2. Thomas Jefferson Hears "A Fire Bell in the Night" During the Missouri Crisis, 1820

Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820

I thank you, Dear Sir, for the copy you have been so kind as to send me of the letter to your constituents on the Missouri question. It is a perfect justification to them. I had for a long time ceased to read newspapers or pay any attention to public affairs, confident they were in good hands, and content to be a passenger in our bark to the shore from which I am not distant. But this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union. It is hushed indeed for the moment. But this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence. A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated, and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper. I can say with conscious truth that there is not a man on earth who would sacrifice more than I would to relieve us from this heavy reproach in any *practicable* way. The cession of that kind of property, for so it is misnamed, is a bagatelle which would not cost me a second thought, if in that way, a general emancipation and *expatriation* could be effected: and gradually, and with due sacrifices, I think it might be. But, as it is, we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other. Of one thing I am certain, that as the passage of slaves from one state to another would not make a slave of a single human being who would not be so without it, so their diffusion over a greater surface would make them individually happier and proportionally facilitate the accomplishment of their emancipation. . . .

3. Congress Debates the Missouri Crisis, 1819, 1820

Rufus King Opposes the Introduction of Slavery into Missouri, 1819

The constitution declares "that congress shall have power to dispose of, and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory and other property of the United States."

The power to make all needful regulations, includes the power to determine what regulations are needful: and if a regulation prohibiting slavery within any territory of the United States be, as it has been, deemed needful, congress possess the power to make the same, and moreover to pass all laws necessary to carry this power into execution.

The territory of Missouri is a portion of Louisiana, which was purchased of France, . . . and is subject, like other territories of the United States, to the regulations and temporary government which has been, or shall be, prescribed by congress. The clause of the constitution, which grants this power to congress, is so comprehensive

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From the Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress. http://memory.loc.gov/

From *Substance of Two Speeches Delivered in the Senate of the United States on the Subject of the Missouri Bill* (New York: n.p., 1819), pp. 5–6, 26–27, 32.

and unambiguous, and its purpose so manifest, that commentary will not render the power, or the object of its establishment, more explicit or plain.

The constitution further provides, that "new states may be admitted by congress into the union."—As this power is conferred without limitation, the time, terms, and circumstances of the admission of new states are referred to the discretion of congress—which may admit new states, but are not obliged to do so—of right no new state can demand admission into the union, unless such demands be founded upon some previous engagement with the United States. . . .

The motives for the admission of new states into the union, are the extension of the principles of our free government, the equalizing of the public burdens, and the consolidation of the power of the confederated nation. Unless these objects be promoted by the admission of new states, no such administration can be expedient or justified.

. . . If Missouri, and the other states that may be formed to the west of the river Mississippi, are permitted to introduce and establish slavery, the repose, if not the security of the union may be endangered; all the states south of the river Ohio and west of Pennsylvania and Delaware, will be peopled with slaves, and the establishment of new states west of the river Mississippi, will serve to extend slavery instead of freedom over that boundless region.

Such increase of the states, whatever other interests it may promote, will be sure to add nothing to the security of the public liberties; and can hardly fail hereafter to require and produce a change in our government. . . .

. . . if, instead of freedom, slavery is to prevail, and spread as we extend our dominion, can any reflecting man fail to see the necessity of giving to the general government greater powers; to enable it to afford the protection that will be demanded of it: powers that will be difficult to control, and which may prove fatal to the public liberties.

Timothy Fuller Attacks Slavery as Unrepublican, 1819

Mr. Fuller, of Massachusetts, said, that, in the admission of new States into the Union, he considered that Congress had a discretionary power. . . . We certainly have a right, and our duty to the nation requires, that we should examine the actual state of things in the proposed State; and above all the Constitution expressly makes a republican form of government in the several States a fundamental principle, to be preserved under the sacred guarantee of the National Legislature. [Art. 4, sec. 4] It clearly, therefore, is the duty of the Congress, before admitting a new sister into the Union, to ascertain that her constitution or form of government is republican. . . . The existence of slavery in any State is so far a departure from republican principles. The Declaration of Independence penned by the illustrious statesman then and at this time a citizen of a State which admits slavery, defines the principle on which our National and State Constitutions are all professedly founded. The second paragraph of that instrument begins thus: "We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal—that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Since then it cannot be denied that slaves are men, it follows that they are in a purely

From *Annals of Congress*, 15th Congress, 2nd session, pp. 1181–84.

republican government born free, and are entitled to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. [Mr. F was here interrupted by several gentlemen, who thought it improper to question in debate the republican character of the slaveholding states, which had also a tendency, as one gentleman (Mr. Colston, of Virginia) said, to deprive those States of the rights to hold slaves as property, and he adverted to the probability that there might be slaves in the gallery listening to the debate.]

William Smith Defends Slavery, 1820

Mr. Smith: . . . It had been sung in every town and village of the States which call themselves non-slaveholding States, that slavery is opposed to our holy religion. The honorable gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. Morrill) has inculcated this doctrine in his address to the Senate. He would not hazard too much in calling the master a despot, and a violator of the laws of God. To prove his position, he has read sundry passages from Mr. Jefferson's Notes; the most prominent were the following:

> The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions. Our children see this and learn to imitate it. I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just. The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest.

Mr. S. said he had the highest regard for that venerable patriot; he was a great philosopher and statesman of the first order. . . . [But] he did not hesitate to contradict him, in the most unequivocal terms. The master has no motive for this boisterous hostility. It is at war with his interest, and it is at war with his comfort. The whole commerce between master and slave is patriarchal. The master has every motive to impel him to it. . . . These observations of Mr. Jefferson could not have been founded on facts. . . . They are the effusions of the speculative philosophy of his young and ardent mind, and which his riper years have corrected. He wrote these Notes nearly forty years ago; since which his life has been devoted to that sort of practical philosophy which enlarges the sphere of human happiness, and to the promotion of civil liberty; and, during the whole time, his principal fortune has been in slaves, and he still continues to hold them.

4. President John Quincy Adams Describes His View of Liberty and Power, 1825

The spirit of improvement is abroad upon the earth. It stimulates the hearts and sharpens the faculties not of our fellow-citizens alone, but of the nations of Europe and of their rulers. While dwelling with pleasing satisfaction upon the superior excellence of our political institutions, let us not be unmindful that liberty is power; that the nation blessed with the largest portion of liberty must in proportion to its numbers be the most powerful nation upon earth, and that the tenure of power by man is, in the moral purposes of his Creator, upon condition that it shall be exercised to ends of beneficence, to improve the condition of himself and his fellowmen. While

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From *Annals of Congress*, 16th Congress, 1st session, pp. 259–75.

From John Quincy Adams, "First Annual Address," in James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Washington, DC: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1910), vol. 2, pp. 865–83.

ESSAYS

Why did the so-called Era of Good Feelings disintegrate so quickly? And how did its collapse affect the shape of American politics? Three essays that focus on the Missouri crisis develop contrasting arguments. The historian Richard H. Brown, of Newberry Library in Chicago, contends that the Missouri debates led to a reassertion of southern domination in national politics under the aegis of the preeminent "northern man with southern feelings," Martin Van Buren. Proslavery southerners then reconsolidated their control by becoming the leading force inside the Jacksonian coalition. Sean Wilentz of Princeton University sees the crisis less in terms of southern control and more as a sectional rupture among Jeffersonian Republicans over slavery—a rupture temporarily healed by mainstream moderates who included Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams as well as Van Buren, and which required concessions from proslavery southerners as well as antislavery northerners. Finally, Matthew H. Crocker, who teaches at Keene State College, focuses on the divisions among southerners over the compromise and how foreign relations affected both the making of the settlement and its consequences, leading to the issuing of the famous Monroe Doctrine in 1823.

All three essays agree on the importance of slavery to national politics. But whereas Brown's casts the Missouri Compromise as a bargain that instigated a proslavery Jacksonian Democracy, Wilentz's sees it as an awkward truce to which both the Jacksonians and their future mainstream opponents would demand adherence—and which contained antislavery as well as proslavery arguments that would eventually overwhelm the mainstream consensus on slavery. Crocker, meanwhile, is more sympathetic to Brown's view of Jeffersonianism and contends the compromise fortified slavery and accelerated its expansion, but he focuses on what he sees as competing efforts to advance what he calls a "southern strategy." Whatever the merits of his case, Crocker's article offers a powerful reminder of the importance of connecting foreign affairs to what might seem to be wholly domestic political struggles, and vice versa.

