Let the American Flag Wave in the Aegean:
America Responds to the Greek War of Independence (1821 – 1824)

by

Charles L. Booth

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
New York University
May 2005

Marilyn Young

UMI Number: 3170806

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In submitting this dissertation, I feel a special affection and appreciation for all those who have accompanied me on my journey of intellectual discovery. In particular I am grateful to Professor Stan Katz, who inspired me to undertake the course of graduate study which is now culminating. I thank also Professor Tom Bender, whose engaging comments led me to pursue my graduate studies at NYU. I thank Professor Bender more particularly for his probing questions and wise suggestions on the work before you. I am especially grateful to my advisor, Professor Marilyn Young, whose persistent and wise coaching brought focus and energy to my work. And I also want to thank Professor Stewart Stehlin, who taught, or certainly tried to teach, me to think like a diplomat.

ABSTRACT

The dissertation focuses on a topic of surprising cultural and political importance in the United States from 1821 to 1824, namely, the Greek War of Independence from Turkey. Each chapter provides context helpful in assessing how cultural values interacted with political precedents and political expediency in defining the response of America's leaders to the Greek struggle for freedom.

The assessment itself leads to two conclusions. First, American response to the Greek War reinforced and helped to define the racist ethnocentrism which many Americans of the time came to embrace as a fulcrum of their own national identity. Second, domestic political pressures in favor of committing the United States Government to active substantive support for the Greek struggle greatly influenced one of the best known statements of American foreign policy of the nineteenth century, namely, the Monroe Doctrine of December 1823.

Following is a roadmap which shows how the dissertation builds to its two conclusions.

- AMERICA'S QUEST FOR CIVIC IDENTITY
    - HOW THE GREEK CAUSE BECAME A MATTER OF VITAL IMPORTANCE WITHIN THE UNITED STATES
    - WHY AMERICANS LINKED THEIR CIVIC IDENTITY TO THE GREEK CAUSE
- THE LATIN AMERICAN PRECEDENT: THE CONFLICT BETWEEN JOHN QUINCY ADAMS AND HENRY CLAY

- THE CHALLENGES POSED BY EXTENDING DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION
    - GREECE REQUESTS DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION
    - RELATIONS WITH TURKEY AND THE GREAT EUROPEAN POWERS
    - ASSESSING THE RISK OF CONFLICT WITH OTHER NATIONS
    - THE GREEK REQUEST ANSWERED: A SYNTHESIS OF PRECEDENTS, PRINCIPLES AND INTERESTS

- UNFINISHED BUSINESS: THE INTERACTION OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, CULTURAL VALUES AND DOMESTIC POLITICS
    - HOW TO RECONCILE THE NATION'S VALUES AND THE NATION'S NEEDS FOR SECURITY
    - THE PRESIDENT'S 1823 ANNUAL MESSAGE AND CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSE: THE FUSION OF FOREIGN POLICY WITH DOMESTIC POLITICS

The dissertation focuses on available archival material within the context of what was manifest at the time rather than offering a view of what would be reasonable or apparent to a person of own time.

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INTRODUCTION

At first glance it is surprising, even startling, to suggest that events at the eastern end of the Mediterranean played an important role in American cultural and political life in the 1820s. This dissertation will document that one episode in particular did play such a role. It was the Greek War of Independence from Turkey, an armed conflict which began in what is now the Republic of Greece in March 1821.

At the time Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Edward Everett, John Quincy Adams, President Monroe and former Presidents Madison and Jefferson all became preoccupied with what was happening at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. All devoted much thought as to whether, and if so how, the United States Government should support the Greek cause. Leading American literary figures, including John Greenleaf Whittier and William Cullen Bryant, wrote and spoke eloquently on the subject of Greek freedom.

What did America's cultural and political leaders see in the Greek struggle for freedom? How did they respond to the Greek cause? In exploring these questions we will make what the historian Bernard Bailyn once described as "an effort to understand the world [of the past] as it was experienced by those who lived in it."[1]

The evidence presented will show that many politically active Americans felt that their civic identity as Americans mandated United States Government support for the cause of Greek freedom. We will see that it was feelings of civic duty that gave the Greek cause political significance and power within the United

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[1] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Preface:v.

States. We will explore how America's political leaders used popular commitment to the Greek cause in jockeying for political power within the United States. We will consider whether, and if so how, the nation's commercial and security interests clashed with the basic values and principles which America's political leaders felt should govern the nation's foreign policy. We will examine how they reconciled their positions in ways that supported their own personal political interests.

Our purpose is neither dry nor arcane. It is to bring to life a history where cultural values carried with them the ingredients of political power. We will proceed by examining the circumstances surrounding a very specific issue of foreign policy: *Should the United States Government use its sovereign power to extend diplomatic recognition to what its representatives claimed was the Republic of Greece?* In our exploration the emphasis will be on the word "circumstances"—what historians are apt to define as context. As we examine the context in which this question arose, we will see that the perception of personal and political interests was what drove actions. We will also see that these perceptions of interest in their turn were importantly influenced and determined by culture. They were conditioned by time and place.[2]

The time and place in question is very specific: the world inhabited by America's cultural and political leaders from 1821 to 1824.

To judge by what they said and by what they did in responding to the Greek cause, America's political and cultural leaders were struggling to articulate the responsibilities of their own citizenship, and in parallel fashion they were struggling to define the responsibilities of the government that represented a nation founded on the principles of freedom and republicanism. Overall, their writings and their speeches on the subject of Greek freedom evidenced that they felt an urgent need to come together for the purpose of pledging allegiance to a common cause. The reasons for this need are not hard to find.

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[2] Hans Morgenthau gives an excellent analysis of the interrelationship of culture and political interest in Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations,* 8ff.

At the time of the Greek War of Independence, Americans lived in a world where there was little to foster a high level of confidence that the United States would avoid being fragmented into smaller entities. Recently concluded debates over whether Missouri should enter the Union as a free or as a slave state had generated vicious antagonisms which pitted Northern and Southern states against each other. So intense were these antagonisms that people felt that the nation might well be torn into pieces.[3]

There was also the opposite danger, that the nation just might drift apart due to indifference. There were no pressing issues of national concern to galvanize the nation into either vigorous debate or shared commitments to a common cause. The diplomatic historian Ernest May captured this reality quite aptly:

> National questions concerning the extension of slavery into the West, the building of roads and canals appeared to have been settled by compromise, not likely to be attacked except marginally for years. Protective tariffs were not much discussed. Relations between the Federal Government and state banks had not yet attracted much notice.[4]

True, there were repeated and vigorous assertions of American patriotism in the years leading up to the Greek revolution. Looking back, one can argue that they were evidence of a vigorous emerging American nationalism. However, one does need to question why emphatic and repeated protestations were necessary if people of the time felt that the nation's future and its values were really on a stable and secure foundation.[5] The historian Gordon Wood has suggested that people of the time actually felt a diffuse sense of malaise and psychological instability. Older social ties dissolved as a hierarchical society became republican. "In the half century following the Revolution . . . in a thousand different ways connections that had held people together for centuries . . . were strained and severed."[6]

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[3] Jefferson to Richard Rush, October, 20, 1820, in Jefferson, *Writings*, 15:284, wherein Jefferson confides his fears that divisions over slavery "will tear the nation asunder."

[4] May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 136.

In itself the response made to the Greek War of Independence suggests quite strongly that educated and politically active Americans, and those in positions of leadership, did in fact need something that their environment was not providing. To judge by their actions, that something was the need to commit and to share in sacrifice for a common cause, a cause which embodied values and ideals which people throughout the nation could embrace and actively support.

In 1812 John Calhoun had expressed this anxiety quite aptly. As he saw it, "Our union cannot safely stand on the cold calculation of interest alone . . . . We cannot without hazard neglect that which makes man love to be a member of an extensive community."[7]

Looking back from the present day, the historian Fred Somkin stressed that the malaise which Calhoun articulated remained in place at the time of the Greek revolt from Turkish rule: "Roughly from the Peace of 1815 to the death of Thoreau

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[5] In a July 4, 1817 speech, M. M. Noah expressed this general anxiety with these words: "Cast your eyes around, fellow citizens . . . and you will see how effectively ambition, faction and tyranny have swept every republic from the earth." Cited in Somkin, *Unquiet Eagle,* 13.

[6] Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 306.

[7] Calhoun, *Papers*, 1:145. Cited in May, *The Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 47.

America was engaged in a quest for a definition of self that would give meaning to the American past, present and future."[8]

How educated and politically active Americans and their government responded to the Greek struggle to gain freedom from Turkish rule was an important chapter in this prolonged quest. At the time, "The cultural setting was less a backdrop than a vital cog in the workings of foreign affairs."[9] This cultural setting not only went a long way in defining responses to the Greek cause. How the United States Government and its political leaders responded to the Greek War helped define the principles that would subsequently guide the nation's foreign policy. And their responses influenced political and cultural change within the United States.

President Monroe's 1823 Annual Message to Congress illustrates how this process of change unfolded. In ways now little appreciated, the Greek War of Independence occupied a major role in his policy statement.[10] The key part of the message subsequently became known as the Monroe Doctrine.

In his message Monroe qualified the circumstances under which the nation would sacrifice to protect and promote freedom outside its borders. As he expressed it, the United States Government would act, and act with great bravery, to support freedom. The nation would, if necessary, stand up to the most powerful empires on earth. However, to justify action rather than rhetoric, Monroe made it clear that—as a matter of principle—the United States would intervene if, and only if, supporting the cause of human freedom also furthered the nation's vital interests. As he presented it, this meant that in the New World the United States would use force to protect the freedom of the Latin American republics from hostile actions by the major European powers. In the Eastern Hemisphere the United States would speak out in support of the cause of freedom. But on the far side of the Atlantic, the outcome of struggles for freedom did not, to judge by Monroe's statements, affect the nation's vital interests in any way comparable to the situation in the New World. As a result, in those struggles for freedom the actions of the United States would be those of a "neutral."

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[8] Somkin, *Unquiet Eagle*, 3.

[9] Bradford Perkins, "Canvas and the Prism," in *Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations,* 1:9.

[10] *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess. 40:11-23, President's Annual Message.

In earlier debates over support for the freedom of the people of Latin America from Spanish imperial rule, Henry Clay had posed a very different set of principles. For Clay:

> What was the United States about if not human liberty? How can the American people enjoy its blessings and not feel a compelling obligation to extend a helping hand to those who suffer oppression and persecution? How can they knowingly turn away from their duty to the rest of mankind?[11]

Monroe's secretary of state, John Quincy Adams, had vigorously opposed such a broad definition of the nation's moral responsibility. He had sought to limit actions of the United States Government to cases where the nation's own commercial and security interests were at stake. In chapter 3 we will explore in detail the battle Clay and Adams waged over the principles which should govern the nation's foreign policy. In the arena of domestic politics their positions had not only been divisive, they had been irreconcilable.

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[11] *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 2223-2229. Cited in Remini, *Henry Clay*, 175.

With Adams' advice, Monroe in his annual message did find a way to reconcile these disparate positions. He did this by supporting the use of force to support the cause of freedom, but at the same time qualifying the conditions under which the government would act. On the one hand, Monroe demonstrated the courage and the commitment of the nation to act to support the cause of freedom. On the other hand, he demonstrated discipline and restraint in deciding on what circumstances justified action. Those circumstances were the nation's own interests, not the welfare of others outside the nation's borders.

Monroe's approach led to what would prove to be an effective political synthesis between those who supported using the power of the United States Government to support the cause of freedom and those who urged restraint lest such actions damage the nation itself.

Rarely asked is whether, in applying his principles, Monroe allowed the Greek War of Independence to influence his policy statements—most importantly his clear distinction between the New and the Old World. Historians have generally assumed that the distinction was perfectly natural, built into what he wanted to say about Latin America. One needs to explore more deeply why Monroe felt it necessary to make the distinction.

This dissertation will argue that the Greek War of Independence made the distinction vitally important and necessary. Among the facts we will document and explore are the following: Monroe, and Adams in particular, needed to diffuse domestic political pressures to become involved in the Greek struggle. Monroe's vigorous assertion of the nation's willingness to use armed force to defend the freedom of the recently formed republics of Latin America did much to deflect the pressures they faced. It validated their bravery in the face of danger and, in the process, tended to validate the civic virtue of the nation itself. As a result, any need to display bravery in defense of Greek freedom became less pressing.

If Monroe's position on conflicts outside the New World was not grounded in domestic politics, one must ask why he felt it necessary to make a clear distinction between what he would do in the New World and in the Old World. Based on the evidence now available to us, none of the European powers had raised the point of United States intervention in political arrangements within or among the European powers. If Monroe's only purpose had been to dissuade foreign powers from intervening in the New World, his commitments with respect to the Old World appear gratuitous, if not evidence of weakness. To have avoided acerbating relations with Turkey and the major European powers, Monroe needed merely to have refrained from acting in ways which provoked the European powers or, alternatively, to have given assurances through diplomatic channels either in Washington or through United States ministers stationed in the major European capitals.

The last two chapters of the dissertation will explore in detail the role the Greek War of Independence played in what became the Monroe Doctrine. The basic conclusion reached is this: When put in the political context he faced in late 1823, Monroe enunciated his policy of neutrality in conflicts outside the Western Hemisphere for one very concrete reason, the revolt then under way in Greece against Turkish rule. The cabinet had earlier debated whether to use the American fleet to support the Greek cause. Such debates were now over. The United States, if Monroe had his way, would not initiate any use of force to protect and defend the cause of freedom in the Old World. It would refrain from doing so as a clear matter of policy. Behind the policy was a principle, clearly contained in Monroe's message. The United States would depart from its stance of what he termed "neutrality" only where the vital interests of the United States were at stake.

There were no practical commercial or security interests to be served by acting to support the Greek cause. As a result, under Monroe's stated principles there could be no justification for departing from what he defined as "neutrality." In his message Monroe was very clear that these were the criteria which would justify the United States Government departing from a position of neutrality. Greece did not even remotely qualify.

Monroe was not at all clear, however, on how far the nation could or should go in supporting the cause of Greek freedom while still staying within the bounds of what he had defined as neutrality. In the text of his message, one will look in vain for a clear statement indicating whether he felt that an extension of diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic was or was not consistent with his definition of neutrality. One can actually find strong evidence that Monroe was receptive to Congress exploring the issue. At the time of his message, debate over whether the United States Government should take steps leading to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic was at the forefront of public opinion. Monroe's lack of clarity on the criteria short of war which delimited the actions of a neutral cannot be ascribed to accidental oversight.

In January 1824 a prolonged congressional debate on whether to extend diplomatic recognition to the Greeks did in fact take place. (We will explore the substance of that debate in chapter 9.) The rhetoric displayed by Daniel Webster, Henry Clay and others was magnificent and moving. Nevertheless, the debate did not lead the House of Representatives to any conclusion. The result ended up leaving Monroe and future Presidents much more securely in charge of the nation's foreign policy. On the very important issue of executive power within the nation's government, the Greek Revolution against Turkish rule ended up playing a significant facilitating role. Debates on recognition of the Latin American republics were followed by debates on recognition of a Greek republic. There the chain ended. There would be no comparable congressional debates in the future. The executive would largely control initiatives leading to the diplomatic recognition of newly formed states.

More important was the principle that would in the future govern the issue of extending tangible, substantive support to those who were struggling to achieve political freedom. Going forward, emotional and ideological impulses to support even the noble cause of freedom would not validate more than eloquence and rhetoric from the United States Government. In the future the civic, moral and Christian duty of an individual citizen of the United States might well generate obligations to act and to sacrifice without creating corresponding obligations on the part of the Government. Demarked separations of governmental and private duties and responsibilities would be more clearly delineated. In addition it would become accepted doctrine that the United States had a right and also a responsibility to act forcefully to deflect the major European powers from intervening in the Western Hemisphere. In the Eastern Hemisphere, where such interests were deemed to be absent, the United States was not morally bound (or justified) in intervening in a comparable manner.

These distinctions did have staying power. For example, in 1852 the leader of the heroic uprising of the Hungarian people against imperial Austrian rule toured the United States seeking support for a cause very similar to that of the Greeks, namely, national independence from imperial rule; popular sovereignty based on national identity. Daniel Webster, then secretary of state, spoke eloquently in favor of the Hungarian cause. However, Webster said nothing which could be even remotely considered a promise of tangible aid or support from the United States Government.[12] Webster's actions were consistent with both the principles and the policies Monroe had advocated in his 1823 message.

For American culture, the issue of whether to extend diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic ended up being important for very different reasons. Response to the Greek cause helped to move public discourse away from previous commitments to the universal rights which were enshrined in the words of the nation's own Declaration of Independence. With few exceptions, such distancing was true for those who supported active involvement in the Greek cause by the United States Government and also for those who opposed that commitment. Both centered their case in terms of whether the Greek people had the ethnic and racial characteristics which justified substantive, official American support by the Government which represented the people of the United States. Recently concluded debates urging active support for efforts by the people of Latin America to throw off Spanish imperial rule had emphasized the very different 18th century ideal of universal rights and the moral Christian duty of the government of a free people to act to support fellow human beings who were striving to achieve these rights.

