

The War of 1812:  
The Rise of American Nationalism

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## Abstract

On June 18, 1812, United States President, James Madison, signed a Declaration of War against Great Britain. What brought these two nations to such a dramatic impasse? Madison's War Message to Congress gives some hint as to the American grievances: impressment of American sailors; unnecessary, "mock" blockades and disruption of American shipping; violations of American neutral rights; and incursions into American coastal waters.<sup>1</sup> By far, the most vocal point of contention was impressment, or the forcible enlistment of men in the navy. For their part, Great Britain viewed every measure disputed by Americans as a necessity as they waged war against the Continental advances of Napoleon and for maintaining the economic stability of the British people. However, the war erupted despite repeal of the contentious British Orders-in-Council on June 23, 1812. And while Madison cited impressment and maritime rights as the primary causes, what other factors influenced this march to war? How do national honor, Canada, Native Americans, the western frontier, and internal politics also play a significant role?

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<sup>1</sup> James Madison, "War Message to Congress," in *The War of 1812: Writings from America's Second War of Independence*, ed. Donald R. Hickey (New York: The Library of America, 2013), 1-9.

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## Introduction

President James Madison's personal secretary delivered a secret message to Congress on June 1, 1812. In this message, he called for war with Great Britain, urging Congress to "speedily...decide, with greater advantage, on the course due to the rights, the interests, and the honor of our Country."<sup>2</sup> With that closing statement, Madison tapped into the rising swell of American nationalism in the early nineteenth century. Set in the context of the Napoleonic wars in Europe, the War of 1812 was an extension of that global conflict. While the causes of the War of 1812 are multifaceted and complex, from impressment to national expansion, at their heart lies the rise and assertion of American nationalism. Writing in 1816 after the conclusion of the War, former Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin defined that sense of American nationalism: "The War has renewed and reinstated the national feelings which the Revolution had given and which were daily lessened. The people have now more general objects of attachment with which their pride and political opinions are connected. They are more Americans; they feel and act more as a nation; and I hope that the permanency of the Union is thereby better secured."<sup>3</sup>

Madison's War Message outlined the multiple American reasons for war. The maritime violations of the American flag, impressment, and attacks on American ships in American waters all formed a cornerstone of his argument.<sup>4</sup> Economic and diplomatic concerns of pretend blockades and false negotiations, as well as the failure of U.S. attempts at peaceable resolution form the basis of another.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, the American belief in the British incitement of Native

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<sup>2</sup> Madison, "War Message to Congress," 9.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Gallatin to Matthew Lyon, May 7, 1816, in *Writings of Albert Gallatin*, ed. Henry Adams (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1879), 700.

<sup>4</sup> Madison, "War Message to Congress," 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-6.

Americans along the frontier highlighted the national concerns for secure borders.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, American national pride, dignity, and honor was affronted by the general British disregard for the United States as an independent nation.<sup>7</sup> Summing up his argument, Madison maintained, “We behold, in fine, on the side of Great Britain a state of War against the United States; and on the side of the United States, a state of peace towards Great Britain.”<sup>8</sup>

Prior to 1812, the United States attempted to avoid armed conflict with Great Britain, in spite of mounting sentiment for war among the population. Instead, the American government pursued economic and diplomatic solutions, hoping to coerce the warring European powers into respecting the American flag. By 1812, however, a new Congress was in session, and the President, once the greatest of advocates for economic coercion, had changed his perspective by calling for war. The growing tide of American nationalism, in the face of affronted national dignity, carried the nation toward war with Great Britain.

### **Literature Review**

While the historiography on the War of 1812 is both broad and deep, historians have often relegated the causes of the War to a few pages in the introduction or opening chapters of their work. That is not to say that there is a lack of study of the topic; some historians have analyzed the causes in great depth. However, many of these historians focus narrowly on a single primary cause, while peripherally acknowledging other factors. From impressment to

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 7-9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 8.

expansionist and war-hungry War Hawks, the causes of the war have been sharply debated for decades, with little consensus.

Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, Henry Adams is widely recognized as the early authority on the time period covered by his multi-volume *History of the United States during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison*, covering 1801 to 1817. This grand work still forms the foundation of much of the subsequent literature on the War of 1812. Adams places this time period in American history in the broader context of world affairs, with a significantly nationalist view, especially the Napoleonic wars. He also has a tendency to indulge in extravagant prose, but this only enhances the entertainment of his immense and detailed work.<sup>9</sup> His work has been so prolific that a full analysis by Garry Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America*, was published in 2005. In the pages of his own work, Wills essentially narrates the story as told by Adams, almost as a guide to accompany Adams's *History*.<sup>10</sup>

By the mid-twentieth century, however, historians began to look at the War of 1812 through with a wide range of perspectives. In 1940, A.L. Burt published *The United States, Great Britain, and British North America from the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace After the War of 1812*. Burt takes a very detailed look at Anglo-American-Canadian relations from the Revolution to the Treaty of Ghent, seeing the interconnected links of cause and effect. He sees the cause of the war as a fight for American independence, with maritime issues taking center stage.<sup>11</sup> Bradford Perkins, writing in the 1960s, with his *Prologue to War: England and*

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<sup>9</sup> Henry Adams, *History of the United States of America During the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison* (1891-1896, repr., New York: Viking Press, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Garry Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> A.L. Burt, *The United States, Great Britain, and British North America: From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace After the War of 1812* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940).