"Northern man w/ southern feelings"

The Missouri Crisis, Slavery, and the Rise of the Jacksonians

RICHARD H. BROWN

From the inauguration of Washington until the Civil War the South was in the saddle of national politics. . . . [T]here are no exceptions [to this central fact], not even in that period when the "common man" stormed the ramparts of government under the banner of Andrew Jackson. In Jackson's day the chief agent of Southern power was a Northern man with Southern principles, Martin Van Buren of New York. It was he who put together the party coalition which Andrew Jackson led to power. That coalition had its wellsprings in the dramatic crisis over slavery in Missouri, the first great public airing of the slavery question in ante bellum America. . . .

. . . The insistence that slavery was uniquely a Southern concern, not to be touched by outsiders, had been from the outset a *sine qua non* for Southern participation in national politics. It underlay the Constitution and its creation of a government

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From Richard H. Brown, "The Missouri Crisis, Slavery, and the Politics of Jacksonianism" *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 65, pp. 55–70. Copyright 1966, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

of limited powers, without which Southern participation would have been unthinkable. And when in the 1790's Jefferson and Madison perceived that a constitution was only the first step in guaranteeing Southern security, because a constitution meant what those who governed under it said it meant, it led to the creation of the first national political party to protect that Constitution against change by interpretation. The party which they constructed converted a Southern minority into a national majority through alliance with congenial interests outside the South. Organically, it represented an alliance between New York and Virginia, pulling between them Pennsylvania, and after them North Carolina, Georgia, and (at first) Kentucky and Tennessee, all states strongly subject to Virginia's influence. At bottom it rested on the support of people who lived on that rich belt of fertile farmland which stretched from the Great Lakes across upstate New York and Pennsylvania, southward through the Southern piedmont into Georgia, entirely oblivious of the Mason-Dixon line. North as well as South it was an area of prosperous, well-settled small farms. More farmers than capitalists, its residents wanted little from government but to be let alone. Resting his party on them, Jefferson had found a formula for national politics which at the same time was a formula for Southern pre-eminence. . . .

So long as the Federalists remained an effective opposition, Jefferson's party worked as a party should. It maintained its identity in relation to the opposition by a moderate and pragmatic advocacy of strict construction of the Constitution. Because it had competition, it could maintain discipline. It responded to its constituent elements because it depended on them for support. But eventually its very success was its undoing. After 1815, stirred by the nationalism of the postwar era, and with the Federalists in decline, the Republicans took up Federalist positions on a number of the great public issues of the day, sweeping all before them as they did. The Federalists gave up the ghost. In the Era of Good Feelings which followed, everybody began to call himself a Republican, and a new theory of party amalgamation preached the doctrine that party division was bad and that a one-party system best served the national interest. Only gradually did it become apparent that in victory the Republican party had lost its identity—and its usefulness. As the party of the whole nation it ceased to be responsive to any particular elements in its constituency. It ceased to be responsive to the South.

When it did, and because it did, it invited the Missouri crisis of 1819–1820, and that crisis in turn revealed the basis for a possible configuration of national parties which eventually would divide the nation free against slave. As John Quincy Adams put it, the crisis had revealed "the basis for a new organization of parties . . . here was a new party ready formed, . . . terrible to the whole Union, but portentously terrible to the South—threatening in its progress the emancipation of all their slaves, threatening in its immediate effect that Southern domination which has swayed the Union for the last twenty years." Because it did so, Jefferson, in equally famous phrase, "considered it at once as the knell of the Union."

. . . [T]he Missouri crisis gave rise not to prophecy alone, but to action. It led to an urgent and finally successful attempt to revive the old Jeffersonian party and with it the Jeffersonian formula for Southern pre-eminence. . . .

In Jefferson's day the tie between slavery, strict construction of the Constitution, and the Republican party was implicit, not explicit. After Missouri it was explicit, and commented upon time and again in both public and private discussion. Perceptive

Southerners saw (1) that unless effective means were taken to quiet discussion of the question, slavery might be used at any time in the future to force the South into a permanent minority in the Union, endangering all its interests; and (2) that if the loose constitutional construction of the day were allowed to prevail, the time might come when the government would be held to have the power to deal with slavery. Vital to preventing both of these—to keeping the slavery question quiet and to gaining a reassertion of strict construction principles—was the re-establishment of conditions which would make the party in power responsive once again to the South.

[T]he Missouri crisis . . . shaped the conditions which would govern what followed. In the South it gave marked impetus to a reaction against the nationalism and amalgamationism of postwar Republicanism and handed the offensive to a hardy band of Old Republican politicians who had been crying in the wilderness since 1816. In the early 1820's the struggle between Old Republicans and New would be the stuff of Southern politics, and on the strength of the new imperatives to which the Missouri conflict gave rise the Old Republicans would carry off the victory in state after Southern state, providing thereby a base of power on which a new strict construction party could be reared.

For precisely the same reason that it gave the offensive to the Old Republicans of the South—because it portrayed the tie between slavery and party in starkest form—the Missouri crisis put Northern Old Republicans on the defense. Doing so, it handed the keys to national party success thereafter to whatever Northern leader could surmount charges of being pro-Southern and command the necessary Northern votes to bring the party to power. For that reason Thomas Jefferson's formula for national politics would become, when resurrected, Martin Van Buren's formula for national politics. . . .

Because they shaped the context of what was to come, the reactions to the Missouri crisis in the two citadels of Old Republican power, Richmond and Albany, were significant. Each cast its light ahead. As the donnybrook mounted in Congress in the winter of 1820, the Virginia capital was reported to be as "agitated as if affected by all the Volcanic Eruptions of Vesuvius." At the heart of the clamor were the Old Republicans of the Richmond Junto, particularly Thomas Ritchie's famous *Enquirer*, which spoke for the Junto and had been for years the most influential newspaper in the South. Associates of Jefferson, architects of Southern power, the Old Republicans were not long in perceiving the political implications of the crisis. Conviction grew in their minds that the point of Northern agitation was not Missouri at all but to use slavery as an anvil on which to forge a new party which would carry either Rufus King or DeWitt Clinton of New York to the presidency and force the South from power forever. But what excited them even more was the enormity of the price of peace which alone seemed likely to avert the disaster. This was the so-called Thomas Proviso, amending the Missouri bill to draw the ill-fated 36°30′ line across the Louisiana Purchase, prohibiting slavery in the territory to the north, giving up the lion's share to freedom.

No sooner had the proviso been introduced in Congress than the temper of the Old Republicans boiled over, and with prescient glances to the future they leapt to the attack. Ritchie challenged the constitutionality of the proviso at once in the *Enquirer* . . . Nathaniel Macon agreed. "To compromise is to acknowledge the right of Congress to interfere and to legislate on the subject," he wrote: "this would be

acknowledging too much." Equally important was the fact that, by prohibiting slavery in most of the West, the proviso forecast a course of national development ultimately intolerable to the South because, as Spencer Roane put it to Monroe, Southerners could not consent to be "dammed up in a land of Slaves." As the debates thundered to their climax, Ritchie in two separate editorials predicted that if the proviso passed, the South must in due time have Texas. "If we are cooped up on the north," he wrote with grim prophecy, "we must have elbow room to the west."

When finally the Southern Old Republicans tacitly consented to the Missouri Compromise, it was therefore not so much a measure of illusion about what the South had given up, as of how desperately necessary they felt peace to be. They had yielded not so much in the spirit of a bargain as in the spirit of a man caught in a holdup, who yields his fortune rather than risk his life in the hope that he may live to see a better day and perhaps even to get his fortune back. As Ritchie summed it up when news of the settlement reached Richmond, "Instead of joy, we scarcely ever recollect to have tasted of a bitterer cup." That they tasted it at all was because of the manipulative genius of Henry Clay, who managed to bring up the separate parts of the compromise separately in the House, enabling the Old Republicans to provide him his margin of victory on the closely contested Missouri bill while they saved their pride by voting to the end against the Thomas Proviso. They had not bound themselves by their votes to the proviso, as Ritchie warned they should not. If it was cold comfort for the moment, it was potent with significance for the future.