In Greece (but not in Latin America) many of America' political and cultural leaders asserted that there was a shared political heritage founded in the rule of law and also in democratic institutions of government, both of which had originated in ancient Greece. Further strengthening the sense of fraternity were repeated reports of the great heroism and sacrifice by the Greek people, efforts which newspaper reports linked to the bravery which Americans believed they had displayed in their own struggle for freedom. Looked at this way, the Greek people and the American people of the early 19th century became members of the same clan. They were brothers. Many Americans of the time believed that this fraternity generated moral claims for support from the people and the government of the United States which were stronger and different from those of other peoples.

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[12] Pappas, "United States and the Greek War of Independence," 77.

At the time of the Greek revolt from Turkish rule, such a feeling of fraternity was very meaningful. Americans were preoccupied with what the historian Reginald Horsman described as the "Romantic emphasis on the uniqueness, the peculiar qualities of individuals and peoples."[13] Writing in 1824, George Bancroft expressed this sentiment quite forcefully. As Bancroft saw it, "The child inherits the physical and moral characteristics of the race to which he belongs."[14] We will see throughout this dissertation repeated examples which indicate that Bancroft's judgment was one which many others shared. It was in fact a strong ingredient underpinning efforts to support the Greek cause.

There were consequences both positive and negative to what we would today call ethnocentric racism. The positives included: a stated willingness to commit to and to sacrifice for the common good of the community; a shared respect for the rule of law; a shared commitment to the institutions of democratic rule; and a religious and civic commitment to work for the dignity and right to freedom of others. Such values would have lasting positive importance for the nation. They were actually quite similar to the civic responsibility which led to the anti-slavery and abolitionist movements of the following decades.

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[13] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 25.

[14] Bancroft, *Doctrine of Temperaments*, cited in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 163.

In one respect, however, response to the Greek War of Independence was certainly not forward-looking, at least not as we have come to think of the term. In the narrative which follows, women play no active, assertive role. They appear as the victims of Turkish barbarism. In the narrative they are helpless—or, more accurately, they were portrayed as such. To judge by published reports, the exercise of a freely given power to extend protection seemed to provide opportunity for an affirmation which fused one's manliness into one's identity as a citizen of the United States. It was an affirmation which demonstrated contempt for, even a courting of, danger; self-mastery to control and to direct one's own actions; and above all the ability to extend protection and support to others. In this process women were vitally necessary. They enabled American statesmen and cultural leaders of the time to articulate and demonstrate qualities which they felt were central to their own identity as free men, men who were living up to their responsibilities as free and independent citizens of the United States. Such a context provided little opportunity for women themselves to assume assertive, much less aggressive, positions on the issue of whether the United States Government should act to extend diplomatic recognition to the Greeks.

Unfortunately, the response of America's cultural and political leaders to the Greek cause also contained other qualities. These were culturally significant and far from benign, at least from the perspective of the early 21st century.

In responding to the Greek cause, Americans ended up defining themselves (and by kinship defining the Greeks) in terms which excluded those whom they felt differed in terms of religion, race or ethnicity.[15] Rights, duties, and responsibilities tended to become contingent on whether people were members of the same clan or tribe. Such a process of exclusion was fraught with danger. Over time it would encourage a sense of entitlement denied to others. By the 1840s it would help justify a Manifest Destiny which generated a right to own and govern territory belonging to a nation which was different, and presumably less deserving, than the United States.[16]

In the more immediate aftermath of the Greek struggle for freedom, the process of exclusion would lend moral support to the right to own other human beings because they were different racially and culturally from what many American leaders expressed as their own character and identity. Very easily, to be different was to mean in practice that one was both inferior and undeserving of the freedom enjoyed by those who had the ethnic and racial characteristics which ostensibly defined those who were citizens of the United States.[17]

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[15] Within the confines of this paper, the terms "race" and "ethnicity" will refer to early 19th century perceptions. Race will refer to those who possessed common traits, physical and psychological, which were transmitted by descent. Ethnicity will refer to those traits which were culturally transmitted through a sharing of the same environment. The early 19th century did not always make clear distinctions between inherited and environmentally conditioned characteristics. The distinction, however, is crucial in assessing whether early 19th century Americans felt that they should make special sacrifices to support the Greek cause. For example, the Greeks had been corrupted by their environment, becoming virtually slaves to the Turks. However, the qualities of their blood heritage would ostensibly let them rise above their prior condition and enjoy the benefits of living in freedom. Whether the Latin American peoples could rise above the corruption of their colonial past was more questionable, because they did not appear to have the positive qualities of race which the Greek people ostensibly had. To judge by the nature of support for the Greek cause, race provided a vital and necessary ingredient for maintaining and for enjoying the benefits of living in freedom. It went a long way in justifying special efforts to support the Greek cause.

[16] Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny and the Empire of Right*, 42ff. provides an excellent summary of how feelings of American exceptionalism evolved in the decades following the Greek War of Independence. See also Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny,* 6: "By the mid nineteenth century many Americans were less concerned about the liberation of other peoples by the spreading of republicanism than with the limitless expansion of a superior Anglo-Saxon race."

In the 1820s how the positive and negative cultural forces articulated in responding to the Greek struggle for freedom would play themselves out over time was in no sense preordained. Among the protagonists who supported the Greek cause were those who would later become leaders of the abolitionist movement. Samuel Gridley Howe and Edward Everett were prominent examples; it was Howe's wife who would later write "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Those in the South who would later defend the "peculiar institution" of chattel slavery were also prominent and passionate supporters of the Greek cause. John Calhoun was one. At the time they could all unite in supporting the principle of freedom for what they perceived as a white and Christian people, a people who possessed a unique lineage which went back to the heroism and political culture of ancient Greece. Were these not these the very qualities which America's political leaders aspired to for themselves and their fellow countrymen?

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[17] In the following decade, Southern writers would expressly justify slavery as a way of furthering freedom for those like themselves. They would use the example of ancient Greece and Rome as a paradigm. As they expressed it, free men ostensibly brought civilization to those in barbarism. This resulted in leisure which enabled free men to develop their patriotic spirit of independence. For further discussion on this point, see Hartfield, "New Thoughts on the Proslavery Natural Law Theory," *Southern Studies,* 22:244-59. See especially p. 248: "Aristotle explained that nature endowed each person with the virtues necessary to fulfill his functions in society. Thus the 'natural' slave possessed the virtues necessary for a slave, the master those necessary for his role." As stated on p. 247, Greek society was important to those who advocated slavery because "it produced the most expressive proponent of natural law, and also provided a detailed diagram of a successful slave system."

In the nation's cultural history, earlier support for the independence of the peoples of Latin America from Spain had not ended up playing a comparable role in helping to mould perceptions of civic identity. It did not do so for two very important reasons. First, the racial and ethnic bonding which appeared to unite the Greek people with educated and politically active Americans was noticeably absent. The case for support for Latin America had centered on the older and more abstract Enlightenment ideal of universal rights, an ideal quite different from that of exceptional rights and duties grounded on descent from the same racial and ethnic stock. Second, the intensity of public support for the cause of Latin American independence never approached that enjoyed by the Greeks in their struggle for freedom. Throughout the United States the Greek cause derived great strength from aggressive efforts within the private sector, which focused and incited public attention and support. Arguments in favor of Latin American independence did not have the benefit of cohesive, active and well-organized committees composed of business and religious leaders. The Greek cause did. The result was that debate over whether, and if so how, to support the Greek cause penetrated the culture and the politics of the nation in ways which were much deeper and much more broadly based than was the case with Latin America. Even more to the point, American response to the Greek cause reinforced the patterns of ethnocentric and racial thought which would characterize the future. The principles enunciated to engage United States Government support for Latin American independence had looked to the past, to the Enlightenment and its ideals of universal rights and duties.

As the Greek War of Independence began in 1821, such distinctions were by no means apparent. Actually there was no reliable way to predict the important role the Greek cause would come to play in American cultural and political life, much less the role it would play in the evolution of the nation's foreign policy. Still, early press reports did offer significant clues to what lay ahead.

For example, on July 28, 1821 *Niles Weekly Register* published an article entitled "Declaration Submitted by the Messianian Senate of Calamata." It was a plea for support from what was ostensibly a government representing the Greek people. "Despair has seized us, and we have with one accord, taken up arms to throw off the yoke of slavery . . . . Our heads, long under the iron yoke, are again raised and supported by the national feeling . . . this liberty, the blessings of which are again raised and supported and encouraged by the national feeling."[18]

On September 12, 1821 the *Daily National Intelligencer* printed the following, excerpted from an article published in the liberal French newspaper *Le Vrai Liberal.* "It is not given to us to read the book of fate, but if the blood of the heroes of Thermopylae, of Salamis, and Platea, still flow in the veins of men who have succeeded upon that soil which has so often repulsed the incursions of the barbarian, the termination of the war which has just been kindled is not doubtful."[19]

To judge by such reports, what was happening in Greece was not a conflict initiated by local individuals who wanted to expand their power at the expense of the Sultan. Embodied in the revolt were two fundamental principles of social and political order, principles which had severely shaken Western Europe and the United States during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first was the principle of sovereign political power exercised by separate national states, with boundaries defined by compatible race and ethnicity. The second was the principle of freedom itself, the right of a people to assert and, by asserting, to determine their own political destiny, and to do so by establishing democratic rule. The American and French Revolutions had both left a powerful legacy embodying these principles. Both upheavals were a living memory for those who governed in Europe and the United States.

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[18] *Niles* 20 (July 28, 1821): 352.

[19] *Daily National Intelligencer* 9 (September 12, 1821): 2704.

For most European statesmen, the French Revolution in particular generated memories of internal disorder and anarchy on the one hand and, on the other, memories of an international conflagration which had brought the major European powers into a costly and long drawn-out series of wars. As they recalled it, the French Revolution had been a prolonged battle between the forces of good and evil, with established authority the "good" and efforts to achieve democratic rule the "evil." As a result, in England and on the Continent support for the Greek cause of independence became an act of protest, a useful means of expressing political views which would have been deemed criminal and subversive if applied inside the major European states themselves. In the words of the historian Christopher Woodhouse:

> Philhellenism was part of an international movement of protest in which nationalism, religion, radicalism, and commercial greed all played a part as well as romantic sentiment and pure heroism. To some extent the philhellenic movement was linked with the internal politics of the [individual] countries. In England, for example, philhellenism was an instrument for harassing the Tory government.[20]

An eyewitness to many of the events surrounding the Greek War of Independence noted:

> The Greek question was brought forward prominently by the continental press because it offered the means of indulging in political discussion without the allusion to

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[20] Woodhouse, *Philhellenes*, 9.

> domestic administration and proclaiming principles of political justice applicable to the Greeks and Turks which they dared not affect to be applicable to subjects and rulers of Christian nations.[21]

Those in Europe who yearned for a measure of political freedom had reason to embrace the Greek cause. Those who favored the status quo had reason to oppose the Greek cause.

Circumstances within America were quite different. For America's political and cultural leaders, support for the Greek cause neither attacked nor undermined established authority. In the United States those who exercised political power, namely, free white males, already for the most part enjoyed the vote by the early 1820s. They believed they lived under a rule of law. For America's political and cultural leaders the key need which the Greek cause could meet was subtle and intangible. That need was for a heightened sense of national purpose, a validation and affirmation of who they were or, perhaps more accurately, who they wished to be.

Over a period extending from 1821 to 1823 educated and politically active Americans did in fact come to see their involvement in the Greek War of Independence as an affirmation of their identity as citizens of the United States. The result was that by late 1823 and early 1824 support for the cause of Greek freedom resonated from one end of the nation to the other.

For example, on December 21, 1823 Elbert Anderson wrote Samuel Southard, Secretary of the Navy, "We are all mad for the Greeks."[22] On December 25, 1823 Joel Poinsett, a key member of the Foreign Relations Committee in the

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[21] Finley, *History of Greece*, 7:3.

[22] Elbert Anderson to Samuel L. Southard, December 21, 1823, in Papers of Samuel L. Southard, cited in May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 229.

House of Representatives, wrote, "We are running wild about the Greeks."[23] On January 6, 1824 the *New York Commercial Advertiser* wrote, "We cannot keep the record of the numerous meetings called in every part of the country to procure aid for the Greek cause. It is sufficient to say that the feeling is universal."[24] Meetings supporting the Greek cause which were held at Yale, Columbia, Hamilton, the United States Military Academy, Brown and the Andover Theological seminary, as well as at many other educational institutions.[25]

To judge by such evidence, the United States was consumed with an almost uncontrollable passion to reach out and support the Greek cause. A senior official in the Monroe Administration had actually suggested on two occasions that the United States lend the Greek people the American naval squadron then stationed in the Mediterranean. He received strong support for this proposition in a meeting of the cabinet held in late 1823. Twice, in late 1822 and again in late 1823, the president in his annual messages to Congress expressed fervent and heartfelt hope for the independence of Greece.

By early 1824 there would be impassioned speeches on the floor of Congress in favor of extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic. In the course of these debates there were provocative statements suggesting that failure of the United States Government to provide this support for the Greek cause compromised the very manhood which ostensibly defined Americans as a free people. In January 1824 General William Harrison delivered an impassioned speech in Cincinnati. His words typified what had become a very popular commitment to the cause of Greek freedom. For the hero of the battle of Tippecanoe, "The Star Spangled Banner must wave in the Aegean."[26]

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[23] Poinsett to Col. John Johnson, December 25, 1823, in Poinsett, Correspondence in Henry D. Gilpin Collection, cited in Whittaker, *United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 541.

[24] *New York Commercial Advertiser* (January 6, 1824), cited in Pappas, "United States and the Greek War of Independence," 37.

[25] Whittaker, *United States and the Independence of Latin America,* 50ff.

As this crescendo of support for the Greek cause grew stronger in the fall and winter of 1823-1824, it became clear that America's political leaders faced intense public pressure to take steps leading to diplomatic recognition.[27] Political agitation within the United States was strong, eloquent and well organized. For President James Monroe and his secretary of state, John Quincy Adams, the struggle for Greek independence had become a major and also a troubling political issue.

A Presidential election would be held in the fall of 1824. John Quincy Adams would be a candidate in that election. If he were not careful, controversy over whether the United States Government should actively support the Greek cause was apt to become a major issue in that campaign. Such controversy could only detract from his image as an effective leader of the nation's foreign policy. Such controversy would also detract from the legacy of effective stewardship that Monroe would wish to leave at the end of his Presidency.

The issue Monroe and Adams faced was not an easy one. True, there was a powerful emotional and ideological appeal, one which had acquired substantial political power within the United States. Beyond this, however, there was little to justify any action by the United States Government. Adams and others recognized that the act of extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic might well provoke war with Turkey. At the time of the American Revolution, the French had extended diplomatic recognition to the United States. Great Britain had responded by declaring war on France. There were no commercial relationships with the Greek people living in the areas under revolt. Relations with Turkey and the major European powers, however, were of practical and vital importance to the nation. In Turkey itself, American merchants had a good trade in the port of Smyrna. Also, Turkey maintained nominal sovereignty over the Barbary pirates. In the past Turkey had been able to exert a restraining influence against attacks on American-flagged merchant vessels throughout the Mediterranean. Such evidence alone suggested that the United States avoid risking war by getting involved with the Greek people in their struggle to free themselves from Turkish rule.

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[26] Larrabee, *Hellas Observed,* 55.

[27] Ibid., 69ff. provides good documentation on the wide and intense outpourings of support for the Greek cause as 1823 drew to a close.

Relations with the major European powers were even more important. To judge by discussions in President Monroe's cabinet and by reports in the press, the independence of the newly established Latin American republics was not yet secure from attack by the major European powers. Diplomatic and press reports both documented that the continental powers, France and Russia in particular, might try to use armed force to restore Spanish rule in the New World. To counter such a move, there were reports that Great Britain would seize control of the island of Cuba. From a military as well as from a commercial standpoint, such actions could threaten vital American interests, even creating a threat to the continued independence of the nation itself. To judge by press reports and also by diplomatic correspondence over a long period of years, Britain maintained strong feelings of contempt and enmity towards the United States. In the Pacific Northwest the United States and Britain were both threatened by new and aggressive territorial claims of tsarist Russia. By the end of 1823 these concerns would begin to abate, but they still generated great fear and anxiety.

Put in terms of its security and commercial interests (as perceived by Monroe and others at the time), logic dictated that the United States Government take no action, at least until it had clear and stable evidence of how the European powers were responding to the Greek insurgency, and how the European powers might respond to any initiatives by the United States Government to support the Greek cause.

From a European perspective, the events in Greece were occurring in a part of the world left untouched by the European order established after the Napoleonic Wars at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and reaffirmed at the conference of the great powers convened at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818. Both conferences had led to agreements that stressed the importance of maintaining the status quo within Europe. The resulting commitments among the major European powers left little if any room for change in political and social arrangements as circumstances and events evolved over time. The agreements were silent, however, on what positions should govern behavior outside the established European order. So there were no binding understandings on how to respond to an insurrection within the Ottoman Empire. Equally important, there were no useful precedents. In the words of the British historian Harold Temperley, "The [earlier] uprising of the sturdy Serb peasants against the Turks and the practical achievement of independence between 1807 and 1817 had barely rippled the diplomatic waters. The revolt in Serbia affected neither the trade interests nor the sea borne commerce of any state."[28]

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[28] Temperley, *Foreign Policy of George Canning*, 319.

