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Monroe Doctrine

A DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, THE WAR OF 1812, AND THE ORIGINS OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE

Un linguaggio diplomatico. John Quincy Adams, la guerra del 1812 e le origini della Dottrina Monroe

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Abstract

[Eng.] The document of the Monroe Doctrine, written by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, was marked by a diplomatic language. Its essence is expressed in three key passages: separate spheres of influence for the Americas and Europe, non-colonization, and non-intervention. Originally George Canning, British Foreign Secretary, had the idea to issue a joint declaration forbidding future colonization in the Americas, but John Quincy Adams was strongly against it, remembering the war of 1812, and fearing that a bilateral declaration would limit the American western expansion. President Monroe agreed with Adams and issued a unilateral declaration. Behind this choice was not only the fear of the British, but also the rivalry with Spain and Russia for the northwestern territories, and the navigation in the Pacif Ocean to connect US commerce with China.

Keywords: Monroe, James, 1817-1825 – Adams, John Quincy, 1767-1848 – Monroe Doctrine – United States – Western Worlds.

[It.] Il documento noto come Dottrina Monroe, scritto dal Segretario di Stato John Quincy Adams, è caratterizzato da un linguaggio diplomatico. La sua essenza è riassumibile in tre passaggi chiave: le sfere di interesse separate tra le Americhe e l'Europa, la non colonizzazione e il non intervento. Originalmente il Ministro degli Esteri britannico George Canning aveva in mente di emettere una dichiarazione congiunta per impedire la futura colonizzazione nelle Americhe ma John Quincy Adams era contrario, ricordando la guerra del 1812 e temendo che questo avrebbe limitato l'espansione americano nell'Ovest. Il presidente Monroe, d'accordo con Adams, emise una dichiarazione unilaterale. Dietro questa scelta non c'era solo la paura dei britannici, ma anche la rivalità con la Spagna e la Russia per i territori del Nordovest, e la navigazione dell'oceano Pacifico per favorire il commercio statunitense alla Cina.

Parole chiave: Monroe, James, 1817-1825 – Adams, John Quincy, 1767-1848 – Dottrina Monroe – Stati Uniti – Mondi Occidentali

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Contents: 1. Introduction. 2. The War of 1812. 3. James Monroe's Presidency. 4. Spanish Florida. 5. The Monroe Doctrine.

1. INTRODUCTION

Even if James Monroe had a great experience in diplomacy, as Minister to Revolutionary France from 1795 to 1796 than to Napoleon for the negotiation of the Louisiana Purchase, again as Minister to Great Britain from 1803 to 1807, with a brief time as special envoy to Spain in 1805 during the Barbary Wars, and finally as Secretary of State of President James Madison, he certainly was not able to write a so complex message to Congress like the Monroe Doctrine. Reading his papers we can note that his poor style of writing results in words and sometimes entire paragraphs almost illegible. Plus, as stated by the curator of his autobiography, Monroe's habit of spelling words phonetically made almost impossible for him to write a so complex message. In brief, as happened for George Washington with Alexander Hamilton, he did not know the correct spelling of words and had to refer to somebody else, in this case John Quincy Adams[1].

By the way, writing correctly was not necessary for a man who chose politics as his career. Monroe's vocational objective over forty years was to hold with great responsibility public offices, and most of the people and the historians agreed that no American succeeded better. Before the Revolution he had been elected to the Virginia Assembly than he became a military hero of the Revolution and served in the Congress of the Confederation, he run the Virginia Convention for ratifying the Constitution, and he was in the Senate in the First Congress. In this period, he showed serious and intelligent attachment to politics collaborating as junior partner with Thomas Jefferson to define the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 that forbade slavery in the new lands. In general, he shared with Jefferson the democratic and agrarian principles identifying himself as a spokesman for the common man.