In fact, the vote on the proviso illuminated an important division in Southern sentiment. Thirty-seven slave state congressmen opposed it, while thirty-nine voted for it. On the surface the line of division ran along the Appalachian crest and the Potomac, pointing out seemingly a distinction in interest between the South Atlantic states on the one hand and those in the Southwest and mid-Atlantic regions on the other—between those states most characteristically Southern and those which in 1820 were essentially more Western or Northern in outlook. More fundamental, within each section it divided Southerners between those who were more sensitive to the relationship of slavery to politics and those who were less so; between those who thought the party formula for Southern pre-eminence and defense important and those who thought parties outmoded; between particularists and postwar Republican nationalists; between the proponents of an old Republican polity and the proponents of a new one as defined in the years of postwar exuberance; between those closest to Jefferson, such as the Richmond Junto and Macon, and those closest to Monroe, such as Calhoun. It was a division which prefigured Southern political struggles of the twenties. When two years later 70 per cent of those congressmen from the South Atlantic states who had opposed the Thomas Proviso returned to the next Congress, compared to 39 per cent of those who had supported it, it was a measure of the resurgence of Old Republicanism. Two years after that, in the chaotic presidential election of 1824, the Southerners who had opposed the proviso were the Southerners who sought to sustain the party caucus as a method of nominating in a vain attempt to restore old party discipline. Four years after that they marched back to power at last under the banner of Andrew Jackson, restoring to effectiveness in so doing a political system intended to make future Missouri crises impossible, and committed in due time to rectify the Thomas Proviso. . . .

In private, Van Buren left no doubt where he stood, or where he meant to go once the storm had passed. No sooner had the compromise been adopted in Washington than the Little Magician got off a letter to his friendly rival Rufus King, promising at "some future day" to give that veteran Federalist his own views on the expediency of making slavery a party question, and remarking meanwhile that notwithstanding the strong public interest in the Missouri question, "the excitement which exists in regard to it, or which is likely to arise from it, is not so great as you suppose." It was a singularly important assessment of Northern public opinion for a politician who had fallen heir to a tattered Southern alliance, and in it King apprehensively saw the panorama of forty years of national politics stretching before him:

> The inveteracy of party feelings in the Eastern States [he wrote a friend], the hopes of influence and distinction by taking part in favor of the slave States, which call themselves, and are spoken of by others as the truly republican States and the peculiar friends of liberty, will keep alive & sustain a body considerably numerous, and who will have sufficient influence, to preserve to the slave States their disproportionate, I might say exclusive, dominance over the Union.

Twenty months after that, in the late fall of 1821, Van Buren set off for Washington as a newly elected United States senator. . . . He carried with him into the lion's den of presidential politics effective command of the thirty-six uncommitted electoral votes of New York. If he would be the most disinterested statesman in all the land, he could not avoid for long the responsibility that went with that power. It was an opportunity to be used for large purposes or small, as a man might choose, and the Little Magician lost no time in indicating his intended course. Within weeks of his arrival he was pulling the strings of the New York delegation in the House to bring about return of the speakership to the slave states, from whom it had been wrested by a straight sectional vote upon Clay's retirement the year before. . . . Three months after that Van Buren was on his way to Richmond to plan the resurrection of the Old Republican Party.

That he should do so was partly for reasons of personal ambition, partly because the Bucktails after years of frustrating struggle with Clinton had their own clear reasons for wanting to redraw party lines. Beyond this there would appear to be the simple fact that Van Buren believed implicitly in the whole system of republican polity as Thomas Jefferson had staked it out. Committed to the principle of the least possible government, the Republican party was the defender of that republican liberty which was the sole political concern of the disinterested agrarian constituency for which, through life, Van Buren saw himself as a spokesman, and which constituted the majority of Americans. That majority was strongest where it was purest, least subject to the corrupting power of money. That was in the South. Slavery was a lesser issue than republicanism. Nor was it by any means clear in 1820 that agitation was the best way to deal with it. For while some who were nominally Old Republicans, such as Senator William Smith of South Carolina, were beginning to argue that slavery was a positive good, it was generally true that no men in America were more honestly committed to the notion that the institution was wrong than those men of Jeffersonian conscience who were the Old Republicans of the South. . . . Because he believed as he did, Van Buren's efforts to revive party distinctions and restore the Old Republican Party were to be more than a mere matter of machinations with

politicians, looking toward the making of the Democratic party. He looked to Southern power, and he would quiet the slavery question if he could. He was dealing with the root principle of the whole structure of ante bellum politics.

In the long history of the American presidency no election appears quite so formless as that of 1824. With no competing party to force unity on the Republicans, candidates who could not command the party nomination were free to defy it. They did so, charging that "King Caucus" was undemocratic. Eventually no fewer than four candidates competed down to the wire, each a Republican, every man for himself. Because they divided the electoral votes between them, none came close to a majority, and the election went to the House of Representatives. There, with the help of Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams outpolled the popular Andrew Jackson and the caucus nominee, William H. Crawford of Georgia, and carried off the prize. . . .

Hidden in the currents and crosscurrents of [the 1824] campaign was the reiterated issue of party versus amalgamation. Behind it, in turn, were repeated pleas by Old Republican presses, North and South alike, that unless genuine Republicans agreed on a method of choosing a candidate the division must be along sectional lines, in which case a Federalist or proto-Federalist might sneak into the White House. Behind it too was the repeated warning that party organization alone would make democracy work. Without it, the Old Republicans correctly prophesied, the election would end up in the House of Representatives, subject to the worst kind of political intrigue, and with the votes of the smallest states the equals of those of populous Virginia and New York.

When the caucus failed it was because amalgamation had destroyed the levers which made party discipline possible. Exhortation could not restore them. Meantime the issue of democracy had been turned against the advocates of party, because in key states like New York and North Carolina they tried to use the power of the party organizations for Crawford, bucking more popular candidates such as Jackson and Adams. It was a bogus issue. The real issue was whether a party was necessary to make democracy work, and because they were more nearly right than their opponents about this, and the election in the House shortly proved it, the Old Republicans would recover quickly after 1824, after Crawford and the caucus issue were politically dead. Let circumstances limit the number of candidates, and tie up party and democracy on the same side, and the results would be different another time.

In the campaign of 1824 and the years immediately following, the slavery issue was never far below the surface. The Denmark Vesey conspiracy for an insurrection in Charleston . . . was to contemporaries a grim reminder of the Missouri debates, and it was attributed publicly to Rufus King's speeches on the Missouri question. In 1823–1824 some Southerners suspected that an attempt by Secretary of State Adams to conclude a slave trade convention with Great Britain was an attempt to reap the benefit of Northern anti-slavery sentiment; and some, notably Representative John Floyd of Virginia, sought to turn the tables on Adams by attacking him for allegedly ceding Texas to Spain in the Florida treaty, thus ceding what Floyd called "two slaveholding states" and costing "the Southern interest" four Senators.

Old Republicans made no bones about their concern over the issue, or their fear that it might be turned against them. . . . "Call it the Missouri question, the Illinois question, what you please; it was the *Slave question*," Ritchie shrilled. . . . "The more general question of the North and South," the [Van Burenite *Albany*] *Argus* warned,

"will be urged to the uttermost, by those who can never triumph when they meet the democracy of the country, openly, and with the hostility they bear towards it." Over and over the debate rang out the argument that the attempt to revive party distinctions was an attempt to allay sectional prejudices, and by the time the debate was over only the most obtuse citizen could have missed the point.

Nor was the election of Adams destined to calm Southern fears on issues having to do with slavery. A series of incidents early in 1825 suggested that the New Englander's election had made antislavery advocates more bold, and Southern tempers grew shorter in the summer of 1825 than they had been at any time since Missouri. One of the incidents was a reported argument before the Supreme Court in the case of the South Carolina Negro Seaman's Act by Attorney General William Wirt, stating that slavery was "inconsistent with the laws of God and nature." A second was a resolution offered in the Senate a scant nine days after Adams' election by Rufus King, proposing to turn the proceeds from the sale of western lands to the emancipation and export of slaves, through the agency of the American Colonization Society. In the same week the New Jersey legislature proposed a system of foreign colonization which "would, in due time, effect the entire emancipation of the slaves in our country." John Floyd enclosed a copy of the New Jersey resolution to Claiborne Gooch, Ritchie's silent partner on the *Enquirer*, with salient warning:

> Long before this manifestation I have believed, connected with the Missouri question, would come up the general question of slavery, upon the principles avowed by Rufus King in the Senate. . . .
>
> If this indication is well received, who can tell, after the elevation of Mr. A. to the presidency—that he, of Missouri effort, or DeWitt C. or some such aspirant, may not, for the sake of that office, fan this flame—to array the non-slaveholding States against the Slaveholding states, and finally quiet our clamor or opposition, by the application of the slaves knife to our throats. Think of this much, and often.