The revolt in Greece did pose these very threats. In 1821 George Canning, soon to become Britain's Foreign Minister, argued in Parliament that the revolt was sponsored by Russia and was a maneuver to expand Russian power into the Mediterranean.[29] If Russia expanded southward in response to the Greek revolt, it threatened the security of British trade routes to the Levant and beyond to India. In Vienna, the Austrian government, like Britain, was sensitive to the danger posed if Russia used the pretext of the Greek revolt to expand its power southward into the Mediterranean. Metternich, the Austrian Chancellor, also grasped that the principles of national identity and popular rights embedded in the Greek revolt undermined the "legitimacy" of Austria's own rule over the many nationalities making up its own empire. From his perspective, the Greek struggle for freedom was subversive. Metternich opposed and exerted strong influence on other European powers to oppose the Greek struggle for independence. The Russian tsar did withhold support for the Greek struggle for independence and publicly condemned efforts to achieve independence from Turkey. In Paris, the French Government in 1822 and 1823 felt that it faced serious danger from an emerging liberal regime in Spain, one whose democratic principles negated the principles which validated France's own conservative and autocratic regime. Like Austria and Russia, the French Government was not apt to support a revolutionary government, certainly not one based on principles antithetical to those which validated its own existence.

As the historian Christopher Woodhouse aptly put it, "Why concede to the Greeks what the British withheld from the Irish, and the Russians from the

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[29] Finley, *History of Greece*, 6:vii.

Poles?"[30] One should add that what the Greeks sought, the French, the Austrians and the Russians also withheld from their own subjects, as did the British from the vast majority of their countrymen, to say nothing of their colonies.

None of the major European powers supported the principle that people had either a moral or a legal right to determine their governors by rebelling against established rule. None considered national identity as a basis for diplomatic recognition. As a result any diplomatic recognition of Greek independence from Turkish rule risked being doubly provocative. It violated the status quo and thereby violated the values and principles of order which the major European powers were using to validate their own rule. In the case of Greece, diplomatic recognition also ran the risk of undermining the principle of balance of power which the major powers used in regulating relations between nations. In 1821 the Duke of Wellington expressed quite accurately what many leading European statesmen of the time felt: "Indeed there never was such humbug as the Greek affair altogether."[31] The values and principles behind the Greek revolt were, from such a perspective, absurd.

From information available in late 1823, America's political leaders knew that the major European powers were hostile to the basic principle of popular sovereignty and the related right to revolt against monarchical rule—the very principles that made the Greek cause attractive to educated and politically active Americans. America's political leaders also knew that the United States was not in a good position to provoke the major European powers. To judge by newspaper reports, diplomatic correspondence and what they themselves said, they recognized that Turkey and the major European powers were in a position to retaliate in ways which damaged vital American commercial and security interests. Such interests included the future of the island of Cuba and, more broadly, the threat of intervening with armed force to bring the newly formed Latin American republics under either the influence or control of one or more of the major European powers—not to mention America's trading interests in the Mediterranean.

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[30] Woodhouse, *Philhellenes,* 90.

[31] Ibid., 57.

As we look back we can see that American political leaders faced questions which appeared to have no satisfactory answers. Should they choose what many of them felt was morally right (supporting the cause of freedom and thereby risking war with Turkey and/or seriously compromising the nation's security interests in the Western Hemisphere)? Alternatively, should they advocate taking no action, thereby avoiding possible danger to the nation's pragmatic interests but at the same time betraying what many perceived as their own moral principles and honor and those of the United States itself? In the chapters that follow we will see that President Monroe in particular was troubled by feeling that he had to choose between his perception of the values and principles of the nation on the one hand and its pragmatic practical interests on the other.

Given their interpretation of facts available to them, were American political leaders put in a position where they would have strong incentives to act from political expediency rather than principle? Clearly the Greek cause was very popular with educated and politically active Americans. Still, active support by the United States Government for the Greek cause seemed to risk the commercial and security interests of the nation, even presenting the risk of war. They knew that the principles of what we call popular sovereignty and national self-determination were principles of governance that European statesmen generally found repugnant. And

Monroe in particular appeared deeply concerned about the possibility of hostile actions by Britain, France and Russia in the New World.

Surprisingly, America's political leaders (with the notable exception of Adams) did not expressly link their positions on extending diplomatic recognition to Greece with the possible reactions of the major European powers. They simply did not discuss the issue in these terms.

To judge by what they said and by the positions they took, only rarely did America's political leaders openly face the need to resolve any potential conflict between principle and expediency. In general they asserted that the virtue of living up to their own values and those of the nation (as they defined these values) was consistent with—actually supportive of—the nation's interests (as they defined these interests). They focused on, and quarreled about, differences in the principles and the values they felt should guide the nation's foreign policy. Despite their rhetoric, however, inescapable practical considerations lurked in the background. Positions taken had potentially serious consequences for the nation and equally serious potential consequences that could affect the political standing of those who wished to lead the nation. As we will see, the need to reconcile moral principle with pragmatic interest was one of the key factors which framed debate over extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek state. It was not the only factor. As a practical matter, freedom of action was also framed by what political leaders had said in earlier debates over whether to extend diplomatic recognition to the newly formed republics of Latin America.

The positions America's political leaders took on the subject of extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic were congruent with those that they had taken earlier in debating support for the newly formed Latin American republics.

This was the case even though the practical circumstances of the two situations were quite different. The United States could in no way derive practical benefit for its commercial and security interests by extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic. One could make (and a number of political leaders including Henry Clay did make) arguments that the interests of the United States were served by extending diplomatic recognition to the newly formed Latin American republics. Despite this distinction, America's political leaders did not treat the two situations differently. Those who had supported the cause of an early diplomatic recognition for the Latin American republics were at the forefront of those who sponsored moves leading to prompt recognition of a Greek republic. Henry Clay was a prominent member of this group.

By way of contrast, those who had urged caution in the Latin American case also opposed steps leading to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic. John Quincy Adams was a prominent example. Actually Adams was in a very awkward position. He had opposed extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics on a fundamental principle which he felt should govern the nation's foreign policy. As he expressed it, the United States should act only where there was a clear showing that action would promote the commercial and security interests of the nation. These conditions were not present to justify extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic. As a result, no matter how popular the Greek cause became, Adams could not benefit politically by following the public's inclinations. His prior statements on the issue of recognizing the Latin American republics would have created the appearance of inconsistency. He would have left himself open to the charge of betraying the principles which he had previously enunciated and of doing so in order to curry political favor. Adams had to figure a way to benefit politically by seeing that the United States Government did not extend diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic. He did not have the option of "going with the flow" of public opinion. How he succeeded in doing this will provide much of the substance of the final two chapters of the dissertation. Adams did not face an easy task. To build credibility he needed not only to base his position on principle: he needed to give the appearance that the application of principle to a given situation was consistent with what he had said and done earlier.

CHAPTER ONE

HOW THE GREEK CAUSE BECAME A MATTER OF VITAL IMPORTANCE WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

On December 7, 1822 *Niles Weekly Register* reported that a "very numerous meeting of the citizens of Albany convened" to discuss a "Grecian emancipation resolution." In powerful emotional terms the meeting asserted that support for the Greeks "only comports with the magnanimity and feelings of a Christian people." This was so because "the turbaned Turk triumphs upon the cross of the Savior." In the eyes of those who supported the Albany resolution, the Greeks were not like other peoples. They were exceptional. They were the ones "who were the first to declare and establish the principles of freedom." They were the ones who made contributions "to civilization in science and the arts as making her worthy of respect."[1]

Such words suggested that the Greek people possessed the cohesion necessary to form a free and independent nation. Actually, such words were very close to words Washington had used in 1794 in his famous Farewell Address to the American people. As Washington expressed it, "With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits and political principles . . . . You have fought and triumphed together . . . . The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint counsels, and joint efforts—of common dangers, sufferings and successes."[2]

Moreover, the substantive qualities which Washington used to define America's own independent national identity not only appeared to be comparable to those the citizens of Albany used in describing the Greeks. The national identity of the Greeks comes across in the Albany declaration as virtually the same as the national identity which Washington defined as that of the United States itself. For example, the Albany declaration identified the religion of the Greek people with the religion of the people of Albany. By inference, the Albany resolution suggested that to support the struggle for Greek freedom was to affirm the Christianity Americans claimed to espouse as part of their own citizenship. The Albany resolution also identified a shared heritage of political freedom and a shared experience with common laws and institutions of government. To judge by what the citizens of Albany said, they and the citizens of Greece appeared to be descended from common spiritual, if not biological, ancestors.

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[1] *Niles* 23 (December 7, 1822): 215.

[2] Washington, "George Washington's Farewell Address," in Washington, *Writings,* 5.

There was more. The citizens of Albany also drew a firm line defining who they were not. In their words:

> We view with extreme mortification and regret, the policy of the potentates of Europe, especially those claiming to be the "holy alliance" in remaining passive spectators of the great scene now before them in Turkey, instead of affording the suffering Greeks that countenance and act which all Christendom had a right to expect.[3]

They rejected the values and behavior of the rulers of the major European powers.

By acting to support the cause of Greek freedom, were the citizens of Albany actually validating their own freedom from the constraints of those apparently held in bondage in Europe? Were the people of Albany not also affirming their identity as morally upright Christians, capable of meeting their duty to support fellow Christians who were struggling against tyranny and oppression?

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[3] *Niles* 23 (December 7, 1822): 215.

Were they not meeting a duty to support those who were spiritually if not biologically their kin? Implicitly such messages were there.

As we will see in this and the following chapter, it was this process of identifying what America stood for with the Greek struggle for independence that made Greek independence from Turkey important and meaningful to educated and politically active Americans of the 1820s. It was a process which in effect helped Americans to validate their own citizenship. It was also a process that ended up stressing that the Greek people and the American people were exceptional.

Words were not enough. The citizens of Albany recognized that they needed to act, and they did. They resolved to form "a committee to correspond throughout the union, for affording relief to the suffering Greeks" and to support this effort by preparing "an address to the citizens of the United States upon the subject of Greek freedom." What would emerge over the ensuing twelve months were committees of leading citizens in virtually all the major towns of the United States, from Boston to New York to Philadelphia to Charleston, to Cincinnati on the frontier.[4] To judge by this outpouring, the appeal illustrated by the Albany resolution was not only strong, it was pervasive, extending throughout the nation. Apart from the American Revolution, one can point to few causes that had united citizens throughout the nation in a shared national purpose. The recently concluded War of 1812 had, quite the contrary, led to deep divisions within the nation, actually leading to a movement by the New England states to secede from the Union. By way of contrast, the cause of Greek freedom generated feelings that recaptured the sense of commitment to act together which ostensibly had existed during the years of America's own struggle to free itself from British rule. There was, however, a key difference. Support for the Greek cause stressed much more the presence of a common religion, and the duties which that religion imposed on the citizens of the United States.

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[4] On October 26, 1822 the *Daily National Intelligencer* reported, "nothing so preoccupies the public mind as Greece." The article described rallies to support the Greek cause which were held throughout the United States. Cited in May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 10.

For example, in September 1823 prominent citizens of New York contributed funds to erect a cross twenty feet high inscribed "sacred to the cause of the Greeks." According to *Niles*, the cross "was planted, with proper ceremonies, by General Swift, in the presence of a large and brilliant assembly, in Brooklyn Heights."[5]

In December of 1823 *Niles* reported:

> A very large meeting of the citizens of Philadelphia was held to consider what measures were proper to be adopted to express the sympathy of the citizens for their Christian brethren the Greeks, heroically struggling for their lives, liberties, and religion against the grinding tyranny of the ferocious disciples of Mahomet.

The citizens of Philadelphia went further than those at Albany. They moved to petition "Congress to consider the expediency of recognizing the independence of Greece." To support this petition they resolved:

> Whereas from the institutions of ancient Greece, we have derived the first experience of republican government, and its effect in promoting the happiness of the human race, we continue to cherish the kind remembrance—our obligation to knowledge derived from their statesmen, heroes, and philosophes, in art, in arms and in policy.[6]

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[5] *Niles* 24 (September 20, 1823): 39.

[6] *Niles* 25 (December 20, 1823): 244.

As in the Albany resolution a year earlier, a spiritual, almost blood, brotherhood seemed to generate a moral obligation to act to support the Greek cause.

Such organized and public expressions of support for the cause of Greek freedom were a reality which the makers of American foreign policy could not ignore. In a nation where the people were sovereign, political leaders needed to respond, and this they did. In his December 1822 annual message to Congress, Monroe spoke of the Greek struggle for freedom: "A strong hope is entertained that these people will recover their independence and resume their equal station among the nations of the earth."[7] One year later the president in his annual message reinforced these comments: "That she may obtain that rank [of a free and independent nation] is the object of our most ardent wishes."[8] The states of the Union were, as he put it in his 1823 message, "interested spectators" in struggles for freedom taking place on the far side of the Atlantic.

Monroe's position was controversial. Other political leaders—Henry Clay in particular—had long believed the United States Government had a moral obligation to do more than just sit as an interested spectator to struggles for freedom outside the nation's borders. The Philadelphia resolution was quite consistent with the values and principles Clay had long articulated.

For America's political leaders, more than noble ideals were involved. There was in addition the prospect of political gain. As early as December 1822 Richard Williams, one of John Calhoun's supporters in the upcoming Presidential race, wrote Calhoun urging that he speak out publicly in favor of the Greek cause because "an active interest in the behalf of the suffering Greeks is daily expanding in this country." Williams suggested that by embracing the Greek cause, "you will secure to yourself the highest station to which a man can aspire, that of being a benefactor of the whole world."[9] In point of fact, Calhoun did support the Greek cause, arguing in cabinet debates in November 1823 that the United States should send an official mission to Greece as a step toward establishing diplomatic relations.[10] Calhoun would run for President in 1824 in opposition to the candidacy of John Quincy Adams.

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[7] Monroe, December 3, 1822, "Sixth Annual Message" in Monroe, *Writings*, 6:299.

[8] *Annals of Congress,* Eighteenth Cong., 1st sess., 40:22 (December 2, 1823).

The mass meeting in Philadelphia also had political implications. Nicholas Biddle was a prominent member of the Philadelphia committee formed to support the Greek cause. Less than one month after the Philadelphia meeting, Henry Clay would speak out forcefully in favor of steps leading to diplomatic recognition of Greece. He would also run for the presidency. Nicholas Biddle was Clay's powerful patron.[11] Biddle controlled the powerful Bank of the United States.

Unlike either Calhoun or Clay, Adams and Monroe had to take responsibility for the results of any active, substantive step which the United States Government took to support the Greeks in their struggle for freedom from Turkish rule. Given this responsibility, Adams would quite naturally want to minimize the practical danger of a contentious foreign policy debate either in Congress or among educated and politically active Americans. Such divisiveness could only undermine his standing as an effective leader at the very time he was running for President. At the same time he would not want to provoke conflict with either

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[9] Richard Williams to John Calhoun, December 1, 1822, in Calhoun, *Papers*, 7:367.

[10] Adams, November 21, 1823, *Memoirs*, 6:187.

[11] Earle, "American Interest in the Greek Cause," 50.

Turkey or the major European powers by any action they took to support the Greek cause. This too would create the impression of ineptitude if not incompetence. (Whether in retrospect there actually were such risks is a subject we will explore in chapters 8 and 9.)

On the other hand, support for the Greek cause could be considered very consistent with Adams' domestic political interests. If he supported taking steps to extend diplomatic recognition, he would undercut his political adversaries, depriving them of the benefits of supporting a popular cause over his opposition. He would likewise have acted in ways which were compatible with what pubic opinion apparently wanted, validating the principle that the citizens of the United States were truly sovereign.

Unfortunately for Adams, there was an important and practical problem with this second course. Any endorsement of action leading to diplomatic recognition for a Greek republic would have appeared to Adams' contemporaries as a rejection of the principles and values on which Adams had long based his foreign policy. As a result, this course would most probably have opened Adams up to accusations of opportunism and betrayal of his own beliefs. This would not have served his political interests. From a practical standpoint, he was stuck with taking a position which ran the risk of being unpopular with the very educated and politically active Americans who would vote in the upcoming Presidential election.

Before the end of 1823 the political price Adams might have to pay for sticking to his basic principles was to become strikingly evident. Interest in the Greek cause had emerged as the central concern of the American press. Ernest R. May actually asserted, "During the six weeks before the House held its debate [in January 1824, on whether the United States Government should act to support the

Greek cause], Greece commanded more space [in the public press] than South America and the Holy Alliance combined."[12] What is significant is that, unlike Greece, relations with the members of the Holy Alliance and what happened in Latin America—Cuba in particular—were of vital importance to the commercial and military security of the nation. On January 29, 1824 the *U.S. Gazette* stated that the upcoming presidential election had all but disappeared from public view, displaced by "ardor" for the Greek cause.[13]

For Adams and Monroe, the situation generated danger. The dictates of domestic politics had obtruded into their management of the nation's foreign affairs. If they followed the dictates of popular opinion, they risked compromising the principles they had previously used to justify their foreign policy. If they stood by their prior statements, they risked a major and divisive political confrontation. If, on the other hand, they supported the Greek cause by extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic, there appeared to be a risk that the major European powers, as well as Turkey, might take action that undermined American commercial interests in the Mediterranean and American security interests in the New World. We will explore each of these dimensions in subsequent chapters. For the moment we will concentrate on why and how the Greek cause came to assume such importance within the United States.