*the United States 1805-1812*, examines the American path to war. However, unlike many other American historians of the time, Perkins devoted much of his work and research to the development of British policy. He argues that the War of 1812 was an expression of “the American search for national respectability and true independence from Europe.”<sup>12</sup> By emphasizing the role of British policy, Perkins minimizes the effects of other entities on the coming of the War of 1812. Also writing in the sixties and seventies, Reginald Horsman published a series of works: *The Causes of the War of 1812* (1962), *The War of 1812* (1969), and *The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783-1815* (1970). In each, Horsman notes the role of the West in the coming of war. He advocates an economic theory, seeing the effect of British maritime infractions on American commerce as a primary cause.<sup>13</sup>

A flurry of articles were published in this same time period, analyzing the War Hawks, the Twelfth Congress, and the vote for war. Harry Fritz, in “The War Hawks of 1812: Party Leadership in the Twelfth Congress,” analyzes both the role and power of the War Hawks. Seeking to not only identify who exactly the War Hawks were, Fritz argues that the War Hawks had the upper hand against the President in forming national policy.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, in “The War Hawks and the Question of Congressional Leadership in 1812,” Ronald Hatzenbuehler takes an alternative stance, seeing the War Hawks as a powerful group in Congress, but not the sole driving force behind national policy.<sup>15</sup> Norman Risjord weighs in with “1812: Conservatives,

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<sup>12</sup> Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States, 1805-1812* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961), viii.

<sup>13</sup> Reginald Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, Inc., 1962).  
Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).  
Reginald Horsman, *The Frontier in the Formative Years: 1783-1815* (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).

<sup>14</sup> Harry Fritz, “The War Hawks of 1812: Party Leadership in the Twelfth Congress,” *Capitol Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1977), 25-42.

<sup>15</sup> Ronald Hatzenbuehler, “The War Hawks and the Question of Congressional Leadership in 1812,” *Pacific Historical Review* 45, no. 1 (Feb. 1976), 1-22.

War Hawks and the Nation's Honor," minimizing the power of the War Hawks and instead arguing that national honor compelled most Republicans to vote for war.<sup>16</sup> Looking at the motivations for war, in *The War of 1812* Harry Coles concludes that so many different factors led to the Congressional vote for war that not one can be identified as a single primary stimulus.<sup>17</sup> In "The War Hawks of 1812: An Historical Myth," Roger Brown attempts to dispel mythical notions about the War Hawks as a loud, heedless, war-mongering splinter of the Republican Party.<sup>18</sup> Together, these historians all show how widely the views vary on the causes of the War of 1812, even about one small facet of the greater topic.

More recently, a number of historians have published works analyzing the causes of the War of 1812 within the setting of the War itself, as well as the greater national and global context. J.C.A. Stagg, with *The War of 1812: Conflict for a Continent*, looks at the War from trans-Atlantic perspective. He also notes the effect of the War on the development of Canada as a nation-state.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Jeremy Black's *The War of 1812 in the Age of Napoleon* sets the war of 1812 in the wider global context of the Napoleonic wars in Europe. Black runs through a number of causes, concluding with an American sense of unfinished revolution as a primary motivation for war in 1812.<sup>20</sup> Donald Hickey, in *Don't Give Up the Ship! Myths of the War of 1812*, clarifies many of the foundational beliefs about the War, from the causes to the execution and aftermath of the War of 1812. His work, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* looks much

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<sup>16</sup> Norman Risjord, "1812: Conservatives, War Hawks and the Nation's Honor," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Apr. 1961), 196-210.

<sup>17</sup> Harry Coles, *The War of 1812* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

<sup>18</sup> Roger Brown, "The War Hawks of 1812: An Historical Myth," *Indiana Magazine of History* 60, no. 2 (June 1964), 137-151.

<sup>19</sup> J.C.A. Stagg, *The War of 1812: Conflict for a Continent* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Jeremy Black, *The War of 1812 in the Age of Napoleon* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

deeper at the War, aiming to dispel the obscurity surrounding it.<sup>21</sup> Alan Taylor, with *The Civil War of 1812*, sees the War of 1812, with Canada's involvement, as a "civil war between kindred peoples, recently and incompletely divided by the revolution."<sup>22</sup> In *America on the Brink: How the Political Struggle Over the War of 1812 Almost Destroyed the Young Republic*, Richard Buel Jr. notes the "destructive character of Federalist behavior," and argues that the war was caused by the Federalists, who sought to oppose the Republicans at every turn.<sup>23</sup>

From impressment to neutral rights, War Hawks to western commercial interests, Federalist opposition to wounded national honor, the War of 1812 is extremely multifaceted. With such breadth of work on the War of 1812, it is no wonder that there is little consensus on a primary cause of the war. Traditionally, historians have argued that American nationalism was a result of the War of 1812, rather than a cause. This paper examines the causes of the war and posits that the rise of American nationalism can be seen leading up to the war, as the reasons for war in 1807 appear more substantial than in 1812. American nationalism was a primary cause, rather than a result of the war.

### **Historical Setting**

The War of 1812 was a corollary of the Napoleonic conflict convulsing Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Following the turmoil of the French Revolution in 1789, nearly all of Europe was drawn into conflict as Napoleon assumed power in France and

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<sup>21</sup> Donald R. Hickey, *Don't Give Up the Ship! Myths of the War of 1812* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 6.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Buel, Jr., *America on the Brink: How the Political Struggle Over the War of 1812 Almost Destroyed the Young Republic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3.

commenced a rapid and aggressive expansion. By 1812, Napoleon dominated the continent, raising the largest army ever assembled for an invasion of Russia, while Great Britain controlled the seas, uncontested after the battle of Trafalgar in 1805.<sup>24</sup>

Beginning in 1803, with the commencement of Napoleon's conquest of Europe, Great Britain sought to economically disrupt the French Empire through a series of gradually more oppressive blockades of French-controlled ports. The United States, as a neutral nation, did not take kindly to the disruption its of commerce with continental Europe and the Caribbean. Beginning in the 1790s, in what the U.S. considered numerous violations of American neutrality, Great Britain repeatedly boarded and searched American vessels, and routinely impressed American sailors into the British Navy. Giving fiery voice to American indignation, Hezekiah Niles proclaimed, "It is the law of the land that we defend ourselves from British aggressions: it is the legal authority of the country that we shall retaliate our wrongs as the only means to end them. For six years we have contemplated the necessity of this resort, the idea has become familiar, and war has lost half its horrors from being in perspective so long."<sup>25</sup>

In 1805, Great Britain issued the *Essex* decision, restricting American trade by disallowing the "broken voyage", whereby shipped goods would be considered "neutral" if they were first imported to a neutral country.<sup>26</sup> This severely limited the triangular trading from the French West Indies to the United States and then to Europe. Following up this restriction, in 1806, Great Britain announced Orders in Council sealing off ports in Northern Europe to

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<sup>24</sup> Hickey, *A Forgotten Conflict*, 16 & 99.