Meantime, the New York *Commercial Advertiser* expressed publicly the hope that Adams' administration would introduce "a new era, when the northern, eastern, and non-slaveholding states, will assume an attitude in the Union, proportionate to their moral and physical power." Ritchie responded hotly in an editorial asking what the designs of such a combination would be against the "southern and *slave-holding* states." Soon in Georgia the Old Republican Governor George M. Troup, at the instigation of Senator John M. Berrien, put before the legislature a request for resolutions stating slavery to be exclusively within the control of the states and asking that the federal government "abstain from intermeddling." . . .

With the slavery issue thus drawn taut, the Old Republicans recovered quickly from the setback of 1824. Calhoun's inveterate foe William Smith was returned to the Senate from South Carolina, completing for the moment an Old Republican sweep of the South Atlantic states begun in 1821, a sweep which put Calhoun's political career in jeopardy and forced the Carolinian, now vice president, to break with Adams. For the Old Republicans, moreover, Adams made an infinitely better target than Monroe. The high-toned nationalism of the New Englanders, combined with popular revulsion to the alleged bargain which secured his election, put the kiss of death on amalgamation as a political theory. The stage was set, under more favorable circumstances, for the Old Republicans to try again. . . .

When finally it rode to power, the Jacksonian party was made up of two clearly discernible and distinct wings. One comprised the original Jacksonians, those who had supported him in 1824 when he ran on his own, bereft, like all the rest, of party, and nearly of allies. As measured in that election this strength was predominantly in the West. It spilled over into a few states east of the mountains, most notably Pennsylvania, where the chaos of the existing political structure enabled Jackson as military hero to ride roughshod over all the rest. But this was all. The Western vote, especially when shared with Clay, amounted in electoral terms to little. Even with the votes of the Carolinas, thrown to him gratuitously by Calhoun and counting one-quarter of his total, he was far short of an electoral majority. To get even this much he had been formally before the public for two years, and all his considerable natural appeal as a Westerner and a hero had gone into the bargain.

After 1824 Jackson found himself the candidate of a combined opposition. The concrete measure of difference between defeat in 1824 and victory in 1828 was the Old Republican strength of the South Atlantic states and New York, brought to the Jackson camp carefully tended and carefully drilled by Van Buren. Nearly equal in size to the original Jackson following, they constituted a political faction far older, far more permanent, far more purposeful, far better led, and in the long run far more important. Their purposes were set forth by Van Buren in a notable letter to Ritchie in January, 1827, proposing support of the old hero. Such support, as the New Yorker put it, would be "the best and probably the only practicable mode of concentrating the entire vote of the opposition & of effecting what is of still greater importance, the substantial reorganization of the Old Republican Party." It would "restore a better state of things, by combining Genl Jackson's personal popularity with the portion of old party feeling yet remaining." It would aid Republicans of the North and middle states "by substituting *party principle* for *personal preference* as one of the leading points in the contest. . . . Instead of the question being between a northern and Southern man, it would be whether or not the ties, which have hitherto bound together a great political party should be severed." Most important, its effects would be highly salutary for the South:

> We must always have party distinctions and the old ones are the best of which the nature of the case admits. Political combinations between the inhabitants of the different states are unavoidable & the most natural & beneficial to the country is that between the planters of the South and the plain Republicans of the north. The country has once flourished under a party thus constituted & may again. It would take longer than our lives (even if it were practicable) to create new party feelings to keep those masses together. If the old ones are suppressed, geographical divisions founded on local interests or, what is worse prejudices between free and slave holding states will inevitably take their place. Party attachment in former times furnished a complete antidote for sectional prejudices by producing counteracting feelings. It was not until that defence had been broken down that the clamour agt. [against] Southern Influence and African Slavery could be made effectual in the North. . . . Formerly, attacks upon Southern Republicans were regarded by those of the north as assaults upon their political brethren & resented accordingly. This all powerful sympathy has been much weakened, if not, destroyed by the amalgamating policy. . . . it can & ought to be revived.

Lastly, Van Buren noted, a Jackson administration brought to power by the "concerted effort of a political party, holding in the main, to certain tenets & opposed

to certain prevailing principles" would be a far different thing from one brought to power by the popularity of a military hero alone. An administration brought to power by Old Republican votes would be governed by Old Republican principles. Van Buren would make himself the guarantor of that. . . .

Sectional Rupture w/in the Jeff. Rep. over slavery

Jeffersonian Anti-Slavery and the Missouri Crisis

SEAN WILENTZ

The central fact of American history between the War of 1812 and 1860 is the fitful rise of a political antislavery movement that eventually led to national emancipation. For millennia, slavery had existed as a normal institution throughout the world. The founding generation of Americans framed and ratified a federal constitution that condoned it. As late as 1840, at the height of the so-called "era of the common man," at best a beleaguered minority of Americans imagined that slavery would be eradicated within their own lifetimes. Yet, only twenty years later, the election to the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, a southern-born man with northern principles, precipitated the war that brought slavery's end. . . . While the Republicans honored the U.S. Constitution's ban on direct interference with slavery where it existed, they believed that the institution was an affront to God, democracy, equality, and human progress—"the definitions and axioms of free society" that Lincoln traced back to Thomas Jefferson. By halting slavery's expansion, the Republicans were confident that they could put slavery on the road to extinction in perfectly constitutional ways—an interpretation of the Constitution that promoted southern secession.

This revolution in American political and constitutional thought did not develop all at once, nor was it, as some writers have suggested, solely or even chiefly the work of . . . Lincoln. Both the Republican political coalition of the 1850s and its antislavery constitutionalism were foreshadowed during the first decades of the republic by a sectional rupture among Jeffersonian Republicans that historians have either slighted or misinterpreted. . . . When fully understood, the story of sectional divisions among the Jeffersonians recovers the Jeffersonian antislavery legacy, exposes the fragility of the "second party system" of the 1830s and 1840s, and vindicates Lincoln's claims about his party's Jeffersonian origins. The story also offers historical paradoxes of its own, in which hard-line slaveholding Southern Republicans rejected the egalitarian ideals of the slaveholder Jefferson while anti-slavery Northern Republicans upheld them—even as Jefferson himself supported slavery's expansion on purportedly antislavery grounds. . . .

The Missouri crisis is usually remembered more as an omen than as a turning point. Forty years before secession, the aging Jefferson famously heard "a fire bell in the night" in the debates, which he immediately recognized as "the knell of the Union." Yet if the controversy was a harbinger of graver events, it was itself a crucible of momentous political judgments about slavery, and of what John Quincy Adams

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From Sean Wilentz, "Jeffersonian Democracy and the Origins of Political Anti-Slavery in the United States: The Missouri Crisis Revisited," *Journal of the Historical Society*, 4 (2004), 375–401. Reprinted by permission of Blackwell Publishing.

discerned as "a new party, ready formed . . . terrible to the whole Union, but portentously terrible to the South—threatening in its progress the emancipation of all their slaves." . . .

At stake were the terms of admission to the Union of the newest state, Missouri. The main issue seemed simple enough, but the ramifications were not. Since 1815, in a flurry of state admissions, the numbers of new slave and free states had been equal, leaving the balance of slave and free states nationwide and in the Senate equal. The balance was deceptive. In 1818, when Illinois gained admission to the Union, antislavery forces won a state constitution that formally barred slavery but included a fierce legal code that regulated free blacks and permitted the election of two Southern-born senators. In practical terms, were Missouri admitted as a slave state, the Southern bloc in the Senate might enjoy a four-vote, not a two-vote, majority. And some Northerners were determined to stop Missouri from having laws as blatantly racist as those of Illinois.

All about who wields the voting power.

Southerners saw things differently. The proposed creation of Maine as a new free state required Missouri's admission as a slave state to preserve the balance of free-soil versus slave-soil states. Missouri was also to be the second state carved out of the Louisiana Purchase—and the precedent for Purchase land, although small, was pro-slavery. Missouri, unlike Louisiana, was not suited to cotton, but slavery had been established in its western portions, which were especially promising for growing hemp, a crop so taxing to cultivate that it was deemed fit only for slave labor. Southerners worried that a ban on slavery in Missouri, already home to 10,000 slaves—roughly fifteen percent of its total population—would create a precedent for doing so in all the entering states from the trans-Mississippi West, thereby establishing congressional powers that slaveholders denied existed. When the territorial residents of Missouri applied for admission to the Union, most Southerners—and, probably, at first, most Northerners—assumed slavery would be allowed. All were in for a shock.