If one looks at the history of the United States before the Greek War began in 1821, one will find very few indications that Greece and its struggle against Turkish rule would become an important event in American history. This very fact is important. It suggests the nature of what had to change before the Greek cause could assume the cultural and political importance that it did.

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[12] May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 229.
[13] Cited in Cline, *American Attitude,* 113.

When the war broke out in 1821, there was no geographical entity that Americans could identify as Greece. People who called themselves Greek lived throughout the Turkish Empire, with large numbers in Constantinople and Smyrna in particular. Among educated Greek elites within the Empire, the Greek language was widely used for diplomacy and religion. This small group shared a consciousness of the past, that of both Byzantium and of ancient Greece. For the great majority of people living in what is now the Republic of Greece, the situation was very different. There was no linguistic unity, merely dialects barely understood in different regions of the country. In terms of governance, the territory consisted of a series of separate provinces, each ruled by a governor accountable directly to the government of the Sultan in Constantinople. What the Greek people had in common was their religion, the common burden of oppressive Turkish rule, and the rudiments of a common language. In largely inchoate form, such ingredients provided the foundation for a religiously-based ethnocentric identity.

Americans from the time of their own Revolution had been only dimly aware of such realities.[14] Even in 1821 the Greek people and what is now the land making up the Republic of Greece remained dimly perceived and far away. True, by 1821 the American Bible Society had dispatched its first missionaries to the Middle East and to India, evidencing a sense of Christian responsibility for the religious well-being of faraway peoples. The nation itself was deeply involved in a massive and powerful movement of religious commitment and revival now known as the Second Great Awakening. Still, the thrust of the Second Great Awakening and of the efforts of the American Bible Society was very different from what emerged in response to the struggle of the Greek people to free themselves from Turkish rule. Neither missionary activities nor the Second Great Awakening had encompassed sponsoring action by the United States Government. Moreover, private efforts had not involved an organized, concerted intervention in a revolutionary struggle against established civil authority, not even in the name of religious freedom. Nor had the Albany and Philadelphia resolutions spoken of Christian charity for those who were in helpless need. Both resolutions urged a duty to support the Greek cause based on the strength of the Greeks' own efforts to overthrow tyranny. It was respect for the vigor of these efforts that focused and distinguished the concerted efforts made in the United States to support Greek freedom from Turkey. Feelings of compassion were there, but they were not what gave the Greek cause its political and cultural power within the United States.

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[14] Biddle, *Nicholas Biddle in Greece*. See analysis by McNeal (editor), 12-20.

Unlike support for the cause of Latin American independence, efforts to support Greece did not start out as a partisan battle for control over the reins of political power between the executive and legislative branches of government. In fact, support for the Greek cause did not originate in the arena of national politics. It became an important political issue only by virtue of becoming a popular cause. The revolt against Spanish rule in Latin America had not engendered strong outpourings of popular support comparable to those engendered by the Greek cause. Nor had pleas to support Latin American independence been centered on a duty to defend a shared Christian religion. In support of extending diplomatic recognition to newly formed republics in Latin America, political leaders in the United States had spoken of the more general Christian duty to sacrifice for those who were struggling to gain freedom from political oppression. The Greek resolutions were grounded differently. They stressed the unique circumstances of the Greeks and a correspondingly unique obligation to lend them support. Also, support from well-organized committees of private individuals was the key foundation behind efforts to engage the United States Government to extend diplomatic recognition to the Greeks. This was not the case with Latin America.

Time after time the resolutions that were passed urging the contribution of money and diplomatic recognition of the Greek nation by the United States Government stressed the exceptionalism of the Greek people. Repeatedly, resolutions supporting the Greek cause stipulated that the people of modern Greece, and only the people of modern Greece, carried in their veins the heritage of ancient Greece. An ethnic identification between ancient and contemporary Greece comes across as a fact, one which was accepted without question. This was true in the Albany and Philadelphia resolutions and in most pronouncements which supported the Greek cause.[15]

One might assume that such a cultural and ethnic identity was a firmly grounded part of American consciousness before the outbreak of the Greek revolt in 1821. The reality was quite different. In the years before the Greek revolt, a common ethnicity between the modern and the ancient Greeks did not go unchallenged. Equally important, from the time of the Founding Fathers to the generation which followed them to political and social power in the 1820s, educated, politically active Americans were actually quite ambivalent about the relevance of the Greek heritage itself.

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[15] See in particular Everett, "Coray's Aristotle."

The impressions recorded by one of the first Americans who visited Greece in the early 19th century are a case in point. The contrast with the paeans of praise contained in subsequent expressions of support for the Greek people is striking. The early visitor to Greece was Nicholas Biddle, later to become the head of the Bank of the United States, and a patron of Henry Clay. As we have just seen, in the 1820s Biddle was a strong supporter of the cause of Greek independence. His impressions of Greece back in 1806 were of an entirely different character.

In July 1806 Nicholas Biddle wrote to his brother Will from Athens in mournful and deprecating terms:

> The voice of the Athenian people is silent. The crowded Areopagus [is] a melancholy hill to which time has not left even a ruin . . . . Where are her orators? Gone forth to enlighten distant nations without a solitary ray for their country . . . . Their very names are forgotten by their countrymen. Where is her people? Are these men, these wretches little superior to beasts whom they drive headless over the ruins, are these men Athenians? Where is her freedom? Here is the meanest stab of all.[16]

Biddle lamented but apparently accepted the subjugation of the Greek people to the "firmans of a distant master," of "a little Turkish despot to command and to terrify her children." Biddle continued:

> The Athenian mind is still more degraded than the Athenian city . . . . The Academy, the Lyceum Prytaneum have been superceded by a little school of elements which have never heard of Plato.[17]

Writing from Trieste after the end of his 1806 trip, Biddle again lamented the degraded condition of the Greeks, but did manage to end up with a conclusion signaling a cautious note of hope for the future. Though "independent of any of the acts of cruelty to which they are every day liable, the general relation between the Greeks and the Turks is that of master and slave," in a more positive vein Biddle went on to say:

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[16] N. Biddle to Will Biddle, January 6, 1806, in Biddle, *Nicholas Biddle in Greece*, 111.

[17] Ibid.

> The misfortunes of Greece are the more to be regretted; from the capacity to be happy since there are few countries possessing so many advantages. A fine climate, an unclouded sky, the thin air of genius from a robust as well as a lively people.[18]

In his judgment, the Greek people were suppressed as well as oppressed. Remove the subjugation, Biddle suggested, and the Greek people would achieve a better destiny. The climate gave them potential, their nature gave them potential. In 1806 neither seemingly gave them the capacity to recapture the qualities identified with ancient Greece. Those qualities of greatness had departed from Greece, leaving behind, as he put it, not even a "solitary ray." For Biddle there was no ethnocentric connection between the people of ancient Greece and the Greeks of the early 19th century.

Whether domestic political considerations motivated Biddle's changed behavior in the 1820s, or whether he did in fact have a change of perception, can now be only a matter of speculation. However, it is a fact that by 1823 he quite actively supported what had already become the very popular cause of Greek freedom.[19]

In 1816 another early American visitor to Greece was Edward Everett. Everett had long had an interest in the cause of Greek independence. In 1813, on his graduation from Harvard, he gave the English Oration at commencement. His chosen topic: "On the Restoration of Greece." He would later be appointed the first Professor of Classics at Harvard. To prepare himself for his new position, Everett received permission to pursue classical studies at the then renowned university at Gottingen in Germany. He would receive from that university the first Ph.D. ever earned by an American citizen.[20] It was in classical studies. Everett is perhaps most frequently remembered as the featured speaker whose oration at Gettysburg was eclipsed by the brief remarks delivered by Abraham Lincoln.

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[18] N. Biddle to W. Biddle, July 25, 1806, cited in Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 226.

[19] Earle, "American Interest," 50.

At Gottingen, Everett met scholars from Greece then studying to prepare themselves for a career of teaching in Greece. In his letters home he wrote of studying modern Greek with "Glarakes, who is a fellow student."[21] Nourished by his association with Glarakes and other students from Greece, this is what Everett wrote in 1816 in a long letter to Robert Walsh, the editor of the *North American Review:*

> Why even the modern Greek, sighing under the Turkish plague, might put us to shame. There are in Paris 10 or 12 and in all the universities almost of Germany one or two students sent out to prepare themselves as instructors at home. I had a fellow student at Gottingen, a very country man of Homer.[22]

Everett explained that the countryman was from Scio (allegedly the birthplace of Homer) and was "sent out for ten years to Europe, and is destined to a professorship at Scio, which is very flourishing." Everett went on:

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[20] For general background on Everett's early experiences, see Varg, *Edward Everett.*

[21] E. Everett to Alexander Everett, June 1, 1816, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 1

[22] E. Everett to Robert Walsh, December 18, 1817, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 1.

> But the most remarkable instance of the spirit now stirring in Greece was mentioned to me by M. Coray [a key intellectual leader in the early agitation to free Greece from Turkey] . . . . The little town of Cndonius, where there is a Greek school, has sent a young man here to superintend a printing press.[23]

Ten years earlier Biddle had found that education in Greece consisted of a "little school of elements which had never heard of Plato."

As the Greek War of Independence began, it was not clear whether Biddle's early perspective on the Greeks would govern America's response or whether that of Everett would prevail. What was clear is that the distinction was of vital importance. For example, an article in the *North American Review* of January 1821 set forth the criteria it felt were necessary for freedom to flourish, and presumably the criteria which would justify active American support for efforts to obtain freedom. In current terms, the article can only be called racially arrogant. The article stated, "We in North America succeeded in achieving our political independence because we had already the social and civil liberty which is its best foundation." The people of the United States were not a "corrupt and mixed race" of "various shades of men." "We enjoy political freedom because we are not corrupted by a wealthy aristocracy and a needy peasantry." Speaking of Latin America, the article concluded, "We need here no long reasonings on the known degeneracy in such a mixture of blood."[24] Had a wealthy aristocracy (of Turkish overlords) and a needy peasantry resulted in a "corrupt" Greek people? Were the Greek people made racially or spiritually degenerate as a result of Turkish rule from the 15th to the 19th centuries? Did an enslaved people have the ability to live successfully in freedom? Biddle's 1806 letters and Everett's subsequent writings suggested very different answers to such questions.

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[23] Ibid.

[24] "South America," *North American Review* 31:435.

Still, on one key point Biddle and Everett were in agreement. For both, the heritage of ancient Greece had unquestioned value. In the early 19th century others took a very different position. At Yale and elsewhere there were student rebellions against the study of Greek.[25] Benjamin Latrobe, the architect who designed the nation's capital, captured the spirit of such protests with these words: "Homer conveyed no information which can ever be practically useful."[26] In Latrobe's view, study of ancient languages led only to "pretended knowledge."

In the early decades of the 19th century the relevant issue for most educated Americans was whether classical learning had practical application in a young and dynamic republic. For Latrobe and students at Yale the language at least apparently did not. Others felt that it did. Daniel Webster summarized this positive approach in the eulogy he delivered to commemorate the deaths of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in July 1826: "Those whose memories we honor were learned men; but their learning was kept in proper place and made useful to the uses and objects of life."[27] As Webster presented it, their scholarship had value because it was utilitarian.

Put in the perspective of the early 19th century, there was little room for *ars gratia artis*.[28] Supporters of the Greek cause would need to link the modern Greek with the ancients, but in addition they would need to validate that the heritage of ancient Greece had pragmatic value for Americans living in the early 19th century.

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[25] Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, 70.

[26] Ibid., 71.

[27] Cited (ibid., 77).

[28] Ibid.; see pp. 38 and 39 in particular.

Failure to maintain this double linkage would mean losing the fraternity which stemmed from such a shared heritage. Such a loss had the potential to substantially weaken support for the Greek cause.

However, an examination of the prior history of the young American republic will not validate strong feelings of identification with ancient Greece. Going back to the time of the American Revolution, the Founding Fathers had used Rome, not Greece, as their model for the institutions of government. At the time of the Revolution the history of the ancient Greek city-states appeared too unstable to provide a model for the new American republic. Besides, the Greek model of direct participation by voters in passing laws and administering justice seemed an inappropriate guide for a geographically dispersed nation. The nation was to become a republic (from the Latin word *respublica*), not a democracy (derived from the Greek word which means "rule by the people"). Even a brief review of the Federalist Papers documents that the Founding Fathers went to great lengths to prevent any direct rule by the people. They interposed many checks, balances and constraints on that rule.

The perception that ancient Greece was an unstable *polis* persisted right up to the time of the Greek revolt against Turkish rule. In 1820 Daniel Webster captured this feeling in his famous Plymouth oration. Speaking of ancient Greece, Webster stated, "Political science among the Greeks seems never to have extended to the government of a great nation upon principles of liberty." What Webster suggested was an analogy with British settlement. "The laws and customs, both political and municipal, as well as religious worship of the parent city [Athens] were transferred to the colony."[29] From Webster's perspective, what was not transferred was any principle of a unity grounded on participation in the process of governance within a territorially large and dispersed state.

Despite such reservations, most educated Americans of Webster's time (as at the time of the American Revolution) did consider ancient Greece relevant and important in American public life. There actually appeared to be wisdom imbedded in the language itself. For example, in Philadelphia in 1787 members of the Constitutional Convention debated vigorously whether English should become the official language of the new republic—or whether ancient Greek should assume that role.[30] The vote was close, a tie broken only by the presiding officer, Benjamin Franklin. It was his decision in favor of English that ended the debate.

Thomas Jefferson at the time wrote, "I think Greek is the least useful of the foreign languages."[31] His other comments at the time were much more supportive of Greece and its language, suggesting that his 1787 statement was not part of the general context of his thought. On July 17, 1785 Jefferson wrote Ezra Stiles expressing the hope that "the language of Homer and Demosthenes would become a living language again and that ancient Greek culture might somehow reemerge."[32] Jefferson went on to state, "For I am persuaded the modern Greek would easily get back to classical models." In Jefferson's view, "It is really a pity that so charming a country [Greece] should remain in the hands of a people, whose religion forbids the admission of science and the arts among them." In the same letter Jefferson stated that he was less optimistic about the ability of the Latin American peoples to prosper in a state of independence. There was apparently some special quality in the heritage of the ancients which fit their progeny for freedom and greatness. On May 29, 1785 Jefferson underscored this special quality when he wrote his friend and mentor George Wythe in virtually the same words he used in his letter to Stiles: "I cannot help but look forward to the re-establishment of the Greeks as a people, and the language of Homer becoming again a living language."[33] To judge by Jefferson's comments in the 1780s (with the notable exception of 1787), there was indeed a linkage between ancient Greece and the modern inhabitants of the land which had given rise to Pericles and Demosthenes.

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[29] Webster, "The First Settlement of New England" (discourse, Plymouth, MA, December 22, 1820) in *Great Speeches of Daniel Webster*, 31.

[30] Pappas, "United States and the Greek War of Independence," 28.

[31] Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, 214.

[32] Jefferson to Ezra Stiles, July 17, 1825, in Jefferson, *Writings*, 15:397.

In the ancient world the Founding Fathers also felt they had models of personal character and civic virtue. These character traits included "restraint, temperance, fortitude, dignity and independence."[34] For many of the men who framed the institutions of the new American nation, the heritage of ancient Greece as well as Rome provided the moral foundation on which they attempted to build the new nation they wanted to found.[35] It was the apparent loss of this foundation that Biddle lamented in his letters to his brother Will; it was the perceived presence of this moral foundation which had attracted Everett.

The history of George Washington's personal commitment to the general cause of revolution and of Greek independence is interesting from a different perspective. In the early 19th century, as today, there was a temptation to see in the past what was useful for the present, and to overlook factual evidence which did not comport with current interest. The cause of Greek freedom in the 1820s was a case in point. In his *History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States*, the early historian George Bancroft stated that in 1785 Washington told a French officer then visiting him that the Greek people would free themselves from Turkish rule as part of a worldwide process of liberation from tyranny.[36] Bancroft went on to make statements which reflected more of Bancroft's political views than they did the historical record. For example, he stated in his *History*:

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[33] Jefferson to Wythe, May 29, 1786, cited in Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 4.
[34] Wood, *Creation,* 50.
[35] Chinard, *Letters of Lafayette and Jefferson,* 41.

> [Washington] wished success to every people that were struggling for better days. Afflicted by the abject poverty of the Irish, he gave them his sympathies. A hope dawned of renewed national life for the Greeks. He could scarcely conceive that the Turks would be permitted to hold any of their possessions in Europe. He evidenced with enthusiasm the approach of the French Revolution.[37]

Even a cursory review of Washington's career, and his Farewell Address in particular, documents that he was much more committed to keeping the United States out of the quarrels of other peoples.[38] In assessing Bancroft's position, one must remember that Bancroft, like Everett, had studied at Gottingen in the years before the Greek revolt of 1821. Like Everett, Bancroft was an early and passionate supporter of the struggle for Greek independence. In his *Journals* for 1821, for example, he spoke of returning with Washington Irving from a July 4, 1821 dinner "of the Americans in Paris," saying that Lafayette was the special guest of Albert Gallatin, the American minister. Bancroft confided:

> May her sons [the sons of Greece] in her clime rebuild the home of liberty. The contest of the Greeks at present is too interesting a subject to be talked of lightly, or to

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[36] Bancroft, *History of the Formation*, 1:248.

[37] Ibid.