<sup>25</sup> Hezekiah Niles, "War against England," in *The War of 1812: Writings from America's Second War of Independence*, ed. Donald R. Hickey (New York: The Library of America, 2013), 40.

<sup>26</sup> Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812*, 38.

neutrals.<sup>27</sup> Known as Fox's Blockade, these orders somewhat relaxed the *Essex* decision, but were still seen as onerous by Americans.

France, seeing that the United States tolerated this treatment by the British, retaliated with their own measures. Although Napoleon issued his Berlin Decree on November 21, 1806, news of it did not reach the United States until February 1807.<sup>28</sup> Napoleon called for a general French blockade of all English ports, inciting fear among American merchants of a British retaliation to the Emperor's decree.<sup>29</sup> Great Britain responded with the Orders in Council of January 7, 1807, which banned shipping between French-controlled ports.<sup>30</sup> Further Orders in Council issued November 11, 1807, required that all neutral trade with French-controlled ports must pass through Great Britain.<sup>31</sup> Napoleon's Milan Decree, issued December 17, 1807, stated that any ship submitting to the British Orders in Council would be subject to forfeiture and seizure by the French.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time the United States sought to weave its way through this economic and diplomatic obstacle course, concerns closer to home also occupied Americans. Sectional differences between New England and the South stormed through Congress, while the political factions quickly coalesced around separate visions for the national government.<sup>33</sup> Dating to the first days of the republic, conflict along the frontier between Native Americans and white settlers plagued the United States. Speaking to the American perception of that hostility, Madison noted, "It is difficult to account for the activity, and combinations, which have for some time been

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Adams, *History of the United States of America During the Second Administration of Thomas Jefferson, 1805-1809*, ed. Earl Harbert (New York: Viking Press 1986), 1:897.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Hickey, *Don't Give Up the Ship!* 327.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812*, 121.

<sup>33</sup> Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 6.

developing themselves among tribes in constant intercourse with British traders and garrisons, without connecting their hostility with that influence.”<sup>34</sup> Likewise, both settlers and the national government were frustrated by the remaining British presence in the Old Northwest, a direct violation of the Treaty of Paris of 1783, in which Great Britain ceded the land south of the Great Lakes to the United States.<sup>35</sup>

By the time President Madison issued his War Message in 1812, a rising tide of American nationalism swept a new cohort of politicians into Congress. These men looked at the international situation not from the regional perspectives of their predecessors, but instead they took a broader national view. Generally hailing from the frontier regions, this new congressional generation exemplified the growing nationalism that ultimately pushed the United States to war.

### **Maritime Motivations**

Great Britain’s power and national identity at the beginning of the nineteenth century resided relatively securely in its naval supremacy. However, the requirements of maintaining the world’s largest navy quickly outpaced the number of volunteers for service. The British could not maintain both the Navy at full wartime levels and the sailor requirements of the merchant marine.<sup>36</sup> Hemorrhaging thousands of sailors seeking work among American merchant ships, Britain turned to impressment, the forcible enlistment of men in the navy, in order to fulfill their manpower needs.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Madison, “War Message to Congress,” 7.

<sup>35</sup> Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812*, 16-17.

<sup>36</sup> Denver Brunson, “Men of War: British Sailors and the Impressment Paradox.” *Journal of Early Modern History* 14, no. 1/2 (2010), 9-44.

<sup>37</sup> Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 103.

At odds with the American concept of citizenship, the British view of being a subject to the crown lay at the heart of the irreconcilable Anglo-American disagreement over impressment.

Alan Taylor argues:

Britain's rulers insisted that no one born a subject could renounce that identity and its duties. Allegiance began at birth and ended only in death. No emigration, not even a legal process of naturalization could alienate a subject. Throughout life, the 'natural-born subject' remained obligated to serve the king in time of war. And the subject became a traitor if he fought against the sovereign of the kingdom of his birth. American naturalization defied the British concept of the perpetual subject.<sup>38</sup>

The United States believed naturalization released citizens from all ties to their former homeland; Great Britain disagreed, claiming that American naturalization did not absolve British subjects from obligations to the crown.<sup>39</sup> Thus former British sailors, despite having legally obtained U.S. citizenship, were at risk of impressment.

In light of the increasing numbers of British deserters seeking work on American merchant vessels, British commanders soon learned to distrust American documents of citizenship.<sup>40</sup> As a result, J.C.A. Stagg notes that "perhaps inevitably, as the Royal Navy stopped more and more American vessels, its officers began to impress Americans as well, regardless of whether they were native born or naturalized."<sup>41</sup> Later justifying this policy, in 1813 British foreign secretary Lord Castlereagh declared before Parliament "that the object of Great Britain, in insisting upon the right of search, was not to acquire American seamen, but the much broader and more important one of guarding herself from being deprived of her own."<sup>42</sup> Rather, from the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>39</sup> Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 89.

<sup>40</sup> Denver Brunsman, "Subjects vs. Citizens: Impressment and Identity in the Anglo-American Atlantic." *Journal of the Early Republic* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2010), 557-586.

<sup>41</sup> Stagg, *The War of 1812*, 28.

<sup>42</sup> "Address Respecting the War with America," House of Commons Debate, February 18, 1813, Hansard XXIV, 602.

British perspective, it was a policy of national security for the preservation of the Royal Navy in light of the ongoing wars with Napoleon.