At this point of his life, Monroe started an important role time in diplomacy as we said in France, Spain and Great Britain during the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson, entering in the so called Democratic-Republican Party in opposition to the Federalists. He was described by Albert Gallatin, Secretary of Treasury, as a man of great integrity and with a great sense of duty. When Monroe came back to the United States in December 1807, Gallatin organized a «splendid dinner» at Oeller's hotel in Washington, «in order to testify our approbation of his conduct and our opinion of his integrity» in Europe. Jefferson and fifty members of the Congress joined the dinner[2]. The Democratic-Republican Party, as a national organization, had its origins in dinners such as this, defining clearly their principles: «low taxes, small armed force, little governmental guidance of the nation's life, and quick retirement of the public debt»[3]. Monroe was deeply involved in both the national Party and the Virginia branch. Generally, he

1 S.G. Brown (Ed.), *The Autobiography of James Monroe* (1959), Syracuse University Press, 2017, vi.
2 H. Adams, *The Life of Albert Gallatin*, Peter Smith, 1943, 187.
3 L. Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology*, Cornell University Press, 292.

Nuovi Autoritarismi e Democrazie: Diritto, Istituzioni e Società
ISSN 2612-6672 – n. 1/2025

spoke with plain words in defense of the farmers of the West, and against the interest of the rich merchants of the eastern seaboard. Acting like this he became the symbol of revolutionary unity, defending the idea of the republic of farmers in contrast with monarchy and privilege of old Europe.

But Jefferson was really disappointed about what happened on June 22, 1807, when the American frigate *Chesapeake*, sailing from Norfolk to the Mediterranean for a new confrontation with the Barbary Pirates, was stopped not far from Chesapeake Bay by the bigger English frigate *Leopard* in search of deserters. When the American ship refused to stop, the British ship fired killing three American seamen, and wounding eighteen others. «This country – Jefferson wrote to Madison on August 26, 1807 – has never been in such a state of excitement since the battle of Lexington»[4].

Remembering the first shots of the minutemen that started the Revolutionary War with Great Britain, he expressed the sentiment of many American citizens outraged by this attack. Jefferson's policy toward the English culminated with an embargo on all maritime commerce between the two nations and made same preparation for an eventually war, just in case: he ordered to fortify the country's harbor defenses, recommended to build more gunboats, and secretly made plans for the invasion of Canada. In his Seventh Annual Message to the Congress on October 27, he declared: «I immediately, by proclamation, interdicted our harbors and waters to all British armed vessels, forbade intercourse with them, and uncertain how far hostilities were intended and the town of Norfolk, indeed being threatened with immediate attack, a sufficient force was ordered for the protection of that place»[5].

As a consequence, Jefferson declined to submit the treaty with England negotiated by Monroe, and refused to send it to Senate for approval. Things now were changed and the lost friendship with England damaged the figure of Monroe both in Jefferson and Secretary of State James Madison, who was being widely talked of Jefferson's successor[6]. If in Virginia Monroe had the support of Congressman John Randolph, once a strong ally of Jefferson but contrary to Madison. Wisely Monroe did not connect himself with Randolph and did not join in his assault on the current administration. With the risk of a split of the Democratic-Republican Party, Jefferson allowed the nomination of both expressing his neutrality, but he clearly chose Madison as his successor[7].

The political restoration of Monroe inside the administration began with his election to the Virginia assembly in 1810. With this election Madison was able to rebuild harmony in the Party in his home State. More he was determined to replace his first Secretary of state, Robert Smith, former Secretary of the navy during Jefferson administration but a disaster in his new role. No other Democratic-Republican could bring so much experience in diplomacy and in March 1811 President Madison asked Monroe to be Secretary of state. In an exchange of letters the two men showed the possibility to overcome past differences and work together, so Monroe accepted the offer. Monroe was now in the position to follow Madison in the presidency[8]. But the times were perilous especially when James Madison asked to the Congress a declaration of war against England on June 1, 1812. By June 17, the Declaration of War

[4] Quoted in N.E. Cunningham, *In Pursuit of Reason: The Life of Thomas Jefferson*, Louisiana State University Press, 1987, 210. See also Id., *The Jeffersonian Republicans in Power: Party Operations, 1801-1809*, Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

[5] Thomas Jefferson to United States Congress, 27 October 1807, in *The Founders on Line*, at https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/99-01-02-6665.