[38] For discussion of Washington's Farewell Address, see pp. 99-100.

> be regarded as a commonplace war of ambition or intent. It is a nation rising against tyranny and vindicating the rights of man. Since the days of the American War of Independence, there has been no such exertion so pure and glorious as this.[39]

Apart from Washington's alleged comments, in the years before the Greek uprisings began in 1821 there had been persistent but scattered public expressions of support for the freedom of the Greek people then living within the Turkish Empire. Edward Everett's English Oration of 1813 was one example. In 1817 the *Portfolio of Philadelphia* offered another. It published a twenty-one page article on the subject of Greek freedom. Its sentiments were: "Let the modern Greek hurl their oppressors from the throne, and a century may exalt them to the highest honors."[40]

Despite such statements, impressions of Greece before 1821 were on balance both positive and negative. More to the point, Greece was at the periphery of concerns in the United States. Given these realities, one needs to question further how and why the struggle at the eastern end of the Mediterranean became vitally important to educated and politically active Americans.

To gain perspective on this question one must start by exploring an easily overlooked dimension: Support for the Greek cause had to meet not only the needs of the Greek people, it also had to meet some important need of the people in America who extended that support.

In April 1823 Daniel Webster provided tangible evidence of this need. In a private letter to his friend Joseph Story, Webster confided, "There is a Federal interest, a Democratic interest, a Bankrupt interest, an Orthodox interest, and a

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[39] Larrabee, *Hellas Observed,* 55.

[40] *Portfolio of Philadelphia,* January 1, 1817, cited in Raizis et al., *Greek Revolution*, 10.

Middling interest, but no national interest."[41] What the nation appeared to need was a catalyst, something that citizens of the United States could all share in common. If there were no "national interest," citizenship carried with it no common, shared duties and responsibilities. Under such circumstances, any commitment to the future of the nation itself was tenuous. To judge by Webster's statement, Americans needed to answer some very basic questions, including the following: What did it mean to be an American? Educated and politically active Americans who wielded social and political power in the 1820s needed to find and embrace satisfactory answers. Shared economic interests, represented by Clay's proposals to form a cohesive national economy, were important. They were not enough; for, as Webster indicated, neither a "bankrupt" nor a "middling" interest was enough.

The historian Bradford Perkins put the need Webster expressed in these terms: "For almost a generation or more after independence, Americans worried about the fate of their experiment in popular government."[42]

Support for the cause of freedom in Latin America had not provided the perceived need for a civic bonding agent. In April 1821, for example, the *North American Review* published the following article:

> We have no concern with South America; we have no sympathy with them. We are sprung from different stock, we speak different languages, we have been brought up in different social and moral schools, we have been governed by different codes of law, we profess radically different forms of religion.

The article continued:

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[41] Webster to Joseph Story, April 12, 1823, in Webster, *Papers: Correspondence,* 1:327-28.

[42] Bradford Perkins, "Canvas and the Prism," in *Cambridge History,* 1:11.

> How can our mild and merciful people sympathize with a people that are hanging and shooting each other in the streets, with every fluctuation of their ill organized and exasperated factions?[43]

Under such circumstances, "not all the money we could lend them, would transform their [political leaders] into Adams and Franklin, or their Bolivars into Washingtons." After all, in the view of the *North American Review*, "None but the temperate climates, the climates which produce and retain the European character of skin—admit to the highest degrees of national character." In essence, not only was the United States a nation of Protestants rather than the "radically different" Catholic religion; the citizens of the United States were also racially pure and, presumably, purely white. Disciplined by the rule of law and the institutions of free government, the people of the United States had both the cultural and the ethnic conditioning which permitted them to live in freedom. Identifying with the cause of freedom in Latin America was not a good bonding agent. Benighted, the peoples of Latin America appeared to lack the key ingredients necessary for freedom to flourish.

In February 1822 *Niles* reported that in Ireland "the most dreadful outrages have been perpetrated on the peaceable inhabitants, by bands of marauders and ruffians, whose career seems to have been marked by murder, conflagration, robbery and almost every species of cruelty." While conceding that the Irish were "oppressed," the focus of the article was on what it termed the "excesses" of the Irish themselves.[44] The Irish were portrayed as the perpetrators of violence and disorder. Besides, they were Catholic.

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[43] "South America," *North American Review* 31:433.

[44] *Niles* 22 (April 6, 1822), 81.

Broadly defined, the Christian religion in and of itself could not act as a strong agent bonding the United States to support struggles for civic freedom. In August 1823 the *National Intelligencer* published the following:

> When priest craft is patronized by the state, then peace and liberty and equal rights can never be preserved. Look at Spain, at Portugal, and at Mexico, and see what is to be expected where a fanatical priesthood and superstitious people are the dead weight to counteract all improvements.[45]

Neither Ireland nor other Catholic countries appeared capable of cementing America's interest in strengthening a shared commitment to the nation's future.

Greece just might be different. As reported, the struggle of the Greek people for independence was one made by a people who appeared at the time to have a very different racial complexion and ethnic character from those of South America. The Greeks actually conducted their liturgy in the language St. Paul used in writing his Epistles. Like the Protestant religion of the United States, the Orthodox faith harked back to the origins of Christianity. Unlike the Irish, the Greek people did not appear as the instigators of disorder and cruelty. Support for the cause of Greek independence from Turkey just might provide the opportunity to draw Americans together in a fraternity. Much would depend on how events were reported—both the available factual evidence from Greece and the interpretation given to those facts.

One of the earliest published reports on the Greek uprising appeared in a May 1821 edition of *Niles*. The report consisted of excerpts from a prominent German newspaper. The revolt apparently had taken place in what are now Bulgaria and Romania, not in Greece itself. Only gradually did newspaper reports make it apparent that an ongoing revolt of the Greeks against Turkish rule centered in the Morea, in what today bears the name of the Peloponnesus. In its early report *Niles* quite frankly admitted, "There are a variety of rumors and reports about the operations of the revolted Greeks . . . . But they are of a very uncertain character, and not materially important, so we shall not attempt a notice of them."[46]

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[45] *Daily National Intelligencer* 11 (August 25, 1823): 3340.

On June 16th *Niles* told its readers:

> There is a report by way of Odessa, that a strong American squadron has appeared at the Archipelago and fell foul of the Turks—capturing five vessels at one dash, two of which were frigates. The cause is stated to be, the refusal of the Porte [the government of the Turkish sultan] to receive the American Ambassador.[47]

Such a report typified the misinformation which characterized much of the reporting on unfolding events in Greece. There was absolutely no foundation of fact behind the *Niles* report. Still, this early report from Europe did indicate an expectation that the United States would have strong sympathy for the cause of the Greeks, a cause which clearly involved rejection of established rule—just as the revolt of the American colonies had rejected such rule one generation earlier in their revolt against Britain.

Other reports were more accurate. On June 21st *Niles* described the hanging in Constantinople of the Greek primate before the doors of his church.[48] On July 14th *Niles* followed up: "Our accounts are so confused and contradictory that we know not how to put them in regular order." Despite this admonition it then went on to state:

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[46] *Niles* 20 (May 26, 1821): 206-207.

[47] *Niles* 20 (June 16, 1821): 254.

[48] *Niles* 20 (June 21, 1821): 336.

> Executions of the Greeks take place daily in the capital [Constantinople]; the venerable Greek Patriarch was dragged from his chair in the midst of divine service, and two hours after hanged in his patriarchal robes . . . . Several bishops have been beheaded before the doors of their church, as well as other wealthy and respectable Greek merchants.

It reported "the murders of many women and children at Para, which they [the Turks] have set on fire." *Niles* concluded its report in almost apocalyptic fashion:

> The Greeks murdered in Constantinople appear to have amounted to thousands. Indeed, it seems that a proposition was made to the Divan [the government of the Sultan] to murder all the Christians in the Empire, about twelve million.[49]

In September *Niles* spoke of the sending to Constantinople of

> . . . several chests of ears and noses, that had been cut off, which he [the local governor in Greece] salted on account of the season. This reminds us of the packages of scalps, curiously marked and assorted, which were captured on their way to England, whither the agents of his "sacred majesty" were sending them to gratify the royal taste.[50]

To judge by such reports, Turkey, like Britain, was a savage power. Such linkage of Britain and Turkey was not isolated. In fact, in early reports from Greece, Britain came across as an adversary of the very freedoms Americans had fought for in the recently concluded War of 1812. For example, on August 18th *Niles* reported that a British officer had boarded a Greek vessel at sea and seized arms destined for the Greeks in their fight against Turkey. With sarcasm, *Niles* asserted:

> We rather suppose that the British officer only maintained what his government calls 'the right to search'—in other words 'the winds and seas are Britain's domain, and not a sail without permission spreads.'

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[49] *Niles* 20 (July 21, 1821): 318-319.
[50] *Niles* 21 (September 29, 1821): 79.

Niles then proceeded to ask with indignation what was essentially a rhetorical question:

> Are we to suppose that the "head of the English church," the pious Guelph George 4th . . . is determined to uphold the standards of Mahomet, and bring the crescent under the protection of the Holy Alliance?[51]

In November 1821 *Niles* reported on British rule in the Ionian Islands:

> There is much prospect of a rising of the people of the Ionian Islands to drive out their [British] protectors—in which we most heartily wish them success.[52]

Britain had acquired the Ionian Islands as part of the peace settlement reached at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. They were strategically important as anchorages for the British fleet and protected British commerce in the Middle East and onward to India. The people of the Ionian Islands were Greek. The islands themselves were just off the coast of the Morea, the very center of the Greek struggle for independence. Certainly, as *Niles* saw it, Britain was hostile to the very principles and values on which the United States was founded, and as part of that hostile character they were hostile to the very freedoms Americans had fought for.

From such early reports, three key themes emerged. They would heavily influence American reactions as the Greek War of Independence progressed. First, the struggle was one involving religious freedom, for the Turks had attacked the leading prelates of the Greek Church. Second, to judge by printed reports, the Turks were the aggressors. The Greeks were innocent victims, just as Americans had been the innocent victims of British-sponsored Indian savagery. Third, the British were behaving toward the Greeks very much as the British had behaved toward Americans as recently as the War of 1812. At the time, boarding of American vessels on the high seas by British men-of-war had been the key *casus belli.* Given this background, Americans were apt to see Britain as a nation that wanted to deny them freedom and even impress their seamen. In the context of American values and experience, linking Britain with Turkey could only generate hostility toward Turkey.

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[51] *Niles* 20 (August 18, 1821): 386.

[52] *Niles* 21 (November 24, 1821): 195.

Even so, early reports from Greece did contain a mixed message. They spoke of great disorder in Greece, sometimes created by the Greeks themselves. On August 4, 1821 *Niles* reported, "The war is one of extermination—both parties seem resolved to massacre all their opponents." *Niles* spoke of the Greek women of Yannina in northwestern Greece throwing prisoners "over a precipice to their deaths." It estimated that the Greeks "have destroyed 3,000 Turks captured with their fleets at sea."[53] *Niles* then balanced its report by listing Turkish atrocities. On August 18th it reported, "They [the Greeks] have captured a great number of Turkish vessels, and put the whole of their crews to death, amounting to 5,000 men."[54]

In the same August 4th issue that reported the murder of Turkish captives, *Niles* also published an "allocation or address of the Grecian exarch Germanicus, archbishop of Patrasso to the faithful of the Peloponnesus [which] was pronounced on the 20th of March, breathing the enthusiasm that was witnessed in America on the eventful days of Bunker Hill." *Niles* quoted Germanicus as follows:

> "The temple of the lord is treated as an ignoble place . . . . The ancient mercies of the Lord are about to descend upon his people [the Greek people] . . . . The

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[53] *Niles* 20 (August 4, 1821): 366.
[54] Ibid., 400.

> hour of driving them from Greece has arrived, according to the word of the Eternal, 'Drive out the slave and the son of the slave.'"

The rhetoric in the allocution rose ever higher:

> "Arm then, Hellenic race, doubly illustrious by your sires, with the zeal of God. . . . Let us burst our bonds asunder, and the yoke that weighs upon our heads for we are the heirs of God, and just heirs of Jesus Christ."

Germanicus concluded:

> "Soldiers of the cross! It is the cause of Heaven itself that you are called upon to defend."[55]

By the autumn of 1821 many published reports began to paint the Greek revolt in terms which evoked the spirit of outrage which Germanicus tried to convey. For example, a private letter from Smyrna published in the *National Intelligencer* on September 15th stated:

> The town of Sydonia in which were 30,000 Christians, has just been burnt to the ground by the Turks, who put all capable of bearing arms to the sword, and took their wives and children into the interior as slaves.[56]

On October 31, 1821 the *National Intelligencer* reminded its readers of what reports were now making increasingly obvious: "The Turks are descended from Tartar hordes."[57]

Such increasingly one-sided reports need to be put in perspective. Many of the comments were abstractions and interpretations made by people outside Greece, or by those who might well be partisan to the conflict. What was lacking were detached, impartial on-the-ground reports.

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[55] Ibid., 367.

[56] *Daily National Intelligencer* 9 (September 15, 1821): 2707.

[57] *Daily National Intelligencer* 9 (October 31, 1821): 2746.

On September 21st the *National Intelligencer* printed what appeared to be just such a report. The report consisted of excerpts from a book recently published by the French diplomat and classicist F. H. L. Pouqueville. Around the time of the Greek uprising, Pouqueville had been in Greece. His analysis, based on his own personal observations, was not at all encouraging.

> This physiognomy [that of the Greeks] draws its principal characteristics from the state of slavery and oppression in which they are plunged, differing in this most essentially from the former inhabitants of the country. But who is not, alas, aware how much the rot of despotism debases nations as well as individuals?

Pouqueville concluded by stating as fact that "there is little reason to hope that any union among such persons can be forged upon the grand and enlarged scale which could afford a prospect of their ancient splendor being restored."[58] In substance, Pouqueville affirmed Nicholas Biddle's pessimistic 1806 impressions and invalidated the laudatory comments Everett had made to the editor of the *North American Review* in 1816.

On October 6th *Niles* reported, "The rage of the parties against one another seems to be equal, for it is said that the Greeks actually roasted a Turk below a slow fire at Hydra, after having cut off his nose and ears."[59] Some reports also suggested that the ability of the Greek people to marshal their knowledge and education to create an orderly, effective government was uncertain. On November 24th *Niles* stated, "We regret to hear that all attempts which have been made to form a concentrated Greek government and to dissolve the separate [i.e., local] authorities have hitherto been unsuccessful."[60]

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[58] *Daily National Intelligencer* 9 (September 21, 1821): 2699.

[59] *Niles* 21 (October 6, 1821): 95.

[60] *Niles* 21 (November 24, 1821): 195.

By the end of 1821 and into early 1822 the tone of reports from Greece followed a pattern well summarized by the *National Intelligencer* on October 18th:

> The papers as usual abound with letters and extracts from the continental papers, relative to the affairs of the Greeks and the Turks; but they are equally as unsatisfactory and contradictory as former accounts have been . . . . The majority of accounts are rather favorable to the Greeks.[61]

Many published reports did in fact provide strong reasons to accept that the modern Greek: was the blood descendent of the ancients and as such had the bravery to fight and if necessary to die for the cause of freedom; was the victim of religiously-based Turkish persecution; was nourished with good education; was the beneficiary of the ancient institutions of law and government; and as a result had the ability not only to win freedom from Turkey but also to then move forward to enjoy the freedom that victory would bring. Unfortunately, a number of early reports on the conduct of the war and the eyewitness evidence coming out of Greece itself contradicted such positive conclusions. Still, the matter was evolving, and evolving in ways which tended to strengthen empathy for the Greek cause.

More specifically, by the end of 1821 efforts by the press to interpret rather than report events increased. These interpretations were increasingly favorable to the Greek cause. For example, on December 13th *Niles* printed the following: "The *London Courier*, as duty bound, rails enormously at the Greeks for their cruelties." *Niles* went on to quote the *Courier* as saying that "8,000 Turks bearing arms were put to the sword on the taking of Tripolitza." The *London Courier* then argued, "But the Turks, acting under the orders of a legitimate government, may murder the Greeks, and their women and children—their patriarchs, archbishops and priests at discretion." According to the *Courier*, the Greeks discovered on taking Tripolitza that the Turks had just murdered "12,000 to 13,000 hostages of all ages and both sexes."[62]

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[61] *Daily National Intelligencer* 9 (October 18, 1821): 2735.

In essence the *London Courier* found that Turkish cruelty was committed against innocent civilians, whereas the cruelty of the Greeks was a function of spontaneous rage by individuals who had lost helpless loved ones. This meant that Turkish cruelty was premeditated and vicious, perpetrated by officials of the Turkish state. What the Greeks did was spontaneous and unprovoked. One could, presumably, sympathize with Greek cruelty, but not with atrocities committed by the Turks. In its reprinting of the *London Courier* article, *Niles* itself in no way qualified what the *Courier* had reported. Both journals seemed to accept that Turkish violence was barbaric, whereas Greek violence was spontaneous and the product of justifiable provocation.