Great Britain and the United States never came closer to war over the issue of impressment than in the summer of 1807, when they appeared on the brink of open conflict.<sup>43</sup> In what became known as the *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair, a British ship fired upon, boarded, and removed sailors from the American frigate *Chesapeake* on June 22, 1807. The *Chesapeake* was thought to be carrying a number of British naval deserters; three of the sailors were, in fact, considered by the British to be deserters.<sup>44</sup> The United States however, recognized them as citizens who were forbidden to serve a belligerent nation while America remained neutral.<sup>45</sup>

Orders from British Vice Admiral Berkeley directed:

[T]he captains and commanders of his majesty's ships and vessels under my command, are therefore hereby required and directed, in the case of meeting with the American Frigate *Chesapeake*, at sea, and without the limits of the U. States, to shew her this order, and to require search his ship for the deserters...any of his captains who should meet the *Chesapeake* at sea should show her captain his order and require that she be searched for deserters....<sup>46</sup>

Three American sailors were killed and eighteen more were wounded, nearly sparking an international conflict between the United States and Great Britain.<sup>47</sup> Dumas Malone notes that even in 1807, "Jefferson's administration was not oblivious of the problem of desertion. Madison in particular was disturbed by the presence of British seamen in the American merchant marine."<sup>48</sup> Instead of war, in 1807 the United States opted for a policy of economic coercion.

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<sup>43</sup> George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 118.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, vol. 5, *Jefferson the President: Second Term, 1805-1809* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1974), 419.

<sup>46</sup> "British Account of the Late Outrage on the *Chesapeake*." *The Weekly Inspector*, August 1, 1807.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Cray, Jr., "Remembering the USS *Chesapeake*: The Politics of Maritime Death and Impressment." *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2005), 445-474.

<sup>48</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the President*, 417.

In his letter to James Monroe on July 6, 1807, Secretary of State James Madison wrote regarding the *Chesapeake-Leopard* Affair, “With this demand you are charged by the President...” to remind the British Government of the “multiplied infractions of their rights by British Naval Commanders,” and of the “inefficacy of reiterated appeals to the justice and friendship of that Government”.<sup>49</sup> Further, Madison stated that “The President has an evident right to expect from the British Government, not only an ample reparation to the United States in this case, but that it will be decided without difficulty or delay.”<sup>50</sup> Highlighting the importance of dealing with the incident, he wrote: “All negotiation with the British Government on other subjects will of course be suspended until satisfaction on this be so pledged and arranged as to render negotiation honorable.”<sup>51</sup> Madison went on to state in a politic manner that the President did not necessarily believe the *Leopard* had acted on direct orders of the British Government, and expected that they would readily atone for the incident.<sup>52</sup>

Later, in 1811 as their policy shifted regarding the *Chesapeake* incident, the British offered conciliation, agreeing to disavow the attack. They also offered reparations, as well as the return of the two surviving Americans from the attack.<sup>53</sup> As Donald Hickey notes, offering further appeasement,

In the spring of 1812, the British Navy began to treat American ships and seamen with new tact. The Admiralty ordered all naval officers to take ‘especial care’ to avoid clashes with the American navy and to exercise ‘all possible forbearance’ toward American citizens. The commanding officers at both Halifax and Bermuda ordered their ships to keep clear of the American coast to avoid incidents. This was particularly significant because Americans found the search and seizure of ships near the coast so infuriating.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> James Madison to James Monroe, July 6, 1807, in *Madison: Writings*, ed. Jack Rakove (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999), 674.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 677.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 678.

<sup>53</sup> Hickey, *A Forgotten Conflict*, 39.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

In spite of these acts of reconciliation, however, Britain stood firm on the issue of impressment. Central to Great Britain's staunch determination to continue impressment, despite American protest, lay the concept of British maritime rights. From the American perspective, by 1812 the British concessions were too little too late, and still did not address America's larger grievances. American honor had been insulted far too often, and national pride inspired a growing sentiment favoring war.

### **Economic Experiments**

American commerce was dramatically affected when Britain issued the Orders-in-Council in 1807, prohibiting neutral nations from shipping to French-controlled ports.<sup>55</sup> For five years, United States envoys sought to persuade the British cabinet to rescind the Orders, to no effect.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, Great Britain accused Americans of exploitation of their neutral flag, stealing commerce and undermining the Empire and funding for the Royal Navy.<sup>57</sup> As further validation of the Orders, Henry Adams notes that after the United States officially banned participation in the international slave trade in 1808, "Orders in Council were used by the British to justify seizing American slavers," as there was "scant effort by the American government...to enforce the ban."<sup>58</sup> This fit in with the British self-identification as the defender of the world against the despotism of Napoleon.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Hickey, *Don't Give Up the Ship!* 23.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Relations: Report on the Causes and Reasons for War, "An Immediate Appeal to Arms," in *The War of 1812: Writings from America's Second War of Independence*, ed. Donald R. Hickey (New York: The Library of America, 2013), 10-22.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 110.

<sup>58</sup> Black, *The War of 1812 in the Age of Napoleon*, 27.

<sup>59</sup> Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 110.

In dealing with Britain's continued depredations on American shipping, beginning in 1807 the United States adopted a series of economic acts aimed at disrupting the British economy. The hope was that the British could be economically forced to suspend practices hostile to American neutral rights. This strategy, known as "peaceable coercion" and strongly advocated by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, formed the foundation of American foreign policy in the years leading up to the War of 1812. Noting the ties to the economic strategies of the American Revolution, A. L. Burt argues, "Congress adopted a measure which inaugurated the policy of commercial restriction as a weapon against foreign powers, a policy that had roots in popular action on the eve of the Revolutionary War."<sup>60</sup>

The first of these acts, the Non-Importation Act of 1806, sought to restrict importation of a short list of British goods that Congress thought America could do without: cloth and clothing of hemp or flax, high-cost wool goods, glass, and some metal items.<sup>61</sup> Although passed in April 1806, the provisions were not put into place until the end of 1807 following news of the *Chesapeake-Leopard* incident, and they were quickly supplemented by the Embargo of 1807.<sup>62</sup> On December 18, 1807, partially in anticipation of new British Orders in Council and the King's Proclamation of October 17 authorizing all British naval officers to fully exercise the right of impressment against neutral merchant shipping,<sup>63</sup> President Jefferson urged Congress to place a full embargo on all shipping in the United States, halting all departure of American vessels from U.S. ports.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Burt, *The United States, Great Britain, and British North America*, 231.