[The New York Republican James] Tallmadge offered two amendments to the Missouri statehood bill, banning the further spread of slavery into Missouri and providing for the emancipation at age 25 of all slave children born there after statehood was granted. The debate in the House lasted only a few days—the Fifteenth Congress would expire in less than three weeks—but it was blistering. Southerners virtually threatened secession were the amendments approved. Go ahead, Tallmadge dared: "Sir, if a dissolution of the Union must take place, let it be so!" Northern House members united across party and factional lines to support Tallmadge. Despite nearly unanimous opposition from the slaveholding states, the lopsided Northern margins in favor of the Tallmadge amendments pushed them through [Table 1]. In the Senate, five Northerners, including both senators from Illinois, helped defeat the amendments, but in the House antislavery Northerners, called "restrictionists," would not be intimidated. By a twelve-vote margin, the House reapproved Tallmadge's proposals, killing the statehood bill and handing the crisis over to the Sixteenth Congress.

Instead of soothing sectional passions, the ensuing nine-month recess aggravated them, as antislavery Northerners took their cause to the people. Beginning in August, "free Missouri" meetings assembled in major towns and cities from Maine to New Jersey and as far west as Illinois. By December, William Plumer, Sr. observed

Table 1. House vote on restricting slavery in Missouri, 1819 by party and section

February 16, 1819

	Y	N	A	TOTAL
Northern Federalists	22	3	3	28
Northern Republicans	64	7	6	77
North Total	86	10	9	105
South Total	1	66	13	80
House Total	87	76	22	185

Yea is a vote for restriction.

Source: *Annals of the Congress of the United States*, 15th Congress, 2nd session, p. 1214; Kenneth C. Martis, *The Historical Atlas of the Political Parties in the United States Congress, 1789–1989* (New York, 1989), pp. 84–5.

in New Hampshire, it had become "political suicide" for any free-state officeholder "to tolerate slavery beyond its present limits."

James Tallmadge did not return to Washington for the new Congress in December, having lost his bid to join the New York State Senate, but the ruckus he had fomented resumed. Maine was now applying for admission to statehood, and pro-Southern antirestrictionists asserted that if Congress had the power to ban slavery in Missouri, then it had the power to make Maine's admission contingent on slavery in Missouri. A new Maine statehood bill passed the House after a bruising debate, but the Senate Judiciary committee added an amendment admitting Missouri without restriction of slavery. After uniting the Maine and Missouri statehood bills, the Senate then heard an amendment from Jesse B. Thomas, an Illinois anti-restrictionist that provided the germ of a compromise. As amended, the Senate bill would admit Maine as a free state and Missouri as a slave state, and bar slavery from all additional states carved out of the Louisiana Purchase territory that lay north of latitude 36° 30′. Sectional balance would be sustained; the North would concede the admission of Missouri as a slave state; and Southerners would give way on the principle, which they had upheld since the ratification of the Constitution, that Congress lacked authority to regulate slavery in entering states or territories. On February 17, 1820, with ten members, including eight Southerners, opposed, the Senate passed the Thomas Amendment—but the antislavery-dominated House, voting once again on sectional lines, dismissed the Senate's proposals.

The political will and parliamentary skill of the peacemakers, led by Henry Clay, finally broke the impasse, or so it appeared. On February 29, the House consented to hold a joint conference with the Senate over the outstanding issues, and Speaker Clay chose reliably pro-compromise members for the conference committee. Two days later, the Senate returned the House bill, with the restrictionist amendment stricken and the Thomas Amendment restored—and at virtually the same hour, the conference committee issued a quickly drafted statement urging passage of the Senate version. Clay knew he could never get a majority in the House to approve the compromise if he presented it in a single bill—and so the House took up the Missouri statehood and 30° 30′ compromise question separately. By three votes—with the South united and eighteen Northerners either concurring or absenting themselves—the members opened Missouri to slavery [Table 2]. Approval of the 36° 30′ compromise followed,

Table 2. House vote on compromise to restrict slavery in Missouri, 1820 by party and section

March 2, 1820

	Y	N	A	TOTAL
Northern Federalists	2	14	—	16
Northern Republicans	12	73	4	89
North Total	14	87	4	105
South Total	76	—	5	81
House Total	90	87	9	186

Yea is a vote for restriction.

Source: *Annals of the Congress of the United States*, 16th Congress, 1st session, 1586–87; Kenneth C. Martis, *The Historical Atlas of the Political Parties in the United States Congress, 1789–1989* (New York, 1989), pp. 86–7.

over opposition from thirty-seven pro-slavery Southern Republicans who rejected the proposed federal interference with slavery. On March 6, President Monroe signed the Missouri statehood bill.

The controversy did not end there. In violation of the Constitution, pro-slavery forces at Missouri's constitutional convention inserted a clause barring "free negroes and mulattoes" from entering the state. Antislavery Northerners rejected the document, and in 1821 another round of sectional brawling followed in the House. The struggle closed when Clay brokered a deal that let the Missouri constitution stand—but with the perverse proviso that the state legislature would pass no law at variance with the Constitution.

Not since the framing and ratification of the Constitution in 1787–88 had slavery caused such a tempest in national politics. In part, the breakthrough of emancipation in the Middle States after 1789—especially in New York, where James Tallmadge played a direct role—emboldened Northern antislavery opinion. Southern slavery had spread since 1815. After the end of the War of 1812, and thanks to new demand from the Lancashire mills, the effects of Eli Whitney's cotton gin, and the new profitability of upland cotton, slavery expanded into Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Between 1815 and 1820, U.S. cotton production doubled, and, between 1820 and 1825, it doubled again. Slavery's revival weakened what had been, during the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary era, a widespread assumption in the South, although not in South Carolina and Georgia, that slavery was doomed. By the early 1820s, Southern liberal blandishments of the post-Revolutionary years had either fallen on the defensive or disappeared entirely.

Tallmadge's amendments horrified Southern congressmen, the vast majority of whom were Jeffersonian Republicans. They claimed that, whatever the rights and wrongs of slavery, Congress lacked the power to interfere with its expansion. Southerners of all factions and both parties rallied to the proposition that slavery must remain a Southern question. Otherwise, congressional Southerners divided. One group, concentrated in the border states and including the leading compromisers, took a soft anti-restrictionist line, sensible to what Clay and others called slavery's "evils," but claiming that the dispersion of slavery across a wider area would, as the Virginia congressman John Tyler asserted, "ameliorate the condition of the slave

and . . . add much to the prospect of emancipation." This so-called "diffusionist" argument made sense to tortured enlightened slaveholders of the older Jeffersonian generation, including the aging Jefferson himself, who could not imagine a peaceful elimination of slavery except by highly deliberate gradual means. Diffusionism also reinforced efforts by younger men, Clay included, to promote gradual, voluntary emancipation and the colonization of free blacks to Africa. Yet even the soft anti-restrictionists insisted that the North had no business interfering with slavery. Some, like Tyler, denounced the Northerners' egalitarian sentiments as radical fantasies reminiscent of French Jacobinism, which were incitements to the slaves to rebel.

The Missouri debates also witnessed the appearance of a harder Southern line, which insisted not only that Congress lacked the power to regulate slavery in the territories but that slavery, rather than an evil, was essentially benevolent. South Carolinians and Georgians had advanced these arguments as early as 1790. Afterwards, they spread across the slaveholding states, especially among so-called Old Republican ideologues. Philip C. Barbour of Virginia, although a proponent of diffusion, partially grasped the nettle by asserting that slaves were "considered and treated as the most valuable, the most favored property," and that "their masters remembered they were men." The Old Republican Senator Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina, an orthodox Jeffersonian, not only defended slavery but denied that the egalitarian ideas of his revered mentor's Declaration of Independence applied to it. The Republican Senator William Smith of South Carolina charged that the "venerable patriot" Jefferson had been wrong to claim, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, that a basic antagonism pitted master against slave: "The master has no motive for this boisterous hostility. It is at war with his interest, and it is at war with his comfort. The whole commerce between master and slave is patriarchal." The malicious critics of the South, Smith declared, had substituted their own "religion of nature" for the dictates of Scripture, and been stirred by "the misguided influence of fanaticism and humanity" associated with Jefferson.

In due course, a bare majority of the Southerners in Congress supported the restriction of slavery outside Missouri, completing Clay's compromise. Fearful for the Union's survival and confident that, except in Missouri, slavery could not seriously take hold north of the compromise line, these Southerners were willing to trade constitutional principle for sectional peace. Still, the Missouri crisis, declaimed by Jefferson himself as the outcome of a Northern plot, ironically pushed other Southerners to reject Jefferson in the name of defending slavery—and, like Senator Nathaniel Macon and Richmond editor Thomas Ritchie, to hold out in vain against concessions over congressional authority to regulate slavery in the new states and territories. Compounding the irony, most Northerners embraced Jeffersonian principles to attack slavery and its expansion.