Not reported in the *London Courier* was the following: At Tripolitza and elsewhere the Greek battle cry was, "In the Morea shall no Turk be left, none in the whole wide world."[63] In point of fact, over 12,000 Turks were slain at Tripolitza. According to one historian, such biased reporting meant that "American public opinion had neither eyes nor ears for Greek sponsored atrocities."[64]

Early in 1822 a new development presented itself. It tended to further tip the scale of press support into open advocacy for the Greek cause. The Greeks made a direct appeal for tangible support for their cause. They asked the American people for money to carry on their struggle. On January 5, 1822 *Niles* printed their appeal. It came from what *Niles* termed the Greek Senate, meeting in Kalamata. With strong rhetoric, the "people of Greece" spoke to the people of the United States:

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[62] *Niles* 21 (December 13, 1821): 374.
[63] Cline, *American Attitude*, 11.
[64] Earle, "American Interest," 62.

> It is now for you to perfect your glory, in aiding us purge Greece from the barbarians, who for four centuries have polluted it . . . . No, the country of Penn, of Franklin, and of Washington cannot refuse her and the descendents of Phocon, Thrasybylus, Aratus and Philopremen . . . . Humanity is expecting its revival from the new world . . . . The ties of fraternity and kindness will forever unite the Grecians and the Americans; and our mutual interests are such, as to strengthen forever an alliance founded on liberty and virtue . . . . It is among you that liberty has found its abode, and she is worshipped by you as by our fathers. In evoking her name, we invoke yours; feeling that in imitating you we imitate our own ancestors, and that we show ourselves worthy of you by our virtues . . . . We regard you as friends, fellow citizens and brethren.[65]

In time money would in fact flow from people in the United States to support the Greek cause. The Kalamata appeal was to play a positive role in stimulating support for the Greek cause. In October 1823 Edward Everett would reprint the impassioned exhortations contained in the Kalamata appeal to buttress his own arguments for active support by the United States government for the Greek cause.[66] The Kalamata appeal itself did not make a direct appeal for the American people to speak through their Government. To judge by many of the responses to the appeal, however, there was no clear demarcation of what was a private duty of individual Americans and a public responsibility of the Government that represented them.

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[65] *Niles* 22 (January 5, 1822): 142.

[66] See p. 92.

Meanwhile, reports in 1822 confirmed that the Greeks were winning their war against the "barbarians." In March *Niles* reported:

> The Greeks appear to go on prosperously. They have an organized government. An expedition of 2,000 men was [said to be] preparing to drive the Turks from the island of Scio. All the Morea except the town of Coron was in their hands.[67]

In June *Niles* reported:

> The patriots are preparing to meet their enemies. Supplies have reached them from various parts, and many volunteers [from Europe] are flocking to their standard.[68]

By the summer of 1822 the tone and the substance maintained its course of increasing bias in favor of the Greek cause, coupled with an increasing willingness to demonize the Turks. Even so, up to this point in time Americans had not responded in any tangible, organized way to the Greek War of Independence. Two key ingredients were missing. The first was a cataclysmic event to galvanize people's feelings of empathy into feelings of urgency to take concrete, tangible steps to support the Greek cause. The second missing ingredient was leadership to organize actions designed to tangibly help the Greek cause. Both would soon fall into place.

The catalytic event was a Turkish atrocity of enormous proportions. It would later be described as the Massacre of Scio. One British historian in the 1840s described the event in these terms:

> Mercy was out of the question, the victors butchering indiscriminately all who came their way; shrieks wrent the air, and the streets were strewed with dead bodies of

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[67] *Niles* 22 (March 18, 1822): 35.

[68] *Niles* 22 (June 5, 1822): 222.

> old men, women and children, even the inmates of the hospital, the madhouse and the deaf and dumb institution were inhumanely slaughtered.
>
> * * *
>
> Within a week two grisly consignments from the governor of Chios had reached Constantinople. They contained the heads and ears of the rebels who had been killed or worse still, the ears of some who had been taken alive, and a notice to this effect was posted outside the Seraglio.[69]

The basis for this report was a dispatch which the British ambassador at Constantinople allegedly sent to London at the time of the massacre.

Reports in the American press echoed almost word for word the horrific and emotional tones which the ambassador had used. On July 20th *Niles* published the following:

> The streets and highways are filled with the bodies of men, women, and children, butchered, and many outrages on the young women, even worse than death have been committed in the most horrible manner.[70]

The report spoke of the burning of churches and of their looting, then went on:

> The Greek population were conveyed successively to Constantinople, and sold like vile herds, the most considerable persons and women of the first families were treated like the others . . . . The people of Scio that had not been sent off as slaves were retained for deliberate butchery. The streets and towns are filled with their festering remains . . . . Thousands of Greeks are exposed in the slave market at Constantinople, especially women and girls. Some of these kill each other to rescue themselves from the Turks . . . . Some are purchased for the express purpose of being murdered.

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[69] Gordon, *History of the Greek Revolution*, 1:358, cited in Brewer, *Greek War*, 158.

[70] *Niles* 22 (August 3, 1822): 358-359.

On August 17th *Niles* reported, "The affairs of the Greeks are desperate."[71] On that same date *Niles* reported an Address of the Greeks at Constantinople to their brethren in London:

> Who can without shuddering read of the total ruin, the universal desolation of our famed and happy isle—the destruction of its inhabitants, nearly 100,000.

The address spoke of "whole villages, innumerable country seats, a prey to flames." The address concluded with this exhortation: "Brethren and countrymen, exert yourselves in behalf of humanity."[72]

Two days later the *National Intelligencer* published a private letter from an eyewitness to the massacres.

> All the women were sent into slavery, the men and male children over 12 years of age were massacred . . . . These dastardly and ruthless ruffians went to Scio because it was rich and defenseless . . . . They knew better than to attempt Samos or any of the islands which were prepared for them.

It was "one continual scene of murder, conflagration and plunder." What happened was not uncontrolled, nor was it spontaneous.

> It appears that from the very moment the Turkish fleet was destined for Scio, the total destruction of its inhabitants was resolved upon, without any examination of culpability or innocence.

The letter spoke of the destruction of "the library, the superb edifice of Saint Anaigeroso, and upward of 40 villages have been consumed in flames." It gave repeated, graphic, and detailed accounts of horrific hangings and strangulations. The author of the letter concluded with words of venom:

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[71] *Niles* 22 (August 17, 1822): 388.
[72] Ibid., 389.

> Hatred and indignation against our executioners are the only sentiments which can henceforth dwell within my heart . . . . My dreadful situation interests neither Turks nor Englishmen.[73]

On September 4th the *National Intelligencer* reported that a "British warship passed Scio and saw villages burning and signals for help from Greek warships, but it being dead calm and the ship under order to observe the strictest neutrality in the Greek cause, she proceeded to Corfu."[74] The heartless attitude of the British Government was apparently shared by other European governments. In the words of the article, "It was expected that the conduct of the Turks at Scio might influence [Tsar] Alexander's determination, but it has made no impression on him." The very next day the *National Intelligencer* followed up, printing what was contained in a letter received from an American in Paris:

> No sacrifice is too great to uphold legitimate thrones, although the Porte, like Metternich, is crimsoned with the blood of women and children, and is decorated with bleeding heads.[75]

On September 21st the paper underscored the pitiful human nature of the sacrifice being made to uphold the "legitimate thrones" of the European rulers. From Odessa came this report:

> The number of Christian slaves for sale in the bazaar is so great, that a lad has been sold for a small quantity of vegetables. Though it may appear improbable, it is not the least true.[76]

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[73] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (August 19, 1822): 2994.

[74] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (September 4, 1822): 3008.

[75] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (September 5, 1822): 3009.

[76] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (September 21, 1822): 3025.

Earlier, on August 17th, *Niles* had reported to its readers, "It is affirmed that the operations of the Turks, both by sea and by land, are now directed by English officers."

> A vessel has arrived at Patras, under the protection of the British command, to supply the Turkish garrison with grain. Another has sailed from London with gunpowder . . . . A third, destined for Egypt reportedly sailed with guns and cannon and other items destined for war.[77]

The article then stated, "When these vessels arrive in the Mediterranean, it is possible that they will receive convoy from British ships of war." In the context of a general hostility to the Greek people by the British and other European governments, *Niles* on September 7th reported:

> The details of the proceedings of the barbarians at Scio seem to be more and more horrible if possible. It is stated that upwards of 5,000 children have been hung, drowned or otherwise destroyed by the Turks, putting to death 50 to 60 of them at a time, by various means, as if it were for amusement.[78]

In that same issue *Niles* printed the following proclamation under the title "GREEK PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT": "The rights of the people are incontestable. The unheard of sacrifices made by that people are incontestable." The statement made clear that these sacrifices were made in support of the struggle for the freedom of the Greek people. *Niles* concluded by reporting:

> The Greeks have not become dispirited, and although abandoned by [Tsar] Alexander, it is probable that they will maintain their ground for a considerable time—but we are now hopeless of their success, unless the infernal alliance of kings against men is shaken to pieces.

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[77] *Niles* 22 (August 17, 1822): 389.
[78] *Niles* 23 (September 7, 1822): 6.

The Greeks were fighting for their lives, as well as the sacred honor of their religion and that of their wives and children. Had we not done the same in our own battles against the British and their Indian allies? There could be no ambivalence. The case for support from America for the Greek cause was powerful and strong. Was the case not the same as that which validated support for America's own struggle for freedom? Were the Greeks not isolated, just as we had been before French intervention in our cause? As evidenced by the Albany resolution of December 1822, there was an implicit judgment that the Greeks needed help to survive what *Niles* termed the "infernal alliance of kings against men." Conditions necessary to support an active American allegiance and commitment to the Greek cause were now present. And America had the freedom to do what was right. America, unlike Europe, was free of the infernal alliance of hereditary rulers.

In themselves, however, tales of horror were not sufficient to precipitate tangible measures of support for the Greek people. Even when repeated, statements of respect for Greek courage and empathy for the sufferings necessary to secure freedom were not enough. What was needed was leadership within the United States—vital in order to translate words and sentiments into tangible substantive actions. Committees needed to be formed to raise money for the Greek cause. This required the guiding hand of leadership. Leadership was likewise necessary to assure a consistent message interpreting news from Greece in ways which justified support for the Greeks. Moreover, coordinated decisions needed to be made on such issues as whether to ask the United States Government to act officially to support the struggle for freedom. Without the many dimensions of such leadership, the Greek cause would be merely a rhetorical exercise of indignation at the appalling behavior of others. Without such leadership it would be hard, if not impossible, to translate emotional engagement into the power to influence events by tangible actions.

The Greek cause did find the needed leadership in Edward Everett. As one historian put it, in Everett the Greek cause "had a leader whose zeal and devotion to Greece was unsurpassed by that of any of his countrymen. To no other American is there so much responsibility for assessing public sentiment in favor of Greece."[79] Everett was in a unique position to provide the needed leadership. He was known and respected within educated and politically active circles within the United States. He knew and embraced the cause of Greek freedom with great fervor. The nationalist leaders of the Greek revolt, such as Adamantes Coray, were old and trusted friends years before the Greek revolt began. In the summer and fall of 1821 Everett maintained an intensive correspondence with Greek leaders. They wrote to each other in modern Greek. With such correspondence Everett knew how the leaders of the Greek revolt were presenting their case for support.

Everett served as an almost ideal bridge between the Greek nationalists in Europe and those in the United States who were in a position to help the Greek cause. He maintained correspondence with many of the key figures of American political life of the time, including Monroe, Madison, Jefferson, Webster, John Adams and his son, John Quincy Adams. On topics of intellectual or political interest, Everett became a source of presumably reliable information and respected insights. For example, in July 1821 Daniel Webster wrote Everett expressing praise for a recent article in the *North American Review*.[80] In March 1822 Jefferson wrote to Everett to express appreciation for "the very edifying view of Europe which you have been so kind as to send to me." Jefferson told Everett that newspapers had made an "ocean of uncertainties and falsehoods," so that "it is joyful at times to catch the glimmerings of a beam."[81] In February 1823 Madison wrote to Everett to express appreciation for the receipt of a copy of Buttman's *Greek Grammar.*[82] In March 1823 John Adams wrote Everett thanking him for tickets to Everett's lectures in Cambridge.[83] Everett was a master of cultivating influential people by providing them with information and ideas that they needed and felt that they could not easily come by elsewhere.

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[79] Cline, *American Attitude*, 272.

[80] Webster to Everett, July 9, 1821, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

Even early in his career Everett was also a master of eloquence at a time when oratorical skill was much respected. Emerson was among the many who felt inspiration in listening to Everett. As a very young man Emerson attended one of Everett's sermons in Cambridge. Emerson described his reactions with these words: "[Everett] who was heard with such throbbing hearts and sparkling eyes in the lighted and crowded chamber did not let go of his hearers when the church was dismissed, but the bright images and that eloquent form followed the boy [Emerson] home to his bedchamber."[84]

All in all, Everett was a trusted and respected member of the establishment of his day. He earned his admission to this circle not by political office. Everett enjoyed his influence at the time of the Greek struggle for freedom in part by virtue of his appointment as editor of the *North American Review*. He "belonged" even more because of his eloquence and his talent and his energy in cultivating a wide range of correspondents. He had graduated from Harvard less than eight years before the Greek War of Independence began in 1821. Support for Greek freedom was his first major commitment to a cause which was to become of national importance within the United States.

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[81] Jefferson to Everett, March 2, 1822, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

[82] James Madison to Everett, February 18, 1823, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

[83] John Adams to Everett, March 2, 1823, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

[84] Cited in Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 25.

Given this background, it is not surprising to find a high level of congruence between what Greek leaders said in their communications to America and statements made by Everett and the "Greek" committees that sprang up over the course of 1823. The Albany and Philadelphia resolutions and the Kalamata appeal, for example, showed many parallels in their arguments for the Greek cause. Recognizing the level of personal contact and exchange of information, it would be surprising not to find such congruence. What is more surprising is to find that much the same congruence of values and beliefs extended to reports in the American press. For the most part these press reports were summaries of articles that had appeared in the London papers and, to a lesser extent, those on the continent. One must assume that the editors of *Niles* and the *National Intelligencer*, the two major national newspapers of the time, generally selected items from liberal European papers, papers which were sometimes quite hostile to those who occupied positions of power and authority in England and on the Continent.[85] Also, it is important to note that the Greeks did send emissaries throughout Europe and did engage in efforts to garner support within Europe for their cause. Everett was not the only one exposed to the ideas of Coray and others who provided the ideological foundations for the Greek struggle for freedom.

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[85] The author believes that research would document that reports from the European press were chosen for publication in the United States to support the liberal, pro-Greek viewpoint espoused by both *Niles* and the *Daily National Intelligencer.*

Given effective leadership, given the powerful message contained in the massacre of Scio, given also the close ethnocentric identification of the Greeks and their cause with Americans and the United States, exhortations to support the Greek cause contained a very powerful cultural message. In the following chapter we will explore how Americans came to express this message. Thereafter we will examine whether the values and principles of American cultural and political life either validated or mandated that the United States Government use its substantive power to extend diplomatic recognition to the Greek people. And then we will consider whether actions taken by the United States Government meant that there would be a melding of, or definable distinctions between, these values and the principles that would guide the nation in the conduct of its foreign affairs.

CHAPTER TWO

WHY AMERICANS LINKED THEIR CIVIC IDENTITY TO THE GREEK CAUSE

On November 28, 1821 John Adams queried Benjamin Rush, the American minister in London, "Are the Greeks rising like phoenix from the ashes?"[1] Two years later he confided to Jefferson, "My old imagination is kindling into a kind of missionary enthusiasm for the cause of the Greeks, my feelings go on with NY, Penn. and Mass.; but, after all, they are feelings rather than reasonings."[2] In his letter the former president was referring to mass meetings of support for the Greek cause that had just been held in all these states. *Niles* would subsequently quote Adams as saying, "Be assured my heart beats in unison with yours [those who supported the Greek cause]. . . . I believe no effort in favor of the Greeks will be ultimately lost."[3] For Adams and for others, curiosity led to empathy which in turn led to commitment.

Why this progression took place reflected four intertwined ideals. All spoke to a need to articulate America's own civic identity.

First, support for the cause of Greek freedom let Americans express their commitment to and, if circumstances permitted, to display what people of the time called civic "virtue." Bravery, exemplified by a disciplined willingness to endure danger and even sacrifice one's life for a worthwhile cause, was a crucial aspect of this civic virtue. Second, the Greek cause let Americans express their sense of duty to defend and support what many accepted as a shared Christian (and non-Catholic) religion. Third, support for the Greek cause enabled educated and politically active Americans to reaffirm their commitment to the heritage of democratic government and the rule of law which they felt had originated in ancient Greece. As we will see in this chapter, many Americans of the 1820s accepted as fact that it was the ancient Greeks who gave birth to these blessings, blessings which most Americans of the time felt were at the heart of America's own freedom. Fourth, the Greek cause provided opportunity to express feelings of compassion and support for those undergoing persecution, thereby validating not only one's civic virtue and but also one's Christian identity. Taken together, these four intertwined aspects of national identity generated a *volkgeist* which identified the Greeks and the Americans of the early 19th century as brothers, members of the same family, sharing the same heritage.

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[1] John Adams to Rush, November 28, 1821, in *Works of John Adams*, 10:40, cited in Cline, *American Attitude*, 54.

[2] John Adams to Jefferson, December 29, 1823, cited in Cline, *American Attitude*, 54.

[3] *Niles* 25 (February 24, 1824): 346.