<sup>61</sup> Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 112.

<sup>62</sup> Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812*, 61.

<sup>63</sup> Adams, *History of the United States of America During the Second Administration of Thomas Jefferson*, 2:1040.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1043.

At the same time, the Embargo did not halt or restrict any imports from foreign nations, although the Non-Importation Act was still in place. In calling for an embargo, the president sought to both avoid war and to protect American property by depriving Britain and France of American merchant vessels as targets. Congress passed the Embargo Act of 1807 on December 21, 1807. Upon receiving news of the Embargo Act, the British minister to the United States, David Montagu Erskine, wrote British Foreign Secretary Canning on December 23, stating that he did not think the Embargo was an act of aggression toward Great Britain, but rather a response to Napoleon's enforcement of the Berlin Decree against American vessels.<sup>65</sup> According to Adams, with the Embargo Act of 1807, Jefferson "succeeded in fixing upon the country, beyond recall, the experiment of peaceable coercion."<sup>66</sup>

Facing stiff opposition and circumvention of the Embargo, Jefferson and Congress pushed through a series of supplementary acts aimed at enforcing the original act. The supplements aimed to add penalties and extended not only to shipping from American ports, but also eventually coastal trade, fisheries, whaling, and even interstate commerce in some border states.<sup>67</sup> By the time of the Embargo's 1809 repeal, the goal of economic coercion had utterly failed; the restrictions on American shipping hurt the United States far more than Great Britain or France.<sup>68</sup> In fact, American exports dropped from \$108 million in 1807 to \$22 million in 1809.<sup>69</sup> The internal dissent over the Embargo emphasized sectional and party differences; New England Federalists in particular vehemently opposed and undermined enforcement of the act at every opportunity. Ultimately, while keeping the United States out of war, the Embargo

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 2:1047.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 2:1048.

<sup>67</sup> Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 163.

<sup>68</sup> Burt, *The United States, Great Britain, and British North America*, 261.

<sup>69</sup> Hickey, *A Forgotten Conflict*, 20.

undermined U.S. diplomacy, and played into the hands of both Britain and France by voluntarily depriving each other of American shipping.

Coinciding with the end of Jefferson's tenure as President and after a vote for war failed to pass Congress in February 1809, the Non-Intercourse Act replaced the embattled Embargo in March of that year.<sup>70</sup> This new act, instead of blocking trade with all of Europe only banned exports to Great Britain and France, as well as imports from the belligerents.<sup>71</sup> Another section of the law authorized the President to suspend it in the case of one of the belligerent powers agreeing to drop their predatory tactics. However, enforcement of this new law was difficult, as it did not stop merchants from declaring a different port of call before sailing.<sup>72</sup> The easy circumvention of the law did nothing to halt the loss of government revenues begun with the Embargo. Like the Embargo, the Non-Intercourse law failed to coerce either of the warring European powers into relaxing their stance on American neutral shipping.

Congress passed Macon's Bill Number 2 on May 1, 1810 as a last effort to pursue economic coercion. Replacing the Non-Intercourse Act, Macon's Bill repealed all restrictions on shipping with Europe, with the significant stipulation that the President could reenact Non-Intercourse against either of the belligerents if one were to reverse halt their attacks on American shipping and reverse the edicts empowering them.<sup>73</sup> The British viewed this as surrender, while the French looked for a way to turn it to their advantage.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Scott Silverstone, *Divided Union: The Politics of War in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 84.

<sup>71</sup> Burt, *The United States, Great Britain, and British North America*, 266.

<sup>72</sup> Silverstone, *Divided Union*, 84.

<sup>73</sup> Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812*, 185.

<sup>74</sup> Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 244-245.

Ultimately, the economic experiments utterly failed to coerce either England or France to relax their attacks on American merchants. With the Cadore letter of August 5, 1810, Napoleon rigged the game in his favor. He mentioned that the Berlin and Milan decrees would be suspended on November 1 if Great Britain repealed the Orders in Council or the United States resumed non-intercourse against Britain.<sup>75</sup> Choosing to ignore the conditional nature of the letter, on November 2, 1810, Madison declared that France had acquiesced; however, the Berlin and Milan decrees were never actually revoked. Seeking to maneuver Britain into backing down, the President announced that Non-Intercourse would resume against them within three months.<sup>76</sup> Great Britain, however, refused to reverse course as growing American indignation and nationalism pushed both countries closer to war.

### **Diplomatic Dilemmas**

While the United States sought to use economic coercion to avoid the war sweeping through Europe, American diplomats in London and Paris worked tirelessly to secure recognition of American neutral rights. Sent to England, emissaries James Monroe and William Pinkney were instructed to deal with the issues of impressment of American sailors and violation of American neutrality. However, upon receiving news of the treaty negotiated with Great Britain by Monroe and Pinkney on March 3, 1807, Jefferson refused to submit it to the Senate for ratification.<sup>77</sup> According to Jefferson, “the only way he could account for our ministers having signed such a treaty under such circumstances was by supposing that in the first panic of the

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<sup>75</sup> Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812*, 187.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>77</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the President*, 291.

