silence led me to another, and another. We have a duty to actively search for silences: to not let the archive restrict our thoughts, to keep in mind actions not taken in addition to those that were, and to always interrogate power where we find it.

To interrogate this power, we must not be afraid to judge those who wielded it. Walter Benjamin's concept of "awakening the dead" is important, but in order for these awakened figures to hold their proper weight in history we must not only highlight the wrongs of the powerful, but also judge these wrongs and their enactors. Only when Thomas Jefferson is a greedy bastard can we fully reveal the self-interested nature of his republicanism and deconstruct its role in structuring our present society. The historian's reticence surrounding judgement is understandable because for years their judgements worked to the benefit of power, oftentimes they still do. The problem with this reticence is that today it leaves the old constructed biases intact by toning down the histories that challenge these biases and the power they were built upon. As a discipline we should always be wary of how our judgements may play into biases and power structures, but our fear of this should not cripple us from making right the harms of the past, as historians and as citizens.

Indeed, this work is more urgent than ever before. Trouillot writes that "we move closer to the era when professional historians will have to position themselves more clearly within the present, lest politicians, magnates, or ethic leaders alone write history for them."<sup>247</sup> This sentiment echoes Benjamin, who wrote that "For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."<sup>248</sup> The mythology of the credal narrative continues to apologize for the catastrophe of U.S. history, with all its inequalities and oppressions. In this moment, an image of the past shows itself as a concern of the present, the silences become ever so slightly audible, and it is our duty to form this history lest, once again, it disappears. Arendt writes that "no moral, individual and personal, standards of conduct will ever be able to excuse us from collective responsibility. This vicarious responsibility for things we have not done, this taking

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<sup>247</sup>Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 152.

<sup>248</sup>Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 255.

upon ourselves the consequences for things we are entirely innocent of, is the price we pay for the fact that we live our lives not by ourselves but among our fellowmen.”<sup>249</sup> To ignore this history, to continue to write about the ‘founding ideals’ is not only to deny history, it is to deny our responsibility for that history. We might not have penned the words that justified genocide and expansionism, but we live in the world those words created and we have a responsibility to remedy the crimes of their past authors and present adherents. To enact this remedy, we must first acknowledge these crimes and their centrality to our political community. The American creedal narrative does more than silence, it excuses: asking ‘Why should we be responsible for the failure of our ancestors to live up to the ideals that we uphold?’ and declaring that ‘the core vision for our country has always been one of admirable principles.’ With these excuses the storm blows down from paradise and progress, the notion that U.S. history is one of slow but inevitable improvement, blinds us to the catastrophe of our history. This storm can make us feel comfortable, its illusion guarding us from the uncomfortable truth that we hold a collective responsibility for this catastrophe, but this illusion does nothing for all those who suffer because of our history nor does it remove from us our responsibility to these persons. Each day we live under this illusion we condemn its victims to further suffering and condemn ourselves as members of the community it founded.

This responsibility is core to our duty to always remember the *presence in the past*. I say presence because we need to remember both that the present holds its roots in the past and that the past has a presence today. In essence, we need to remember, as Benjamin claimed, that linear time is itself silencing because time flows both ways, weaving together the past and the present. Part of

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<sup>249</sup>Hannah Arendt, “Collective Responsibility,” in *Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt*, ed. James Bernauer, (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 50.

acknowledging this means challenging the historically based myths and illusions that reside in this confluence of past and present. To do so is not to engage in Ranke's project to show the past "as it essentially was,"<sup>250</sup> because a historian's duty exists not to the past as a "separate world,"<sup>251</sup> but to the presence in the past. This demands not simply a search for the truth, but a search for *a* truth that can serve the present by combatting silences, awakening the dead, and reevaluating the history of the powerful. Historians must take a greater stand on what their histories mean in order to challenge our readers to rethink the present in addition to the past. We are, and will forever remain, political actors. A lack of judgement or moral condemnation and an ignorance of this confluence of time are acts as political as their opposites. Whether we recognize it or not, the presence in the past will always be with us. We have a responsibility to make it just.

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<sup>250</sup>Leopold Von Ranke, quoted in Michael Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 28.

<sup>251</sup>Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 152.



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