[6] B. Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States, 1805-1812*, University California Press, 1968, 114-137.

[7] N.E. Cunningham, *The Presidency of James Monroe*, University Press of Kansas, 1996, 10.

[8] *Idem*, 11.

passed both houses, and was printed in the newspaper with the seal of the American eagle surmounted by a banner remembering two great battles in the history of the United States: "Bunker Hill" on one side and "Tripoli" on the other[9].

2. THE WAR OF 1812

Monroe asked Madison to become active part of the war, but the President preferred the nomination as Secretary of War of William Eustis, a physician from Massachusetts, who served as a military surgeon during the American Revolutionary War, in particular at the battle of Bunker Hill, so it was much more clear the connection with the banner published with the Declaration of War. Federalists and Democratic-Republican were together asking not only the preparation for the war, but also the annexation of Canada and the expansion in the South. For historian Alan Taylor: «They anticipated the rhetoric of manifest destiny»[10]. As physician Eustis was not able to organize the «war fever» which pervaded the American citizens. «We want the British expelled from every inch of the North American Continent» wrote a Massachusetts Republican in an article in the *New Bedford Gazette* on May 8, 1812[11].

If the conquest of Canada was imagined by Jefferson as a simple march of the Army toward the North, reality proved the issue much more perilous. William Hull, the General chose by Eustis to lead the army in Canada, issued a proclamation for the emancipation from tyranny of the Canadians but the American soldiers and militia found a fierce opposition and the invasion ended as a disastrous failure. Hull surrendered Fort Detroit to the British on August 16, 1812. After the battle, he was court-martialed, convicted, and sentenced to death but he received a pardon from President. For the American people he was «a coward and a liar»[12].

On January 1813 Madison changed the unpopular William Eustis with John Armstrong as Secretary of War. He made a number of valuable actions but, as Henry Adams wrote in his history of the United States: «he was fifty-four years old, which was also the age of Monroe; but he suffered from the reputation of indolence and intrigue». One of these actions brought to the death of General Zebulon Pike, the gallant explorer of New Mexico, killed in action on the battle of York in April. Troops in the North lacked not only arms and ammunition but also clothes and shoes, and they are poorly fed. One of the contractors was Samuel Wilson, a meat-packer in Troy, New York, who supplies rations of beef. The soldiers started to refer to him as Uncle Sam. One newspaper wrote on March 4, 1814, about complaints against «Uncle Sam's hard bargain» which brought the soldier «Weak … and sick»[13]. One year and half the beginning of the conflict, the War fever decreased leaving both the side of the Niagara River abandoned. American soldiers terrorized Canadian farmers, transforming potential friends into bitter enemies.

Secretary of War, John Armstrong, was so convinced that the British would not attack Washington D.C. that he did nothing to defend the city even when it became clear it was the objective of the invasion force. The British, using the same generals and troops left free with the collapse of Napoleon in Europe,

[9] See for example *City Gazette and Daily Advertise*, Charleston, South Carolina, June 27, 1812.
[10] A. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies*, Knopf, 2011, 137.
[11] M. Sioli, *War Fever: The American Press and the War of 1812*, in J.M. Serme, *1812 in the Americas*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.
[12] *Idem*, 114
[13] *Idem*, 120.

Nuovi Autoritarismi e Democrazie: Diritto, Istituzioni e Società
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invaded the United States in multiple directions: South in New Orleans and on the Chesapeake shores. After the American defeat at the Battle of Bladensburg and the surrender of Alexandria in August, and the subsequent burning of Washington, Madison forced Armstrong to resign in September 1814. Monroe, who was the last member of the American government to leave Washington, returned to the burned city when the British withdrew, and Madison asked him to keep both the appointment of Secretary of State and Secretary of War[14]. Monroe suddenly gave the command of the troops to General Andrew Jackson: a good choice. Jackson obtained a «splendid and decisive victory» in New Orleans on January 8, helped also by several Bonapartist soldiers who, refusing allegiance to the hated Bourbons, came to America[15]. Two weeks before American peace commissioners – Albert Gallatin, Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams – signed a treaty in Ghent that simply ended the war, and restored the previous boundaries. John Quincy Adams penned in a letter to his wife: «I had my share in restoring the peace of the world»[16]. The famous German naturalist, Alexander von Humboldt, wrote to Albert Gallatin that «the fine and courageous defense of New Orleans will gain respect for the armies of liberty … My eyes gaze on the countries so soon to be the center of civilization of the world»[17].