French imperial decree they had supposed a war to be inevitable, and that America must make common cause with England.”<sup>78</sup>

The Monroe-Pinkney treaty made no reference to impressment, and a note was attached by the British commissioners to the United States to the effect that the King would require “American resistance to the enforcement of Napoleon’s edict” before the treaty could be ratified.<sup>79</sup> At the heart of Jefferson’s rejection was a belief “that British contemptuousness of American sovereignty was intolerable to his countrymen, as it was to him.”<sup>80</sup> In Jefferson’s own correspondence with Monroe dated March 21, 1807, he wrote “that it will be considered as a hard treaty when it is known. The British commissioners appear to have screwed every article as far as it would bear, to have taken every thing, and yielded nothing.” Further instructions to Monroe clarified:

If the treaty cannot be put into an acceptable form, then the next best thing is to back out of the negotiation as well as we can, letting that die away insensibly; but, in the mean time, agreeing informally, that both parties shall act on the principles of the treaty, so as to preserve that friendly understanding which we so sincerely desire, until the one or the other may be disposed to yield the points which divide us. This will leave you to follow your desire of coming home, as soon as you see that the amendment of the treaty is desperate. The power of continuing the negotiations will pass over to Mr. Pinckney, who, by procrastinations, can let it die away, and give us time, the most precious of all things to us.<sup>81</sup>

Unable to reach an understanding on the issue of impressment, negotiations halted until 1809.

To offer small encouragements and deter further embargoes from the United States, in 1809 the British Cabinet issued new Orders-in-Council, opening the Baltic to American

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<sup>78</sup> Adams, *History of the United States of America During the Second Administration of Thomas Jefferson*, 1:899.

<sup>79</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the President*, 408.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>81</sup> Jefferson to Monroe, March 21, 1807, in *Memoir, Correspondence and Miscellanies from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Thomas Jefferson Randolph (The Library of Alexandria, 2008), Kindle Locations 30354-30355.

shipping, while maintaining a general blockade of ports controlled by Napoleon.<sup>82</sup> According to Bradford Perkins, “The Cabinet assumed, or strongly hoped, that disappearance of the orders of 1807 would lead to better relations with the United States.”<sup>83</sup> However, in light of failed negotiations with British Minister Erskine, America did not respond as favorably as Great Britain hoped.

Minister Erskine took it upon himself to negotiate beyond his orders from the British Foreign Secretary. In the agreement signed April 19, 1809, he even went so far as to promise that the Orders-in-Council would be repealed if the Non-Intercourse law were lifted from Britain and applied only against France. Erskine’s agreements with the U.S. State Department were disavowed by the British Cabinet as soon as they received account of the negotiation, and he was immediately recalled from the U.S. by the British Foreign Secretary, George Canning.<sup>84</sup> Further negotiations stalled as the war in Europe escalated. Neither Great Britain nor France were willing to back down, and the rising tide of American nationalism eventually swept away the failure of these diplomatic efforts.

### **Continental Causes**

The western frontier of the United States, more than any other section, embraced a sense of national pride. George Dangerfield notes the stirrings of nationalism from western politicians on the issue of impressment. “When men like Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay brought it out, they did so in all good faith. Their high spirit was affronted, and when they said that they longed

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<sup>82</sup> Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 207.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Stagg, *The War of 1812*, 34.

to re-establish the national character, they meant every word of it.”<sup>85</sup> While impressment became the driving cause for war, settlers living on the frontier in the Old Northwest had experienced years of growing concerns and conflict.

Hostility along the western frontier of the United States persisted from the time of the American Revolution. This was not only Native American-white hostility, but also Anglo-American conflict. Tensions between Americans and the British arose immediately following the conclusion of the American Revolution with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. The British refused to abandon their posts in the Old Northwest, even on land that had been officially ceded to the United States.<sup>86</sup> While simmering resentments over continued British occupation kept the frontier settlers on the verge of conflict, Jay’s treaty, negotiated with Great Britain in 1794 and effective February 29, 1796, moved the situation to a back burner. Article II of the treaty stipulated that “His Majesty will withdraw all His Troops and Garrisons from all Posts and Places within the Boundary Lines assigned by the Treaty of Peace to the United States.”<sup>87</sup>

Concern, fear, and resentment toward the British continued along the frontier, in spite of the reprieve gained by Jay’s Treaty. American settlers believed the British were behind every clash with Native Americans. As Reginald Horsman notes, “Since the bloody days of the American Revolution, the West had looked with anger at the British-Indian alliance. This hatred of British frontier policy had been kept alive by the frontier wars of 1783 to 1794 and now was revived by the renewed British backing for the Indians.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952), 39.

<sup>86</sup> Horsman, *The Frontier*, 94.

<sup>87</sup> Jay’s Treaty, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/jay.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/jay.asp)

<sup>88</sup> Horsman, *The Frontier*, 168.

Likewise, economic concerns confronted the frontier states. The restricted trade with Great Britain and Europe severely affected the livelihood of the settlers, as they were agricultural producers who suddenly found themselves with no available market.<sup>89</sup> They placed the blame squarely on British depredations of American shipping.<sup>90</sup> However, the concern over British designs with the Native Americans was deeply ingrained in the Western psyche. Horsman argues: “Though it seems likely that the dominant motives of the West were related to British maritime actions, the importance, in certain areas, of the fear of British instigation of the Indians should not be underestimated. It seems likely in fact that, particularly after Tippecanoe, the suspected British backing of Indian depredations was of definite importance in bringing matters to a head, and in convincing the already aroused westerners that some warlike action against Great Britain was needed.”<sup>91</sup>

Often linked in American minds to the War of 1812, the 1811 battle of Tippecanoe offers some insight into the mindset of western frontiersmen. A Shawnee leader known as the Prophet and his brother, Tecumseh, formed an Ohio Valley confederation of Native American tribes; this caused obvious concern among white settlers, leading to confrontation.<sup>92</sup> In 1811, Indiana Territorial Governor, General William Henry Harrison, led a small army to Prophetstown, Indiana with the intent to end Native American raids on frontier settlements. On November 7, Harrison’s force was attacked by the confederation, but the Americans held their ground and eventually burned Prophetstown.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Reginald Horsman, “Western War Aims, 1811-1812.” *Indiana Magazine of History* 53, no. 1 (March 1957), 5.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>92</sup> Hickey, *Don’t Give Up the Ship!* 30.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