In accord with the traditional interpretations, some of the most prominent anti-slavery Northerners were either Clintonians or Federalists, led by Rufus King of New York. . . . The issue, for King, at least in his early speeches on Missouri, was not chiefly moral. King explicitly abjured wanting to benefit either slaves or free blacks. His goal, rather, was to ward off the political subjugation of the older northeastern states—and to protect what he called "the common defence, the general welfare, and [the] wise administration of government." Only later did King and other Federalists begin pursuing broader moral and constitutional indictments of slavery. . . .

No Federalist helped to instigate the Tallmadge amendments. Although most Northern Federalists backed restriction, they were hardly monolithic on the issue; indeed, in the first key vote on Tallmadge's amendments over Missouri, the proportion of Northern Republicans who backed restriction surpassed that of Northern Federalists [Table 1]. "It is well known," the New Hampshire Republican William Plumer, Jr. observed of the restrictionist effort, "that it originated with Republicans, that it is supported by Republicans throughout the free states; and that the Federalists of the South are its warm opponents."

Outside Congress, antislavery feeling overflowed partisan channels. "The *slavery of man* is abhorrent to every noble and honorable feeling," the pro-restrictionist and veteran Republican William Duane wrote in the Philadelphia *Aurora*, adding that justice and Christian law required that "[slavery's] progress should be arrested, and means should be adopted for its speedy and gradual abolition—and for its ultimate extinction." One prominent Maine Republican, Joshua Cushman, noted that "in most of the states which contend for restriction, federalist and republican are scarcely known." Inside the House of Representatives, the combined forces of Yankee Federalists and Clintonians in the House would have been far too small to mount a successful resistance to slavery. Initially, it was a bloc of forty to fifty Northern Republicans that made the difference. . . .

According to the [antislavery] Republicans, preservation of individual rights and strict construction of the Constitution demanded the limitation of slavery and the recognition, in Timothy Fuller's words, that "all men have equal rights," regardless of color. Earlier and more passionately than the Federalists, Republicans rooted their antislavery arguments, not in political expediency, but in egalitarian morality—the belief, as Fuller declared, that it was both "the right and duty of Congress" to restrict the spread "of the intolerable evil and the crying enormity of slavery." Individual rights, the Republicans asserted, has been defined by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence—"an authority admitted in all parts of the Union [as] a definition of the basis of republican government." If all men were created equal, as Jefferson said, then slaves, as men, were born free and, under any truly republican government, entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As the Constitution, in Article 4, section 4, made a republican government in the states a fundamental guarantee of the Union, the extension of slavery into areas where slavery did not exist in 1787 was not only immoral but unconstitutional.

Antislavery Republicans conceded that in 1787 the framers had permitted slavery to persist, but as a local and not a national right. Given the political realities of the time, the framers had no other choice, since no feasible plan existed for ending slavery in the Southern states without creating even greater evils. But the passing exception, antislavery Republicans argued, should not be confused for a permanent national rule. The framers had not invented slavery. Rather, as Joseph Hemphill claimed, "a certain kind of rights . . . have grown out of original wrongs"—rights that the framers expected would fade way, not proliferate. The founding fathers had excluded the words "slave" and "slavery" from the Constitution. They had further taken steps, as New Hampshire Republican William Plumer, Jr., put it, "leading gradually to the abolition of slavery, even in the old States," above all by allowing for the abolition of the foreign slave trade and by prohibiting slavery in the Northwest

Territory under the Northwest Ordinance. Article 4, section 3, of the Constitution, the Republicans charged, authorized Congress to admit new states as it saw fit. "[U]ntil the ceded territory shall have been made into states, and the new States admitted into the Union," Arthur Livermore proclaimed, "we can do what we will with it." Once again, the Republicans averred, the pro-slavery side was violating both the spirit and the letter of the Constitution.

Southern Republicans immediately recognized these arguments as dangerous. Some had been made in Congressional debates and in the speeches of Republicans who advocated gradual emancipation in the Northern states. But it took the cotton boom and the Missouri crisis for Northern Republicans to mount a coherent Jeffersonian antislavery critique in national affairs. By making Jefferson's Declaration, as the antislavery Republican Charles Rich called it, "that great *national covenant*" from which the Constitution proceeded as a legal instrument, the restrictionist Republicans affirmed a form of nationalist loyalty that held that "slavery does not proceed from the exercise of a legitimate attribute of sovereignty." Firmly rooted in Jeffersonian writ, their nationalism would neither seek to expand the powers of the federal government beyond the strictest construction nor endorse the idea, dear to Southern Old Republicans, that the Union was merely a compact of the several states. Nor would it fall into the Federalist trap of inventing a new national good. Rather, it would restrict an old national evil.

The Union, said the Northern Republicans, in agreement with their Federalist allies preceded the states as a historical fact. Preserving the self-evident rights of equal individual citizens, whites and blacks—which the antislavery Republicans took to be the essence of republicanism—must take precedence over honoring the rights of individual states. A great but unavoidable injustice had left slavery undisturbed under the Federal Union, which eventually had to remove, not perpetuate, the injustice. The Constitution, strictly interpreted, gave the sons of the founding generation the legal tools to hasten that removal, including the refusal to admit additional slave states. Jeffersonian principle—what William Darlington, the antislavery representative of Pennsylvania, called "the good old Republican doctrines"—as well as constitutional mandate, required banning slavery in Missouri.

In 1820 and 1821 several factors defeated both the antislavery Republican restrictions and the pro-slavery diehards. In the House, Clay proved an effective broker for sectional armistice, mobilizing one coalition to pass one half of the compromise, and a very different coalition to pass the other. Pressure from other quarters, ranging from James Monroe's White House to the Philadelphia counting house of Second Bank of the United States trustee Nicholas Biddle, a strong proponent of conciliation, enlarged and solidified the compromisers' ranks. At the margins, the restrictions lacked the disciplined solidarity of the compromisers. Factional fighting in New York proved crucial. Many of the Bucktails, including Martin Van Buren, although not pro-slavery, remained lukewarm about restriction. They suspected that their arch-enemy DeWitt Clinton stood to profit politically from a restrictionist victory, and that antislavery pressure on the South would endanger their political fortunes and the Union itself. One of the six Northern freshmen who voted in 1820 to open Missouri to slavery was a Bucktail, Henry Meigs, as were three of the absentees, including the formerly pro-restrictionist Caleb Tompkins. No evidence proves any pre-arrangement, but those four New York votes represented the tiny margin of victory in 1820 that opened Missouri to slavery.

Still, the outcome refutes the claim, made by John Randolph, John Quincy Adams, and others, that the South cowed the North into submission over the Missouri question. Of the thirty-four congressmen who voted for one of the original Tallmadge amendments in 1819 and who were still in office a year later, only one voted to open Missouri to slavery in 1820, and only one was absent. From 1819 to 1820 Northern Republican support for a ban on slavery in Missouri increased by nine votes, while the votes for restriction remained at 87. Northern support for non-restriction and compromise in 1820 came from a motley group: two Massachusetts Republicans from the district of Maine, who chiefly wanted to gain Maine's admission to the Union; four conservative holdovers from the previous Congress, two Federalists and two Republicans, who had voted against the original Tallmadge Amendments; one representative, a Federalist, who had been absent in 1819; and seven additional Republicans, all but one of them freshmen and three of them newly elected from conservative, previously Federalist districts. In 1820 the compromisers barely prevailed on slavery in Missouri—and only by adding a handful of Northern votes and by getting a higher turnout of Southern anti-restrictionists.

Different particulars of the compromise offended voters in different parts of the country. If the Northerners who voted for compromise and against restriction acted out of personal political expediency, their plans came largely to naught. Only four were re-elected to the Seventeenth Congress, including the two peculiar Maine Republicans, one of whom rose to the Senate. The aging Federalist Jonathan Mason of Massachusetts resigned, as did one of the Pennsylvanians. The other six "doughfaces" either were denied re-nomination, chose not to run, or were defeated for re-election. Lacking more precise polling measurements, we cannot know whether support for the compromise hurt those who did not return in their home districts, but it does not seem to have provided much of an advantage, with the possible exception of Maine districts, where statehood and not slavery was the overriding issue.