3. JAMES MONROE'S PRESIDENCY

The war ended and Monroe left his post at the War Department, resuming his duties as a Secretary of State in March 1815. With the war over and discredited Madison in his final two years, Monroe faced the presidential election of 1816 with successful political service at home and diplomatic experience abroad. But the competition was fierce, as always. All the candidates were Democratic-Republicans because after the War of 1812 and the Convention in Harford asking the secession of New England, the Federalist Party was in a great crisis and close to the disappearance: «My impression – wrote Monroe to Andrew Jackson – is that the Administration should rest strongly on the Republican Party»[18]. Republicanism was not only a question of parties but a political philosophy for the future. When the results came out in December 1816, Monroe received the same electoral votes as Daniel Tompkins of New York. Last was Rufus King who obtained only the votes of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Delaware. When the Senate met in February 1817, Monroe was elected president and Tompkins vice-president[19].

As his Secretary of State, Monroe chose John Quincy Adams: «Who by his age, long experience in our foreign affairs and adoption into the Republican Party, seems to have superior pretensions to any there» he wrote to Jefferson on February 23, 1817[20]. During Madison's presidency Adams served as minister to Russia from 1809 to 1814, and chaired the peace commission in Ghent to end the war of 1812. He was in London when he received his new appointment and did not arrive in the United States until the summer of 1817. He landed with the wife and children on the wharf of New York on August 6

[14] N.E. Cunningham, *The Presidency of James Monroe*, cit., 13.
[15] S. de La Souchère Deléry, *Napoleon's Soldiers in America*, Pelican Publishing, 1999, 174-191.
[16] Quoted in J. Traub, *John Quincy Adams: Militant Spirit*, Basic Book, 2016, 194.
[17] Alexander von Humboldt to Albert Gallatin, January 1815, in *The Diary of James Gallatin, Secretary to Albert Gallatin, A Great Peace Maker (1813-1827)*, Scribner's Sons, 1930, 45.
[18] Monroe to Jackson, December 14, 1816, in *The Writings of James Monroe*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2003, Vol. 5, 344-5.
[19] *Idem*, 19.
[20] James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, 23 February 1817, in *The Founders on Line*, at https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-11-02-0099

«after an absence of eight full and eventful years», as he wrote in his diary[21]. They travelled north stopping first at the family house in Quincy, finding «venerable father and mother in perfect health»[22]. The city of Boston organized a great event on August 26 at the Exchange Coffee House «where the Public Dinner was provided» and attended by about two hundred persons[23]. On September 9, he left for the Capital with his wife, while the boys remained in Quincy[24]. Travelling in the East Coast was much easier than the time he left, especially for the fast steamship invented by Robert Fulton: «Travel has surpassed my highest expectation» penned in his diaries on September 19[25].

At the beginning of Monroe's presidency, the nation had much to feel good about. Its economy was booming, allowing the administration to turn its attention toward domestic issues. The organized opposition, in the form of the Federalists, had faded largely from sight, although the government had adopted many Federalist programs, including protective tariffs and a national bank. The President, moreover, was personable, extremely popular, and interested in reaching out to all the regions of the country.