While the British were not involved at Tippecanoe, Americans noted the Native Americans' use of British weapons and assumed Great Britain to be behind the increasing conflict.<sup>94</sup> According to Horsman, "The encounter at Tippecanoe on November 7, 1811, crystallized this western sentiment and convinced the settlers that British intrigues were bringing desolation to the frontier. Whatever the British policy was in reality, the American settlers undoubtedly were convinced that it was inciting the Indians to aggressive warfare."<sup>95</sup> Seeing the hands of the British descending from Canada to inflame the western tribes, frontier Americans began to rally around the nationalist cry. Horsman further notes, "Moreover, the anger of the frontiersmen at the British lack of regard for American rights at sea cannot be viewed simply in terms of economic difficulties, for the frontiersmen were also most sensitive to any insults to American national honor. They showed the ardent nationalism common to empire builders... They were carving a nation out of the wilderness..."<sup>96</sup>

Even the President's War Message offers an example of the persistence of the belief in British interference along the frontier. Regarding Madison's grievance about British incitement of Native American hostilities in his war message, George Dangerfield argues:

In these words, Mr. Madison connected the British with that singular chain of events which led to the battle of Tippecanoe... For though the British record in their dealings with the Indians was an unsavory one—though there was nothing fanciful in the Western belief that they would not hesitate to loose upon the frontier all the horrors and miseries of an Indian war; though their innocence in this particular instance was the innocence of people who were not yet ready to be guilty—it is only just to admit that, if they had had their way, there would have been no battle of Tippecanoe at all.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>95</sup> Horsman, "Western War Aims", 13.

<sup>96</sup> Horsman, *The Frontier*, 169.

<sup>97</sup> Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings*, 24.

However, the Old Northwest was not the only area concerned with Native American hostilities and British conspiracies. Following a Creek raid on a white settlement on May 12, 1812, Andrew Jackson, as major general of the Tennessee militia, requested permission from Tennessee Governor William Blount to respond in kind. Citing the unrest following Tecumseh's recent visit to the Creek Nation, as well as underscoring the firmly held American belief in British machinations to incite Native American unrest along the frontier, Jackson noted "That incendiary, the emissary of the *Prophet*, who is himself the tool of England, has caused our frontier to be stained with blood, and our peaceful citizens to fly in terror from their once happy abodes."<sup>98</sup>

Displaying the growing sense of American nationalism with his call to the Tennessee militia on March 7, 1812, Andrew Jackson declared:

But we are going to fight for the reestablishment of our national character, misunderstood and vilified at home and abroad; for the protection of our maritime citizens, impressed on board British ships of war and compelled to fight the battles of our enemies against ourselves; to vindicate our right to a free trade, and open a market for the productions of our soil, now perishing on our hands because the mistress of the ocean has forbid us to carry them to any foreign nation; in fine, to seek some indemnity for past injuries, some security against future aggressions, by the conquest of all the British dominions upon the continent of north America.<sup>99</sup>

Dangerfield also notes the stirrings of nationalism from western politicians on the issue of impressment. "When men like Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay brought it out, they did so in all good faith. Their high spirit was affronted, and when they said that they longed to re-establish the national character, they meant every word of it."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Andrew Jackson to Willie Blount, June 5, 1812, " in *The War of 1812: Writings from America's Second War of Independence*, ed. Donald R. Hickey (New York: The Library of America, 2013), 25-26.

<sup>99</sup> Andrew Jackson to 2nd Division Volunteers, March 7, 1812, in *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, ed. John Spencer Bassett, accessed March 1, 2016, [http://www.loc.gov/resource/maj.01009\\_0218\\_0222](http://www.loc.gov/resource/maj.01009_0218_0222)

<sup>100</sup> Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings*, 39.

## Rhetorical Reasons

Rhetoric and oratory in Congress played a major role in leading the call for war in 1812. After the failure of peaceable coercion, America elected a much more radical Congress in 1810. Taking office in 1811, this Congress embodied not only the expanding population of America, but also the budding nationalism emanating from the frontier. Known as the “War Hawk Congress”, the Twelfth Congress voted for war with Great Britain in 1812. What was different about this assembly? Frustration with the failed economic and diplomatic policies led to a formative shift in power toward the broader nationalistic view of frontier politicians.

Examining the War Hawk influence in the Twelfth Congress, Harry Fritz maintains:

The Twelfth Congress opened with a round of fiery speeches, setting the tone of a session which led to a declaration of war. These belligerent addresses have long excited historians, who see in them the emergence on the national scene of a new generation of Republicans, the rejection of the commercial policies of the past, a determination to fight, an effort to awe Great Britain by rhetorical over-kill, and an attempt to influence public opinion and arouse support for war. But the speeches served a more important, internal purpose, one which attests to the function of leadership. They promulgated an ideology. They employed symbolism as an emotive force for Republican unity, and they were aimed at other Congressmen. The War Hawk speeches were for home consumption.<sup>101</sup>

Many historians have made careers out of identifying the War Hawks, believing that they pushed the nation to war. Fritz, writing about the War Hawks, argues that they “constituted the leadership of the majority party,” and that “Congress had the upper hand in dealing with the President.”<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, J.C.A. Stagg contends that the War Hawks “were not a legislative faction, nor were they the makers of American policy. Rather, they served as a channel through which administration measures were transmitted to, and justified before, their fellow legislators.”<sup>103</sup> Regardless of their role or relationship to forming or following national

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<sup>101</sup> Harry Fritz, “The War Hawks of 1812”, 33.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>103</sup> Stagg, *The War of 1812*, 41.

policy, the War Hawks represented the rise of American nationalism, and the shift from sectional concerns to national concerns.