Many Southerners were unhappy with the compromise, and their representatives, although united over Missouri, split over the rest of the bargain. Overall, they were less consistent than the Northerners in their sectional solidarity. Missouri had been opened to slavery, but the Thomas proviso backed the Northern antislavery Republican argument that Congress had the power to interfere with slavery's expansion and set aside forever a large portion of national territory as free soil. This conclusion, the pro-slavery Republican Nathaniel Macon wrote, was "acknowledging too much." Nearly half of the Southerners in both the Senate and the House voted against the Thomas proviso (By contrast, 95% of the Northerners voted for it). Their votes did not undo the compromise itself thanks only to Clay's maneuvering. Two years later, more than two-thirds of those Southern congressmen who had voted against the Thomas proviso won re-election, as compared to about two-fifths of those who had supported it—marking a comeback of Southern Old Republicanism in a new militantly pro-slavery form.

It has been said that, had the Civil War broken out over the Missouri controversy, it would have amounted to a brawl in Congress while the rest of the nation watched in amazement. Certainly the majority of Americans, suffering through the second year of brutal economic times initiated by the Panic of 1819, appeared to welcome the end of the congressional quarrel over slavery and the preservation of the Union. So did virtually all of the major figures who would dominate national politics during

the next two decades: Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, William Crawford, John Quincy Adams, Nicholas Biddle, Martin Van Buren, and Andrew Jackson. All either helped achieve the compromise or accepted it. . . .

[Yet] the Missouri Crisis deepened sectional divisions. Clay's bargain may have purchased temporary national political peace, but it was not an authentic compromise, in which both sides agreed to make sacrifices for the common good. By pushing the two halves of the Compromise through the House on separate votes, Clay helped to create an exaggerated appearance of sectional amity. In fact, many Southerners rejected the Compromise's assumptions about federal power in the territories, and either voiced or supported pro-slavery state rights doctrines that eventually informed Southern secession. An even larger proportion of Northerners opposed the expansion of slavery into Missouri and backed antislavery Jeffersonian doctrines that became basic principles of the Liberty, Free Soil, and Republican parties. Jefferson's "fire-bell" had alarmed mainstream political leaders like Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren. But their responses and the subsequent rise of the intersectional Democratic and Whig parties could not forever suppress the antislavery Jeffersonianism and the southern hard-line pro-slavery arguments that arose so forcefully in 1819.

Leading toward the Monroe Doctrine, foreign relations based on the Missouri compromise.

The Missouri Compromise, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Southern Strategy

MATTHEW H. CROCKER

The four pivotal years between 1819 and 1823 began with the Union facing its first major sectional crisis over slavery in the Missouri statehood controversy and ended with the nation espousing its dominance over the Western Hemisphere with the Monroe Doctrine. Taken together, these events represented the denouement of the Louisiana Purchase and anticipated the two most compelling forces that would preoccupy and significantly define the United States during the ante-bellum era.

American historians have understandably viewed these two episodes as unrelated and isolated events. Indeed, the first was an internal issue that forecast future sectionalism within the country, and the second, an external matter that announced a foreign policy position to the world. Yet, if examined within the context of the nation's previous policy of expansionism and its renewed and remodeled commitment to racial slavery during the Early Republic, a reassessment of both events merits consideration. . . .

From 1819 through 1821, replete with angry appeals to sectional honor and threats of secession, the Missouri crisis embroiled Congress in the most highly charged sectional debate to date. . . .

[N]ot only had slavery flourished in Missouri, but its growth and geographic expansion after the Louisiana Purchase had helped to guarantee Southern political dominance over national affairs. Between 1800 and 1820, Southern interests enjoyed unprecedented political power, unilaterally directing the course of the nation. . . .

Coinciding with Jeffersonian political hegemony, the Southern economy conspired to strengthen both the institution of slavery and Southern aspirations for further expansion. The widespread utilization of the cotton gin by 1810 revolutionized the Southern economy, transforming the once agriculturally limited western regions of the South into a potential cotton kingdom, with an entrepot at New Orleans. With intoxicating dreams of wealth, Anglo-American migration into the Southwest surged. Cotton producers' appetite for more land and more slaves seemed insatiable, and the nation's Republican leadership proved more than happy to satisfy the South's ravenous hunger. Between 1812 and 1819 the Gulf Coast states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama had all effortlessly entered the Union with slavery, having faced minimal Northern opposition. Furthermore, the Jeffersonian administrations of Madison and Monroe worked feverishly to add both Spanish-held Texas and Florida into the community of slave states, going so far as to instigate revolutions in both and actually invading the Floridian peninsula twice in 1814 and again in 1818. . . .

In 1819, when James Tallmadge, Jr., the freshman Republican representative from Poughkeepsie, New York, broke with his party and tacked on an amendment to the statehood petition, demanding the abolition of slavery in Missouri, he sent a shock wave through the South's political and economic regime. . . .

Reaching as far back as the constitutional ratification struggles of 1787–1788, the slaveholding South's most powerful leaders had assumed their region and its institutions would develop and thrive as a result of aggressive Southwestern expansion. . . .

Yet, with the Thomas Proviso [proposed as part of a compromise] that prohibited slavery north of 36° 30', it would not be the North that was bottled up, but the South. Indeed, under Thomas's provision, all the South could look forward to was the addition of two, maybe three, slave states carved from the relatively minuscule Arkansas Territory. . . . Yet, in 1820, it was a majority of the Southern delegation in Congress that pushed the Thomas Proviso over the requisite number needed for passage. Out of the 76 Southerners in the House, 39 voted in favor of the provision; in the Senate, the Southern vote rested at 14 for and only 8 against. Without these Southern votes, the Missouri Compromise would not have passed.

The Southern delegation's curious voting pattern has perplexed American historians who tenaciously have searched for clues to explain it. . . . [A] wide cross-section of the Southern Republican leadership, from the youthful Henry Clay to the venerable Thomas Jefferson, did not seriously fear the outbreak of war despite much of their rhetoric. In fact, most Southern Republicans believed that Northern opposition to slavery and Missouri statehood was purely a partisan ploy to revive the defunct Federalist Party. That Southern Republicans would concede even an inch of territory to resurrect a long-since extinct oppositional party makes no sense.

The South's reaction to the acceptance of Thomas's Proviso mirrors the bewilderment of future historians, though initial Southern confusion quickly evolved into wholesale outrage. "In Richmond," Henry Clay reported, "they are all in a flame; indignant at the idea of [the] compromise." . . . Capturing the defiant mood of the South, Thomas Ritchie, editor of the influential *Richmond Enquirer*, exclaimed, "We scarcely ever recollect to have tasted of a bitterer cup. . . . If we are cooped up on the north, we must have elbow room to the west." Specifically, Ritchie clamored, Texas must be delivered to the South.

Paradoxically, the primary architect of the Missouri Compromise, Kentuckian Henry Clay, agreed with Ritchie; but to him it was the extended battle over Missouri, not the Compromise, that imperiled further Southwestern expansion, especially in the Texas Territory. If the Missouri conflict "should not be happily disposed of," Clay fearfully predicted to a friend, "there will be an inconquerable repugnance to acting upon . . . great[*er*] matters. . . . At present, Spanish affairs," he wrote to another "have given way to the Missouri question." According to his correspondence between 1819 and 1821, Clay desperately wanted to settle the Missouri conflict promptly so that Congress could redirect its efforts and block a proposed treaty between the United States and Spain, which Clay believed severely restrained Southern expansionism. Although the Adams-Onis Treaty had been agreed upon in 1819, Madrid had dug in its heels, delaying ratification. In 1820, Clay saw this as an opportunity, but only if the Missouri controversy could be put to rest.

Helping to explain his motives, while the Spanish treaty was being secretly brokered between 1818 and 1819, Clay staunchly defended slavery's right to expand. A loyal disciple of the Southern strategy, he attacked the Tallmadge amendment and consistently defended the rights of slaveholders to take their "property" into the territories. Yet, upon reading the proposed Adams-Onis Treaty, Clay's priorities dramatically shifted from defending Southern liberty to negotiating a settlement on the Missouri issue at almost any cost. As Speaker of the House, in February 1820, Clay aggressively navigated the Missouri Compromise through Congress—complete with the Thomas Proviso. Although Missouri would not be admitted into the Union until 1821, the Compromise's most controversial ingredient—slavery's prohibition north of 36° 30'—had passed in 1820 due to Clay's herculean efforts in forging a powerful Southern voting block that seemingly cast its ballot against the interests of the South. Clay could now refocus his efforts toward building vigorous opposition to the Spanish treaty, which he believed profoundly sabotaged the South's future.