Even more important than substance was the fact that support for the Greek cause let Americans articulate their feelings collectively, through meetings and later through appeals to and debates in Congress and in state legislatures. These shared experiences produced a civic bonding, generating a sense of active commitment to shared duties and shared responsibilities. This in turn encouraged allegiance to shared principles and values.

What follows are examples which illustrate how educated and politically active Americans came to experience and to express their own sense of national identity by embracing the cause of Greek freedom from Turkey.

In his popular poem "The Massacre of Scio," William Cullen Bryant wrote:

> Though hiss the warm red torrent ran
> Between the flames that lit the sky

Yet for each drop, an armed man
Shall rise, to free the land, or die.[4]

Amidst carnage and death it was the Greek, as Bryant expressed it, who remained valiant and strong. Here was an exemplar, one who eloquently defined the ideal of the bravery and self-sacrifice embedded in civic virtue.

There was a problem. How could Americans of the 1820s know whether they too possessed the qualities of bravery and self-sacrifice which the Greeks were then displaying? Referring to the Greek cause, the poet James Gates Percival suggested that Americans had the opportunity to show these qualities, but had not yet done so.

And is there none to arm thy defense?
No ardent, generous, devoted youth
To pledge his fortunes, and his trust
And nobly exiled, cross the waves
To join the oppress'd and the brave?
Go forth if such there be, go forth
Stand by that nation in her second birth.[5]

Percival delivered his poem in August 1824. He spoke at a Harvard Phi Beta Kappa conclave in Cambridge. The nation he referred to was Greece. One distinguished guest at the meeting was in a particularly good position to appreciate Percival's sentiments. He was the Marquis de Lafayette, who was just beginning his triumphal tour of the United States. Very clearly Lafayette had "crossed the waves" at the time of the American Revolution to fight for freedom. Lafayette was keenly interested in encouraging the United States to reciprocate by supporting the cause of freedom in Greece. Lafayette's host at the gathering was Edward Everett.

The setting in which Percival recited his poem contained an implicit conclusion. To arm in defense of freedom for the Greek people was to display

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[4] Raizis et al., *Greek Revolution*, 28.
[5] Ibid., 26.

Lafayette's own bravery and his ability to make sacrifices for others. In Percival's poem Americans had to choose whether they would follow Lafayette's path. So far, according to Percival, they had not yet made the choice. Bryant's poem, in contrast, left little doubt that the Greeks themselves had already made their choice. They were a people of great valor, willing to fight and, if need be, to die for the cause of freedom.

Nearly two years earlier, in October 1822, Dr. William Thornton, the Superintendent of the Patent Office, had brought into focus the sentiments Percival would later present to the Phi Beta Kappa gathering in Cambridge. Speaking of his fellow countrymen, Thornton stated:

> We rest at ease and in safety, we read with listless apathy of the heroic deeds of those noble spirits who toiled through blood and danger to obtain the boon we now enjoy. No wonder then, that in this supine indulgence many have heard with indifference of the slaughter of the brave Greeks, of the cold blood—the innocent women and children, of the violation of the beautiful virgins, of the sale of other persons to the most abandoned, the most brutal of their kin.[6]

Thornton reminded his audience, "There was a time, when all the chivalry of Christendom, under the banner of the Holy Cross, waged war with the enemies of the savior." Thornton then threw down his gauntlet to the young people of America:

> To you, brave and exalted offspring of the generous race who won freedom for your country. To you I will plead the cause of the Greeks . . . . I address to the true American who feels the oppressed of every nation.[7]

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[6] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (October 18, 1822): 3046.

[7] Ibid.

Percival and Thornton addressed a need frequently expressed at the time of the Greek struggle for independence. That need was to obtain reassurance that American men of the time still had the capacity for courage and sacrifice for others. Would the people of the United States demonstrate by their actions the courage and the energy necessary to validate their own citizenship? As presented by Thornton and by Percival in particular, this was an open question.

In his poem "The Hero," John Greenleaf Whittier echoed these anxieties and concerns.

> O that man once more were manly
> Women's pride and not her scorn
> That once more the pale young mother
> Dared to boast 'a man is born.'
>
> Wherever rise the people
> Wherever sinks a throne
> The throbbing heart of freedom finds
> An answer in her own.[8]

In Whittier's poem, though, there was a double message. The poem expressed anxiety as to whether the pale young mother "dared" to boast that her son truly had the capacity for bravery and self-sacrifice which made him a man. In his 1824 poem Percival played upon these anxieties. Dr. William Thornton indicated the proper path to take in order to demonstrate that Americans did in fact possess qualities of bravery and capacity to sacrifice for others. In essence Americans had a choice. They could exhibit bravery and virtue by supporting the Greek cause, or supinely (and shamefully) they could remain passive spectators to unfolding events. In short, by acting to support the cause of Greek independence Americans could validate their own manliness and national identity.

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[8] Whittier, "The Hero," cited in Howe, *Letters and Journals*, xii.

Beyond the opportunity to demonstrate bravery and self-sacrifice for the noble cause of human freedom, there were also the responsibilities which stemmed from what advocates of the Greek cause accepted as a common heritage. As early as 1821 the *North American Review* had underscored the nature of this heritage. It came from ancient Greece or, more accurately, it came from the spirit of human achievement which characterized ancient Greece.

> It is not the columns and temples, it is not art which give to Greece her highest charm, her poetry. It is man, it is nature, not the loveliness of her landscape, but the history of her inhabitants; their deeds, their glories, their misfortunes which have made her sublime; not the trophies of her art, so much as the recollection of her own history that will remain; when her temples will have crumbled to dust.[9]

In late 1823 William Cullen Bryant provided a good summary of the connection between this heritage and the related obligation to help the Greeks. He spoke at a public meeting held in Great Barrington to support the Greek cause. Bryant exhorted his audience with these words:

> We are the pupils of her great men, in all the principles of science, of morals, and of good government . . . . The world owes her a debt of gratitude which it would be pusillanimous to forget, or fail to return in heaping measure of assistance and benefaction.[10]

There was another side to consider as well. If Americans did not act to support the cause of Greek freedom, they not only failed to meet their civic responsibilities. They risked shame and dishonor. To paraphrase Whittier, man would not be manly. Such arguments were stated subtly. Nevertheless they were quite seductive.

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[9] Everett, "Byron's Letter on Pope," *North American Review* 33:460.

[10] Goodwin, *Biography of William Cullen Bryant*, 1:187, cited in Raizis, *Greek Revolution,* 28.

In a November 18, 1823 article the *National Intelligencer* was quite explicit.

> Greece is everyday consummating her freedom by acts of devoted bravery and the most intrepid heroism as if she awoke from the earth on which she lay, and like a giant starting from her slumbers, astonished all Europe by her successful efforts.[11]

According to the *National Intelligencer* the dying words of one of the leaders of the Greeks were, "My friends, to die for liberty is a pleasure not a pain."[12] Such words call to mind Nathan Hale's heroic statement that he regretted that he had but one life to give to his country.

In early 1823 *Niles* had put such bravery in more graphic terms. Speaking of a naval battle off the island of Spezia, *Niles* stated, "The Greeks performed prodigies of valor in sight of their wives and children."[13] For family and homeland the Greek had risked the ultimate sacrifice, the giving of his own life.

In August 1823 the *National Intelligencer* reported, "Without the aid of foreign powers and without money, a handful of men dared to raise the standard against a powerful tyrant and have succeeded."[14] America's own lonely struggle for freedom was still a living memory for many who read such reports. It would be quite easy for them or for their children to draw parallels with the heroic struggle of American patriots to throw off the tyrannical rule of the British, and to do so against great odds. Going back to ancient Greece one could easily find parallels in the battles of Marathon and Salamis. In sum, it appeared that there were parallels between the struggles waged by the ancient Greeks against the mighty Persian Empire, the struggles of the modern Greeks against the Turkish Empire, and the struggles Americans had waged against the powerful British Empire.

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[11] *Daily National Intelligencer* 34 (November 18, 1823): 3383.

[12] Ibid.

[13] *Niles* 23 (January 13, 1823): 310.

[14] *Daily National Intelligencer* 34 (August 23, 1823): 3309.

In today's world thoughtful people may well find such arguments and analogies naïve, melodramatic and unconvincing. Even so, one must accept that in the early 19th century they were in fact extremely effective, given the outpouring of support for the Greek cause that they generated.[15] Daniel Webster's Plymouth oration suggests a very specific reason why this was so. In 1820 Webster commemorated the Pilgrim heritage with these words: "So neither is it false or vain to consider ourselves as interested and connected with our whole race, through time, allied to our ancestors, allied to our posterity."[16] Shelley's 1822 poem "Hellas" provides further perspective. It was widely read in the United States at the very time that support for the Greek cause was building.

> The world's great age begins anew,
> The earth doth like a snail renew,
> Her winter weeds outworn . . . [17]

For Webster, for Shelley, for Everett and for many others, the "great age" which was to begin anew was one to be crowned by a triumph of freedom and the defeat of enslavement by tyrannical rulers. As the title of Shelley's poem indicates, one needed to look to Greece for what was essentially a rebirth, a return to a time uncorrupted by the realities of the present. There was a mystical link, one bordering on a religious experience which joined past, present and future. It was a link which gave a sense of direction and purpose transcending one's own powers of independent reason and judgment. Webster and Shelley both led their audiences to see that progress itself involved the recapture of what went before, in a world less corrupted than the present. In a *North American Review* article Everett characterized America's role in this rebirth as "the great and glorious part, which this county is to act in the regeneration of the world."[18]

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[15] For an analysis of the cultural significance of rhetoric and its persuasive power, see Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence*, especially discussion on pp. 14ff.

[16] Webster, "The First Settlement of New England" (discourse, Plymouth, December 22, 1820) in *Great Speeches*, 26.

[17] Shelley, "Hellas," cited in Raizis, *Greek Revolution and the American Muse,* 18.

Looking back from the 21st century, there is a startling paradox in how educated and politically active Americans responded to the Greek War of Independence. At the time of the Greek struggle for freedom there was legalized chattel slavery in an important part of the Union. Even in the North there were very few well-organized movements to free the slaves. In fact, the nation had, in the Missouri Compromise, just sanctioned the extension of slavery into newly settled regions of the country. In the 1820s the paradox of condoning slavery within the United States and supporting the cause of freedom in faraway Greece went largely unnoticed. In newspapers of the time, side by side with eloquent pleas to support the cause of Greek freedom, one finds advertisements such as the following:

> Stop the Runaway. Ran away from the subscriber, about Christmas last, named Travis 32 or 33 years of age . . . . Travis is a pretty good carpenter and has been so much indulged for a few years that he is unmindful of his duty.[19]

For his apprehension and delivery or securing him in jail, the owner offered a $50 reward. More poignantly, on March 17, 1823 the same journal advertised:

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[18] Cited in Earle, "American Interest," 46.

[19] *Daily National Intelligencer* 11 (March 12, 1823): 3161.

> Negroes for Sale. In pursuance of a decree of the Charles County Court, I shall on the twenty-sixth of March 1823 sell at public auction a very lively parcel of negroes—two men, two boys, the rest women and children.[20]

In September 1822 the *National Intelligencer* reprinted from the *Petersburg Intelligencer* the following "comments on the late conspiracy at Charleston," indicating

> that the larger part of the slaves concerned in the plot, were those who had been most indulged by their masters, and not a few of them were educated men . . . . To the holders of slaves generally, this fact is pregnant with wholesome instruction . . . . The solemn warning which it [the uprising] conveys of the absolute incompatibility of extreme indulgence and the real good of slaves; and the benefits of education can in no degree and under no circumstances be extended to them.[21]

There were no mass outpourings of protest against advertisements for runaway slaves, slave auctions or demands that blacks be denied the benefits of education.

Educated, politically active Americans did react vigorously and in large numbers to reports that a barbarian people, the Turks, were enslaving and selling as chattel people very much their kin. On September 26, 1822 the *Charleston Courier* ran the following editorial, condemning the Europeans as hypocrites for trying to free blacks and making no efforts to prevent the enslavement of the Greeks.

> Where is the tenderness and sympathy which filled the British senate with tears at the recital of misfortunes of uncivilized, ignorant and savage creatures [the blacks] between whom and themselves there was scarcely one common link or association of interest? . . . What a scene of brutal sensuality, of worse than cannibal warfare, of worse than demonic cruelty, does the Turkish court present in civilized Europe.[22]

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[20] *Daily National Intelligencer* 11 (March 17, 1823): 3178.

[21] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (September 16, 1822): 3018.

[22] *Daily National Intelligencer* 11 (September 26, 1823): 3027.

However despicable the behavior of others, the path for Americans was clear, at least in the minds of the racist owners of the *Charleston Courier*. "We should feel ashamed, both of our reason and our feelings, if we doubted for a moment the duty of interposing to save a Christian people from the barbarous vengeance of their persecutors."[23] The *Courier* gave no evidence of seeing hypocrisy in holding slaves in the United States and at the same time supporting freedom in Greece.

In March 1823 *Niles* reported, "They [the Greeks] have overhauled many European 'Christians' conveying their countrymen and women to the slave markets of Egypt and Barbary, and have contented themselves with liberating the captives—not having thrown the Europeans into the sea, as would have been just."[24] To judge by such reports, the holding of slaves merited capital punishment—but only if perpetrated against people who, being Greek, were kindred to educated, politically active (and white) Americans.

The American press did not accord all Europeans the respect it expressed for the Greek people. In July 1823 the *National Intelligencer* reported with disdain and contempt that the Spanish had surrendered the liberties enshrined in their constitution. Without much of a struggle they had reportedly given up their freedom and accepted rule by an absolute monarch. In the *National Intelligencer's* judgment, Americans most definitely were not like the Spanish. Americans were

> a race of men who bore up with incomprobable firmness, and under so many disadvantages, through a struggle in which no alternative was permitted but liberty or death, and who obtained the prize, [and] can hardly think with patience of a people yielding anything

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[23] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (November 28, 1822): 3080.
[24] *Niles* 24 (June 14, 1823): 240.

> to threats and force, or shrinking from shedding their own blood for the independence of their own country.[25]

(As newspapers reported repeatedly, such bravery characterized just what the Greeks were doing in their own struggle for freedom.) The Turks were, of course, contemptible. In the words of the *National Intelligencer*, "The superior force of the barbarian gave way to the nervous arms of a few [Greek] patriots striking for liberty."[26] Were not the positive qualities of the Greeks evident also in America's own struggle against the superior force of the British? The question and the answer were implicit in published reports.

Such statements, focused on the exceptional character of the Greek people, moved public discourse away from the notion of universal rights which had played a major role in arguments to support the cause of Latin American independence from Spain. Statements made by Henry Clay on the floor of the House of Representatives over a long period of years provide an interesting contrast.

In 1824 Clay would urge support for the cause of Greek independence with these words: "Sir, the experience of the world is that men become slaves as soon as they have ceased to resolve to be freemen . . . . Let us show our people that we are prepared to live or die freemen."[27] Such sentiments were noble, not necessarily practical.

Clay made no mention of the unique or special qualities of the Latin Americans. Clay's frame of reference was one of universal rights.

In December 1822 the *National Intelligencer* put the matter in these terms: "Every friend of humanity, every one who sincerely desires the emancipation of the human race from despotic thralldom, must rejoice with us in the confirmation of the victories obtained by the Greeks over their barbarian oppressors."[28] In support for the Greek cause, Clay's frame of reference was a part of the argument. As the evidence already presented suggests, such a frame of reference was by no means the key foundation which made Americans feel they needed to support the cause of Greek freedom.

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[25] *Daily National Intelligencer* 11 (July 16, 1823): 3276.
[26] *Daily National Intelligencer* 11 (November 18, 1823): 3383.
[27] *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:1174 (January 22, 1824).

In September 1822 the *National Intelligencer* reprinted excerpts from an article in the liberal *Edinburgh Review*.

> What! Does the Holy Alliance open its capacious and accommodating arms to embrace the foe of Christendom—the Turks? Let nations be parceled out and divided amongst the ruling powers as the spoilia optima of victory—let unoffending people be transferred from one master to another, as livestock and land where they inhabit—lest precedents be created destructive to the balance of power.[29]

To judge by such statements, failure to support the cause of Greek freedom meant one supported the principles of the Holy Alliance, and opposed all that America ostensibly stood for. It was a theme which we saw expressed in the Albany resolution discussed in the previous chapter.

Unfortunately there was repeated factual evidence that the Greeks as well as the Turks behaved as barbarians. As we also saw in the preceding chapter, the press had found ways of minimizing and rationalizing the challenge presented by such factual evidence. Dr. Thornton, in his October 1822 address felt it necessary to focus on the issue. This in itself suggests that concern over Greek atrocities was an obstacle in garnering support for the Greek cause. As Thornton expressed it,

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[28] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (December 25, 1822): 3102.
[29] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (September 16, 1822): 3018.

"When the brave Greeks witness the violation of their wives and daughters, what can stay the fury of the man, who broken hearted in his afflictions, becomes indeed terrific."[30] Just ten days earlier, *Niles* had published an article written by the well-known English philhellene, Lord Erskine. In that article Lord Erskine's argument proceeded as follows:

> But it is objected that the Greeks are not less savagely cruel than the Turks. I will not hear of such a thing . . . . The gentlest of animals, when maddened with terror and goaded by barbarian oppression, will change on a sudden all the characteristics of their original natures, and overthrow everything in their course.[31]

The behavior of the Greeks was not only excusable. Being unpremeditated and provoked, it was justifiable, or so Erskine would have his audience believe. Even more important from Erskine's standpoint was the following: "To judge what the Greeks under good government are capable of being, we have only to look back to what they have been." In essence, what the Greeks had done under extreme duress could not detract from what he perceived was an unquestioned fact, that the Greeks had the ability to live responsibly in freedom. The blood lines were there. That is what appeared to count. The racist editors of the *Charleston Courier* could not have agreed more.