Monroe faced his first crisis as President with the Panic of 1819, a global crisis in the Americas of merchants linked to the former Spanish territories which in the United States resulted in high unemployment as well as increased bankruptcies[26]. Although he believed that such troubles were natural for a maturing economy and that the situation would soon turn around, he could do little to alleviate their immediate effects. Monroe's second crisis came the same year, when Missouri asked to enter in the Union as a slave state, threatened to disrupt the balance between North and South. Congress preserved the Union thanks to the ability of the speaker of the House, Henry Clay, with a compromise in which Massachusetts allowed the new free state of Maine from its northern lands. The Missouri Compromise also called for the prohibition of slavery in the western territories the 36 north latitude line. Monroe worked in support of the compromise and, after ascertaining that the provisions were constitutional, signed the bill. In trying to sustain the "Era of Good Feelings", Monroe had hoped to preside over the decline of political parties.

4. SPANISH FLORIDA

For years, southern plantation owners and white farmers in Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina had lost runaway slaves to the Florida swamps. Seminole and Creek Indians offered refuge to these slaves and led raids against white settlers in the border regions. The US government could do little about the problem because the swamps lay deep within Spanish Florida. If the United States moved decisively against the Seminoles, it would risk war with Spain. Although they had tried to convince Spain to cede the territory on various occasions, including during Monroe's action as special envoy to Spain in 1805, its efforts had failed.

In 1818, Monroe chose to act sending General Andrew Jackson to Spanish Florida to subdue the Seminole Indians, who were raiding American settlements. Liberally interpreting his vague instructions,

[21] J.Q. Adams, *Diaries, 1779-1821,* D. Waldstreicher (Ed.), The Library of America, 2017, Vol. 1, 420.
[22] *Idem*, 421.
[23] August 26, 1817, Vol. 30, 237. *John Quincy Adams Digital Diary* at https://www.masshist.org/publications/jqadiaries/index.php/document/jqadiaries
[24] September 9, 1817, vol. 30, 252. *John Quincy Adams Digital Diary*, cit.
[25] September 19, 1817, Vol. 30, 256. *John Quincy Adams Digital Diary*, cit.
[26] M.N. Rothbard, *The Panic of 1819: Reactions and Policies*, Mises Institute, 1968. For the global causes of the crisis in the Americas see D. Besseghini, *The Anglo-American Conflict in the Far Side of the World: A Struggle for Influence over Revolutionary South America (1812-1814)*, in *Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi*, No. 1, 2020, 35-56.

Jackson led his troops deep into areas of Florida under the control of Spain and captured two Spanish forts: San Marcos de Apalachee and Pensacola. Jackson accused Spain to harbor the Indians after the raids, but occupying these lands he exceeded his instructions. Instead of apologizing for the violation of Spanish sovereignty, Monroe's Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, blamed Spain for not keeping order in the Floridas. Adams also sensed that Jackson's Seminole campaign was popular with Americans and it strengthened his diplomatic hand with Spain. The «Napoleon of the Woods», as Jackson was called among the diplomats, ran his raids with his soldiers and returned back to his plantation in Tennessee[27].

In addition to secure greater protection for American settlements, Jackson's successful mission – even if he had exceeded his instructions concerning Spain asking him a «circumspect and cautious policy» to avoid «the most serious and unfavorable consequences» – pointed out the vulnerability of Spanish government in Florida[28]. James Monroe and John Quincy Adams used that vulnerability to pressure Spain to sell this land. Luis de Onís, Spanish minister to the United States, understand that the pressure on the territory of General Jackson's troops was high and sent a message to Spain seeking instruction. But the intention of John Quincy Adams moved far beyond East Florida and concerned the territories north of the Missouri and then to the Pacific Ocean, imagining a Transcontinental Treaty with Spain to include these lands[29].

It was the first time that an American diplomat proposed to extend American sovereignty from the expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark organized by Thomas Jefferson. As a result of the War of 1812 the US troops lost the trading post along the Columbia River and Fort Clatsop built by the Corps of Discovery in 1805, but Adams and Monroe were determined to reassert American sovereignty on the Pacific Coast and the Oregon Territory that remained an «unclaimed space over the course of a decade»[30].