When negotiations between Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and Spanish Foreign Minister Luis de Onis began in 1817, the Monroe administration aspired to secure the Floridas and Texas. Although under a liberal reading of the original Louisiana Purchase agreement there were tenuous grounds for the United States to claim Texas, all conceded that Florida was a Spanish dominion. Despite this, the Madison and Monroe administrations, while in negotiations with Spain, blatantly invaded Florida twice and instigated revolution in Florida, plying Madrid with extreme pressure. In 1819, Luis de Onis finally buckled and agreed to a treaty that handed over Florida and transferred to the United States the Spanish claims to Oregon territories. In exchange, John Quincy Adams promised that the Monroe administration would relinquish United States's title to Texas. If ratified, the treaty gave the Americans a claim to the Pacific Ocean and, with the addition of Florida, firmly secured for the nation the Gulf Coast. Adams presented the agreement as a triumph, but powerful Southerners disagreed. Upon reading the proposed treaty in the last weeks of 1819, Clay was shocked to find Adams had traded Texas for Florida, and he began scheming to block the treaty.

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Although Clay thought Adams had taken too little, Madrid believed Onis had given too much. Upon receiving the treaty, the Spanish government balked at ratification. This gave Clay the precious time he needed to build congressional opposition to the treaty, but because the Missouri conflict raged in Congress, preoccupying the thought of all, he could not bring the issue to the floor. By January 29, 1820, the

situation was getting desperate. "[S]omething ought to be done," Clay frantically wrote to his confidant, Jonathan Russell, "otherwise we shall play into the hands of Spain." In confidence to Russell, Clay proposed using Spain's reluctance to ratify the treaty as justification for the "occupation of Texas": "[I]n view of the Louisiana treaty, we may take . . . it, without the act assuming the character of hostility." Yet, to Clay's utter frustration, due to the Missouri conflict, he explained, "I doubt whether we shall find time, during the Session, to march upon either Texas or Florida."

Five days after Clay expressed his private thoughts to Russell, Jesse Thomas of Illinois presented his Proviso, and with it Clay found the answer to his dilemma. Immediately, he openly supported the Thomas Proviso and plied all his influence as Speaker to guide a compromise through Congress. . . .

The potential in adopting Texas into the family of slaveholding states significantly helps to explain the Southern delegation's seemingly counterintuitive decision to support the Thomas Proviso. Indeed, it was commonly believed that the Texas Territory would yield three to four more slave states, which, coupled with Florida and Arkansas, would significantly counteract the growing influence of the free-labor states. . . .

On March 4, 1820, Clay happily informed Adam Beatty that the Missouri question had finally been "put to rest," opening the way, as Clay explained, to "either authorize Texas or Florida or both to be occupied." To this end, on March 28, 1820, Clay issued a congressional resolution that argued the proposed treaty was wholly "inadequate" and should be summarily abandoned. Then, in a major policy speech on April 3, Clay boldly called for the immediate occupation of Texas. . . . Paradoxically, the Monroe administration and Clay's faction of Southern war hawks both operated under the mandates of the Southern strategy. Where they differed was how to go about expanding Southern slave interests into the crumbling Spanish empire. Where Clay wanted to use the stick, Monroe preferred the carrot.

Upon the advice of Andrew Jackson, John C. Calhoun, and John Quincy Adams, Monroe decided to forego Texas temporarily and continue pressing Madrid for ratification of Adams's treaty for Florida. As Jackson wrote to Monroe,

> I am clearly of your opinion, that *for the present*, we ought to be content with the Floridas. . . . With the Floridas in our possession, our fortifications completed, Orleans, the great emporium of the west, is secure.

"Texas," Jackson explained to Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, '*for the present* we could well do without." . . . To the Monroe administration, the Adams-Onis Treaty, once ratified, would insure the security of the nation, add at least one or two new slave states to the South, and significantly augment the Southwestern plantation economy with a badly needed infusion of slave laborers.

Where Henry Clay assumed Florida would fall into the hands of the South, like a ripened fruit, Monroe reckoned that, in time, so would Texas. Thomas Jefferson adamantly disagreed. Siding with Clay, Jefferson implored Monroe to reconsider and invade Texas. Believing that the administration was squandering a rare opportunity, Jefferson criticized his disciple, Monroe, exclaiming, "I am not sorry for the non-ratification of our Spanish Treaty, [for] Florida . . . is ours. Every nation in Europe considers it such a right." Texas, on the other hand, Jefferson predicted, "will be the richest State of our Union, without any exception," and should not be frittered away. According to Jefferson, invasion guaranteed the South not only Texas, but also

Florida, and perhaps even the coveted, slave-rich Spanish island of Cuba. Monroe responded defensively, arguing his methods would more effectively serve the Southern strategy: If it "involv'd . . . nothing more, than a question between the U. States & Spain," Monroe explained, "I should entirely concur. . . . [We] might take Florida as an indemnity, and Texas for some trifle as an equivalent." Yet, Monroe proposed a different and revealing tack. "Spain," he predicted,

> must soon be expelled from this Continent, and with any new govt. which may be form'd in Mexico, it would be easy to arrange the boundary in the wilderness, so as to include as much territory on our side as we might desire.

Clay's scheme was deeply flawed, Monroe argued, because it did not take into account the depth of Northern opposition to slavery's expansion that Missouri had provoked. With the invasion of Texas, Monroe speculated, sectional "excitement would have been kept up [and] the slave holding States would have lost ground daily. . . . From this view, it is evident that the further acquisition, of territory, to the West & South, involves difficulties, of an internal nature." But Monroe calculated, with the success of an anti-imperial and democratic Mexican revolution, Texas could be acquired under the guise of Mexico-United States friendship, making it easy to portray any Northern opposition as an attack on Mexican-United States republican fellowship, if not Mexico's essential right to following in the path of democracy that the American Revolution had paved. . . .

As it turned out, Monroe gravely miscalculated. One year later, Mexico gained independence but refused to surrender Texas, ironically citing the Adams-Onis Treaty as protection. Adding insult to injury, rumors leaked that Luis de Onis had been authorized to cede Texas as early as 1818, but that Monroe's negotiator, John Quincy Adams, had refused to press the issue. In the South and West, Monroe was attacked for restricting slavery in the Northwestern territories in signing the Missouri Compromise while simultaneously obstructing it in the Southwest by allowing Texas to slip through his fingers. Censored by his own party for betraying the Southern stratagem, by 1822 a despondent Monroe decided not to run for re-election and desperately searched for a way to redeem himself in the eyes of his Southern brethren.

Nor did Adams avoid censure. As chief negotiator of the Spanish treaty, Adams, who was in the midst of mounting his 1824 presidential bid, also faced vicious attacks from the South and West. In particular, Henry Clay, who also eyed the presidency, reprimanded Adams for his mishandling of the treaty, going so far as to charge Adams a traitor. "In some other Countries," Clay wrote of Adams, "such a proceeding on the part of a Minister of the State would bring him the block." Thus, on the cusp of Monroe's retirement and Adams's presidential campaign both men looked to redeem themselves in the South and the West. Authored by Adams and delivered by Monroe, the Monroe Doctrine served this purpose. If nothing more, the Monroe Doctrine offered the South future hope for further Southwestern expansionism. In one of his last acts as President, on December 2, 1823, James Monroe issued his famous Doctrine, declaring the Western Hemisphere off-limits to all future European interference. In a calculating manner, the Doctrine championed the independence and autonomy of the newly formed Latin American republics against European imperial ambitions in North and South America; yet, at the time, its author, John Quincy Adams, privately maintained that Europe had no intention of interfering in

Latin American affairs. Adams's contention has since been confirmed by recent historical scholarship.

Thus, it would seem, the Monroe Doctrine was written more for Latin American eyes than European. Indeed, if viewed from the Latin American perspective, the Doctrine seems a threat directed to nations like Mexico to avoid soliciting support and protection from any European nation or face the wrath of the United States. How else could Mexico interpret a United States policy that stated:

> It is impossible that the allied powers [of Europe] should extend their political system to any portion of either continent, without endangering our [U.S.] peace and happiness: nor can any one believe that our Southern Brethren [of Latin America], if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition, in any form, with indifference.

Under the pretense of benevolent republican fraternity, the policy presented in the Monroe Doctrine declared that the Latin American republics, "if left to themselves," would never invite "any form" of European influence, and, thus, on this basis, any cooperation between Europe and Latin America would be viewed by the United States as a hostile act of European imperialism that would provoke an aggressive United States response.

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