At the same time, President Madison also displayed a change from the economic policies of the prior administration to seeing war as a solution. Writing to Thomas Jefferson on May 25, 1812, Madison discussed the “puzzling” problem of steering the nation toward war with only Great Britain and not France as well. “To go to war with England and not with France arms the federalists with new matter, and divides the Republicans some of whom with the Quids make a display of impartiality. To go to war against both, presents a thousand difficulties, above all, that of shutting all the ports of the Continent of Europe against our Cruisers who can do little without the use of them.” Later he notes that in the event of “this triangular war”, both belligerents might desire a prolonged conflict with the United States despite all reason, “as has prevailed in the past conduct of both.”<sup>104</sup> Jefferson replied on May 30, 1812, agreeing with Madison’s concerns that avoiding a triangular war

would prevent our Eastern capitalists and seamen from employment in privateering, take away the only chance of conciliating them, & keep them at home idle to swell the discontents; it would compleatly disarm us of the most powerful weapon we can employ against Gr. Britain, by shutting every port to our prizes, & yet would not add a single vessel to their number; it would shut every market to our agricultural productions, and engender impatience & discontent with that class which in fact composes the nation, it would insulate us in general negociations for peace, making all the parties our opposers.<sup>105</sup>

This correspondence shows not only Madison’s recognition of war as the only viable solution in light of economic and diplomatic failure, but even that his predecessor Thomas Jefferson, the greatest advocate of peaceable coercion, was considering war.

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<sup>104</sup> James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, May 25, 1812, in *Madison: Writings*, ed. Jack Rakove (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999), 684.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, May 30, 1812, in *The War of 1812: Writings from America’s Second War of Independence*, ed. Donald R. Hickey (New York: The Library of America, 2013), 23-24.

Led by noted southern War Hawk, John C. Calhoun, and following the President's War Message in 1812, the House Committee on Foreign Relations argued in their June 3 report on the Causes and Reasons for War, "The United States must act as an independent Nation, and assert their rights, and avenge their wrongs, according to their own estimate of them, with the party who commits them, holding it responsible for its own misdeeds, unmitigated by those of another."<sup>106</sup> Further cementing the national nature of the rhetoric for war, the report noted:

The effect produced by this attack on the lawful Commerce of the United States, was such as might have been expected from a virtuous, independent, and highly injured people. But one sentiment pervaded the whole American Nation. No local interests were regarded, no sordid motives felt. Without looking to the parts which suffered most, the invasion of our rights was considered a common cause, and from one extremity of our union to the other, was heard the voice of an united People, calling on their Government to avenge the wrongs and vindicate the rights and honor of the Country.<sup>107</sup>

Concluding the report, the committee appealed to both the legacy of patriotism and the rising tide of nationalism by recommending war:

Your Committee, believing, that the freeborn sons of America are worthy to enjoy the liberty which their Fathers purchased at the price of so much blood and treasure, and seeing in the measures adopted by Great Britain, a course commenced and persisted in, which must lead to a loss of National character & Independence, feel no hesitation in advising resistance by force—In which the Americans of the present day will prove to the enemy and to the World, that we have not only inherited that liberty which our Fathers gave us, but also the will & power to maintain it.<sup>108</sup>

Though long an advocate for diplomatic solutions, Secretary of State James Monroe also weighed in regarding the necessity for war in a letter dated June 13, 1812, just days before the formal declaration of war by President Madison:

Nothing would satisfy the present Ministry of England short of unconditional submission, which it was impossible to make. This fact being completely ascertained the only remaining alternative was to get ready for fighting, and to begin as soon as we were

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<sup>106</sup> House Committee on Foreign Relations: Report on the Causes and Reasons for War, 20.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>108</sup> House Committee on Foreign Relations: Report on the Causes and Reasons for War, 22.

ready. This was the plan of the administration when Congress met in December last; the President's message announced it; and every step taken by the administration since has led to it. The delay, it was hoped would give to Great Britain an opportunity to reflect further on the subject, and to change her policy. But the misfortune is that we have been so long dealing in the small way of embargoes, non-intercourse, and non-importation, with menaces of war, &c., that the British government has not believed us. Thus the argument of war, with its consequences has not had its due weight with that government. We must actually get to war before the intention to make it will be credited either here or abroad.<sup>109</sup>

Later justifying the war in his second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1813, Madison asserted the war "was not declared on the part of the United States until it had been long made on them, in reality though not in name; until arguments and expostulations had been exhausted; until a positive declaration had been received that the wrongs provoking it would not be discontinued; nor until this last appeal could no longer be delayed without breaking down the spirit of the nation, destroying all confidence in itself and in its political institutions..."<sup>110</sup>

### Conclusion

On December 24, 1814, the United States and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812 and restoring the *status quo ante bellum*.<sup>111</sup> With that restoration, none of the American war aims of British concession on the issues of impressment and neutral rights were satisfied. Overall, neither the war, nor its resolution appeared to go in America's favor. The British burned Washington in August 1814, and with the wars winding down in Europe, Great

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<sup>109</sup> James Monroe to John Taylor, June 13, 1812, in *The War of 1812: Writings from America's Second War of Independence*, ed. Donald R. Hickey (New York: The Library of America, 2013), 31.

<sup>110</sup> James Madison, Second Inaugural Address, in *Madison: Writings*, ed. Jack Rakove (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999), 693.

<sup>111</sup> Hickey, *Don't Give Up the Ship!* 11.

Britain would soon have more resources to devote toward a war in North America, making the negotiations precarious at best.

In spite of the lackluster conclusion to the war, America was on the rise. With the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the British relaxed their antagonistic maritime policies.<sup>112</sup> The West beckoned, international trade picked up, and a new generation of politicians began to shape the nation. Writing to his father in 1816, John Quincy Adams noted:

The longer I live, the stronger I find my national feelings grow upon me; and the less of my affections are compassed by partial localities—My system of politics more and more inclines to strengthen the Union, and its Government...But it is the contemplation of our external Relations, that makes me specially anxious to strengthen our National Government—The conduct and issue of the late War has undoubtedly raised our national character in the consideration of the world.<sup>113</sup>

Adams grasped the direction of the United States, and the optimism of a burgeoning national character. Unfortunately, this optimism could not extend to Native Americans, who would lose ever more land and life to the expansion of the republic. Likewise, the debate over slavery loomed ominously on the horizon, tied directly to that same expansion. Manifest Destiny would soon call, and American nationalism again answered.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>113</sup> John Quincy Adams to John Adams, August 1, 1816, Founders Online, National Archives, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-03-02-3154>

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