During the fall of 1818 Spain government accepted the reality of the situation and asked Onís to keep Texas and the Southwest. In consequence, Louis de Onís agree with the final offer of the US Secretary of State to trace a line on the forty-first parallel up to the Pacific Ocean in the territory of Oregon. If this line seemed not worthy for the question of Texas, Adams was able to add Florida to the United States without a war, and to avoid the trouble to have a great territory like Texas in the South that for the Missouri compromise would remain in the future a slave state. Slavery was an important point to consider in this context, because it divided members of the Congress as well as the development of the party system in American politics[31].

On February 22, 1819, Adams signed the copy of the Transcontinental Treaty both in Spanish and English, assuming also the responsibility for $5 million that the Spanish government owed from the American citizens. When he came home late from a dinner wrote in his diary something about what he described as «the most important day of my life». Adams continued: «The acquisition of the Florida's has long been an object of earnest desire in this Country». But, also, that the Spanish acknowledgement of a line of border to the Pacific «forms a great epoch in our history»[32].

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27 P.C. Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands: The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819*, Octagon Books, 1970, 142.

28 See the letter of instruction from James Monroe to Andrew Jackson on July 19, 1818, online at https://www.loc.gov/resource/maj.01049_0271_0274/?st=text

29 D.J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontiers in North America*, Yale University Press, 1992, 299.

30 J. Traub, *John Quincy Adams*, cit., 297. For the expedition of Lewis and Clark see T.P. Slaughter, *Exploring Lewis and Clark: Reflection on Men and Wilderness*, Knopf, 2003.

31 *Idem,* 248.

32 February 22, 1819, Vol. 31, 45. *John Quincy Adams Digital Diary,* cit.

The US Senate ratified the treaty two days after, on February 24, but Spain delayed the ratification. This delay infuriated the American government and public. The War Hawks asked to take Florida by force as the Seminole War of 1818 showed Spain's great weakness in defending its borders and territories. The Senate approved the treaty a second time, and President Monroe ratified and exchanged it with Spanish authorities in February 1821. Finally, Spain ratified the treaty, and on July 10, Spanish governor of Florida, José Coppinger ordered their flag lowered from Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine, and the same day troops, officials and their families, boarded vessels for Cuba. The same happened a week later, on July 17, when Spanish officers left Pensacola. But many civilian residents both from Pensacola and St. Augustine remained in their houses[33].

5. THE MONROE DOCTRINE

As Spain's dominion in the America's continued to disintegrate, revolutions throughout its colonies brought independence to Argentina, Peru, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. In March 1822 Monroe sent a message to Congress recognizing these provinces and asking to appoint ministers. Adams wrote instructions to them in a political manner opening the letters with a passionate denunciation of Spanish colonial practices. But he feared the capacity of these provinces to govern them democratically. As one of his biographers wrote, he was a «realist» long before the term gain currency[34].

The year before in his July 4 oration to the Congress he affirmed: «America, with the same voice which spoke to her into existence as a nation, proclaimed to mankind the inextinguishable rights of human nature, and the only lawful foundations of government». The United States of America, in the assembly of nations, since her admission among them, «has invariably, though often fruitlessly, held forth to them the hand of honest friendship, of equal freedom, of generous reciprocity. She has uniformly spoken among them, though often to heedless and often to disdainful ears, the language of equal liberty, of equal justice, and of equal rights. But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy […] America's glory is not dominion, but liberty. Her march is the march of the mind. She has a spear and a shield: but the motto upon her shield is *Freedom, Independence, Peace*. This has been her Declaration»[35].

When European powers threatened to form an alliance to help Spain regain its lost domains, he reacted following these principles declaring that America would resist European intervention in the Western Hemisphere. Announced in the President's message to Congress on December 2, 1823, it became the Monroe Doctrine, a cornerstone of American foreign policy. But the full document was written by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. He wrote in his diary commenting his writing on November 30, 1823: «The first paragraph of my paper stated the fact that the Government of the United States was Republican. The second; what the fundamental principles of this Government were Liberty – Independence – Peace. These were the principles, from which all the remainder of the paper were drawn»[36].

Originally George Canning, British Foreign Minister, had the idea to issue a declaration forbidding future colonization in the Americas. Great Britain, with its powerful navy, also opposed the re-conquest

[33] D.J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontiers in North America*, cit., 300.
[34] J. Traub, *John Quincy Adams*, cit., 260.
[35] J.Q. Adams, Speech to the U.S. House of Representatives on Foreign Policy, July 4, 1821, at https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1821secofstateJQAdmas.pdf. Italics are mine.
[36] J.Q. Adams, *Diaries, Vol. 2, 1821-1848*, cit., 53.

Nuovi Autoritarismi e Democrazie: Diritto, Istituzioni e Società
ISSN 2612-6672 – n. 1/2025

of Latin America by Spain helped by more conservative governments in Europe, and suggested that the United States join in proclaiming «hands off». President James Monroe, former presidents James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson were receptive to the idea, but Secretary of State John Quincy Adams was strongly against it, fearing that a bilateral declaration would limit the American western expansion. Adams advised: «It would be more candid … to avow our principles explicitly to Russia and France»[37].

President Monroe agreed with Adams and issued a unilateral declaration. From my point of view, the experience of the war of 1812, as well as the not recognition of an American sovereignty in the Oregon territory brought to this determination. In fact, the Rush-Bagot Treaty of 1817, named after acting Secretary of State Richard Rush and Charles Bagot, the British Ambassador in the United States, demilitarized the Great Lakes and fixed the US-Canadian border from Minnesota to the Rocky Mountains at the 49th parallel, establishing a joint occupation of Oregon for the next ten years. But Western Canada was also contended with Russia.

Monroe accepted Adams's advice because of that. The fear of Russian expansion referred not only to the control of Alaska and the Bering Strait, but also to the global commerce of sea otter peltries with China. Russians could exchange goods with and demand pelts from Native Americans using the Russian American Company, in charge of establishing colonies in North America from 1799. The same commerce was run by US ships sailed from Boston to exchange tools with sea otter peltries with Native Americans, and finally brought them to Canton obtaining tea, porcelain, silk and spices[38]. It was clear that Monroe not only feared the British who control Canada, but he asked to protect the Pacific coast from the expansion toward south by the Russians. «The American continents – he stated – 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 Power»[39]. This message by the President to the Congress became known as the Monroe Doctrine, even if it was written by John Quincy Adams.

To conclude, the Monroe Doctrine, or better the John Quincy Adams Doctrine, is not a myth, or an invented tradition in nationalist symbols, but the outcome of US expansion in the North America continent as clearly pointed out in Nicholas Guyatt's article for *Diplomatic History* "Forum: The Monroe Doctrine at 200". Certainly, Adams was not the first American to imagine that «the United States might eventually encompass the entire North American continent»[40]. Everything started with Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase from Napoleon in 1803, and the expeditions he organized to reach the Pacific Ocean by Meriweather Lewis and William Clark and to Santa Fe by Zebulon Pike[41]. However, John Quincy Adams was a distinctive and passionate advocate for that outcome. More, in this occasion the role of the Department of State became pivotal in the future of US foreign relations as he wrote to his wife in October 1822, «all that will be worth telling to posterity has been transacted through the Department of State»[42].

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[37] *Idem*, 48.

[38] M. Sioli, *Opening American Commerce with Canton: From the* Empress of China *to the* Columbia Rediviva *(1784-1793)*, in *XVII-XVIII* online at https://journals.openedition.org/1718/5747.

[39] J. Monroe, The Monroe Doctrine from the President's Annual Message to Congress, *Washington Republicans Extra*, December 2, 1823.

[40] N. Guyatt, *The Adams Doctrine and an Empire of States*, in *Diplomatic History*, 47 (2023), 826, online at https://academic.oup.com/dh/article/47/5/823/7232512.

[41] M. Sioli, *Breaking into Trans-Mississippian Frontiers: Thomas Jefferson's Expedition to the West*, in C.A. van Minnen and S.L. Hilton, *Frontiers and Boundaries in US History*, VU University Press, 2004, 69-87.

[42] John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, October 7, 1822, in W.C. Ford, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, Greenwood Press, 1917, vol. 7, 316.