According to a report in *Niles* dated September 23, 1823, the Greeks had clearly demonstrated the capacity to create and then to live with an orderly functioning government.

> The elections in Greece are over, and the new Congress has gone into operation with all the calmness of the most regular government. All looks well.[32]

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[30] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (December 18, 1822): 3046.

[31] *Niles* 23 (October 10, 1822): 111.

[32] *Niles* 24 (September 23, 1823): 410.

Such a picture of order and reason stood in stark contrast to the mayhem allegedly perpetrated by the Turks. Moreover, unlike the Spanish, who had supinely given away their freedom, the Greeks had—to judge by what *Niles* said—not only won theirs but were demonstrating the capacity to generate the order and harmony within which freedom could thrive. The Greeks, in short, appeared to have put in place civic institutions very much like those in the United States.

It was on such foundations that the cause for Greek independence gained its support among educated and politically active Americans. Above all, it was the eloquence of one man that translated the Greek struggle for freedom into a cause many Americans came to adopt as their own. As we saw in the previous chapter, the man who made that translation was Edward Everett. It is to two public expressions of his support for the Greek cause that we now turn: an article in the *North American Review* and a speech in Boston.

In October 1823 the *North American Review* published an article entitled "Coray's Aristotle: The Ethics of Nichomachus." Everett, the author of the article, presented as matters of fact the following:

> We have been told they are barbarous, superstitious, fraudulent—no better than Turkish tyrants. If we accepted travelers accounts of the American character, we would appear as travelers describe Greece.[33]

Everett was referring to British travelers' negative and contemptuous accounts of life in the United States. From his perspective it was self-evident that such reports were false. His implication was subtle, but also quite clear. The reader should distrust sources of information which were at variance with Everett's own statements. Presumably his statements, presented as matters of fact, would need no testing. Among these:

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[33] Everett, "Coray's Aristotle," 398.

> The struggle in Greece is not what some have made out, a struggle between barbarian masters and no less barbarous slaves in which it is difficult to take an interest. It is on the contrary a struggle between cruel and barbarous masters, and a people where hard earned wealth is devoted to libraries . . . to the support of the means of education.[34]
>
> The grammar of Gaza, written in ancient Greek, has been long the first book put into the hands of learners . . . . It does not appear that the traditional acquaintance with Greek as a living tongue has ever ceased among the people of education in Greece.[35]

As Everett characterized it, and as he asked his reader to characterize it, the struggle for Greek independence from Turkey was a struggle between barbarism and civilization.

In Everett's view, though, the Greek struggle for freedom was actually much more. With sarcasm and contempt he asserted, "It is not probable that enlightened Christian princes and rulers would deliberately condemn their fellow men and fellow Christians to the continuance of a cruel and barbarous tyranny, merely from fear that enterprising Greeks would be a commercial challenge."[36] "But the shrewd Turk knows, and the unhappy Greek knows, that England would rather have the Sultan of Constantinople than the Czar" and the Czar would "yet a thousand times rather have the dominion of the Turks than that of the English."[37] For Everett it was a fact that others were refraining from support for the Greek cause out of selfish, self-serving motives—driven by European power politics and possibly even by prospects of monetary gain. Highly questionable motives appeared to lurk behind a failure to support the Greek cause, motives incompatible with the bravery and self-sacrifice inherent in America's own struggle for freedom.

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[34] Ibid., 392.
[35] Ibid., 390.
[36] Ibid., 403.
[37] Ibid., 401.

Moreover, the Greek struggle cried out for an American commitment on still other grounds.

> The war is emphatically a war of the crescent against the cross . . . . The venerable Patriarch of the Greek faith, torn from his altar and hanged at the portals of his church gave the signal to the unholy outrages which were to waste his flock.[38]
>
> We see nothing but an enterprising, intelligent Christian population struggling against a ghastly despotism, that has so long oppressed and wasted the land, that not to speak out is to support the oppression.[39]
>
> It requires all peoples' patience to be oppressed to the ground, to the dust by the parental sway of the most faithful, most catholic, most Christian princes.[40]

Everett led his reader to equate the behavior of the European powers with the type of oppression Turkey had imposed on the Greek people. But his allusion to what he termed most Catholic and most Christian princes was significant for another reason. It is as if opposition to the Greek struggle for freedom were a sacrilege—and the great European powers were guilty of this sacrilege. By no coincidence the guilty were "most catholic" as well as "most Christian princes." The fact that the princes he referred to were hereditary princes only made matters worse. If the reader accepted Everett's statements, he would be led to conclude the following:

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[38] Ibid., 418.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 420-21.

To support what the princes stood for was to deny what America itself stood for; to support Greece was to support what America itself stood for. (Americans were a Christian people, dedicated to the principles of freedom and republicanism. By their conduct European rulers had betrayed the Christian faith and were trying to subvert the very civic ideals on which the United States was founded.)

In making his case Everett iterated and reiterated his basic proposition. The United States, its people and its government were morally bound to take action to support the Greek cause. Everett's method was to stir his readers with a sequence of powerful emotion-laden images. He wrote of "Christians bowed beneath the yoke of barbarous infidels, it is fathers and mothers condemned to see their children torn from them and condemned to the most cruel slavery. It is men like ourselves."[41] Having asserted the vital link identifying the Greeks as people who were like Americans, Everett then asked his reader to imagine "an overwhelming force of barbarians, speaking another language, following a strange faith, let loose in some of our largest cities." At the time Everett wrote, his audience was in a good position to see parallels between such Turkish barbarism and what they remembered as the cruel behavior of American Indians at the time of the Revolution and the War of 1812.[42] The key was that the Greeks were "men like ourselves." They would feel the horror, the pain and the revulsion that Americans had experienced or, more accurately, remembered as experiencing in their own history. Americans would also remember that it was the guiding hand of a remote and cruel empire that had controlled the Indians who actually committed the atrocities Everett described.

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[41] Ibid., 421.

[42] In an article published on September 9, 1821 *Niles* had equated Turkish barbarisms with those of American Indians. See *Niles* 21:79.

For Everett there were still further objections to Turkish rule over the Greek people. As he reported it, "The art of printing is proscribed, the profession of a strange and barbarous faith cuts off the bond of sympathy which unites Christians, both as communities and as individuals . . . . It is a melancholy and odious truth that the Turks derive their great strength from the jealousy of the principal European powers." Ignorance and selfishness: these were what Everett found in those who opposed the cause he sponsored. That cause, by contrast, was characterized by education and the enlightened powers it gave to live productively in freedom.

Everett also urged his readers to recall that Scio, "now a desert, had a population of 100,000 . . . . To see reduced to old copper in our stalls the furniture of the firesides of men and Christians who have themselves wearied the Turkish scimitar in their slaughter."[43] (Trade with the Turkish port of Smyrna had apparently brought confiscated household goods from Scio to American shores for sale.) The image evokes a sense of martyrdom, of a cruel death brought on because of one's Christian faith. The image also suggests a sense of sacrilege if one engaged in trade with those who had plundered the property of people (like ourselves) who had been martyred for their faith. It would be surprising if Monroe and Adams in particular did not grasp the significance of Everett's message. They had just sent a secret agent to Constantinople to negotiate a commercial treaty with the very people who had slain the population of Scio. Public disclosure of such a mission might easily have produced feelings that they had betrayed a "people like us."[44]

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[43] Ibid., 420-421.

Behind Everett's eloquence and rhetoric, there was much more than an effort to enhance his audience's appreciation for the Greek cause. His goal was pragmatic. He wanted to stimulate a commitment to take action to help those struggling for freedom far from America's own shores. He followed his images and the emotions which he hoped they would produce with a direct challenge: "Now ask what claim do the Greeks have on our sympathy."[45] To help his readers respond, Everett printed the text of the Kalamata appeal made by the senate of the Greek provisional government to the American people in 1821. In the context of his own words of support for Greece, two citations from the Kalamata appeal underscore why, at least for Everett, the Greeks had a powerful claim on the "sympathy" of the citizens of the United States. "Wherever the chosen race, the sons of liberty shall worship freedom, they shall turn their face toward you."[46] "Trusting that in imitating you, we shall imitate our ancestors."[47]

Everett reminded his readers that "more than two years have elapsed since the proclamation of the senate of Kalamata, signed by its president, addressed to the 'American nation.'" In Everett's view, the time to respond to that document was now. He urged upon his readers that a response come from the United States Government, and that this response encompass prospects for diplomatic recognition. "If more accurate information on the state of Greece is needed," Everett suggested, "let the president do as he did in 1817, when he dispatched a public vessel with a respectable commission to inquire into the progress of the revolution in that country [the Spanish provinces in Latin America]." Everett noted that "we have always a fleet in the Mediterranean." In correspondence with Monroe, Clay, Jefferson and others, Lafayette had recently proposed that the United States support the Greek War of Independence by lending its Mediterranean squadron to the Greek people.[48] Whether Everett was aware of Lafayette's proposal is not clear, nor is it clear that Everett knew that within one month Gallatin would urge Monroe to do the very same thing. However, the ties between Everett and Coray and the ties between the two of them and Lafayette suggest that Everett may well have been aware of Lafayette's proposal.

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[44] See discussion on pp.178-180.
[45] Everett, "Coray's Aristotle," 420.
[46] Ibid., 417.
[47] Ibid., 415.

Everett's position had not gone unchallenged. There were those who, as individuals, strongly supported the Greek cause but who objected to active intervention by the United States Government. For example, Dr. Thornton in his 1822 address to the citizens of Alexandria, Virginia had put the matter of United States Government intervention in support of Greek freedom in these terms: "However individuals may be allowed to eschew all selfish feelings, and even to despise danger in the service of the afflicted, the first duty of the government is to consult the happiness of the people." Thornton urged that the government act with caution and restraint. When faced with

> the wrongs of the outraged altar and the violated sex, we are almost ready to snatch the avenging sword. The action is natural, and springs from the finest impulses of the heart . . . . But it is not allowed to man to follow his natural impulses as far as they would carry him. Still less is it allowed to government to be moved by

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[48] See p. 244.

> instinctive impulses in opposition to the dictates of duty.[49]

From Thornton's perspective, "Reason was given to us for the purpose of regulating our passion as well as to heighten our enjoyments . . . . The checks in our government are wisely devised, which impose a necessity of deliberation before action."

Given this frame of reference, Thornton then asked a question whose answer was predetermined: "Would it be justifiable for this government to compromise interests of this people in such a cause [the struggle of the Greek people for independence]?"[50] Thornton's answer was no.

If Thornton's contemporaries accepted this answer, the implications were apt to appear troubling. If there were no action by the United States Government but individuals and committees of citizens felt the need to display Christian solidarity and civic virtue by supporting the Greek cause, then a sense of national civic purpose would evolve apart from the sphere of public institutions. Such a demarcation of the public and private spheres is one which Americans of the 21st century take for granted. This was not the case in America at the time of the Greek struggle for freedom. Some, like Thornton, accepted that the civic duties and responsibilities of individuals were distinct and separate from those of the government which represented them. Others fused public and private responsibilities. This troubling reality will surface in the next chapter when we examine the very different principles Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams used in assessing diplomatic recognition at the time of the Latin American revolts against Spanish rule. The different responses that Everett and Thornton proposed to the

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[49] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (October 18, 1822): 3046.

[50] Ibid.

Greek cause provide further evidence that the demarcation between public and private conduct was not settled at the time of the Greek struggle to throw off Turkish rule.

Two months after his *North American Review* article, in December 1823, Everett spoke at a public meeting in Boston, reaffirming his belief in the seamless nature of what he saw as the need for both a public and a private commitment to the Greek cause.

> We call upon the citizens of Boston and our brethren generally throughout the state, to join in efforts already made and making in the civilized world, for the relief of the oppressed, suffering and agonizing Christian people.[51]

The stated purpose of the meeting was to raise money for the Greek cause. Everett's speech was an appeal for that, but also for more general support. He made a point of quoting Monroe's statements in the president's 1822 and 1823 annual messages to Congress. In Everett's words, "Two separate appeals to the sympathy of the national legislature have been made by the president of the United States."[52] Juxtaposed with this allusion was a statement that in Europe, where governments opposed Greek independence, there were "bands of volunteers" fighting for the Greek cause and there were "numerous societies, which have been formed for their relief [the relief of the Greeks] have transmitted supplies of arms, clothing and money."[53] Everett recounted for his audience the "memorials" or petitions urging support for the Greek cause recently sent to Congress by the citizens of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, South Carolina and others to the

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[51] Everett, "Address of the Committee" (Boston, December 19, 1823), 16.
[52] Ibid., 15.
[53] Ibid.

Congress in Washington.[54] As Everett presented it, the cause of the Greeks not only commanded national interest and attention, it commanded action by the citizens of the United States, action both in Washington and throughout the nation. As we saw in his *North American Review* article, Everett felt that the Greek cause mandated that the United States Government initiate steps leading to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic.

In many respects the arguments and emotional "tugs" Everett used in his Boston address paralleled those he had used in the *North American Review* article. Still, there was a key difference. Everett emphasized much more the exceptional character of the Greeks. As he explained it, when countries in Europe were subjugated by conquest, the result

> though ever followed by numerous and alienated affections, seldom presents any spectacle of national disaster and woe. It is for this reason, perhaps, that we are apt to think too lightly of the subjugation of Greece to the Ottoman yoke, regarding that country as in somewhat the same condition as Ireland since its conquest by England, or Poland, since its partition by the northern powers.

As Everett presented it, the case in favor of support for the Greeks was very different.

> Their languages [those of the Greeks and the Turks] are different, not only as the languages of many states of Europe differ, which are yet of the same stock, but different to such a degree as to end almost the possibility of intercourse between subject and master.

He went on to state:

> Another important dissimilarity exists between Greeks and Turks, in their national character. The Turks are

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[54] Ibid.

> little above the state of barbarism, in which they issued from the deserts of Tartary . . . . By the several causes we have mentioned, all amalgamation between them and their masters is prevented, and the latter [the Turks] hold the country by military occupation alone, and with a most cruel hand.[55]

A total alienation separated the racial and cultural character of the Greeks and their oppressors. From Everett's perspective, this in itself created an extraordinary need to extend help. And there was more: "What makes this statement of things [Turkish rule] more oppressive, is that the Greeks possess, naturally, a strong aptitude for these improvements [the improvements of civilized life]." Everett stressed that the Greeks "are not only kept in barbarism, but a barbarism of which they are conscious and keenly aware." With such words Everett urged his audience to accept that the Greek people were worthy of respect and deserving of both compassion and support—from the citizens of the United States, and also from the Government which represented them. To judge by Everett's words: the plight of the Greeks was exceptional; their character was exceptional; the case for tendering them support was exceptional, and also urgent.

Everett's leitmotif linking the heritage of the Greek people with the American people may now appear puzzling, if not incredible. He provided his audience with very little in the way of verifiable or even plausible evidence to support his statements. For example, the linkage between a culture which descended from Byzantium and over 350 years of Turkish rule on the one hand, and on the other an American culture which descended in large part from the culture of British legal and religious beliefs is at best tenuous. Even so, some in Congress—Daniel Webster in particular—came to accept that Everett's perspective was a sound foundation for urging the Monroe Administration to explore prospects for extending diplomatic recognition to a government representing the people of Greece.[56] There was not only emotional power in Everett's words. There was political power as well. As he eloquently expressed it, Americans and their government had a duty to act to support the cause of Greek freedom.

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[55] Ibid., 2.

Whether the United States Government would meet this need by extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek Republic hinged on three critical variables. First were the principles which America's leaders believed should govern the nation's foreign policy. Second were the precedents defining how these principles had been applied in the past in determining when and whether to extend diplomatic recognition. Third was the question of whether perceptions of either personal self-interest or the welfare of the nation would obtrude in ways which made adhering to principle and precedent difficult or impossible. The chapter that follows will begin by examining the precedent set in extending diplomatic recognition to the newly formed Latin American republics. It is necessary background for how America's political leaders approached the issue of recognition for a Greek republic.

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[56] Chapter 9 will explore in detail the common efforts of Everett and Webster to move the United States Government to support the Greek cause by initiating steps leading to diplomatic recognition for the Greeks.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LATIN AMERICAN PRECEDENT: THE CONFLICT BETWEEN JOHN QUINCY ADAMS AND HENRY CLAY

Ironically, John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay could each claim that he based his foreign policy on George Washington's Farewell Address. Published when Washington left the presidency, the address laid down a number of practical rules which Washington felt should govern relations with other nations. Two stand out. First was to cultivate "just and amicable feelings toward all." Second was to take care lest the Nation "adopt through passion what reason would reject."[1] For Washington each of these rules led to a foreign policy based on detachment and neutrality:

> Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none, or very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns . . . . Hence therefore it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collusions of her friendships and enmities . . . . Why by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest, humor and caprice?[2]

The application of Washington's guiding principle was quite clear and resolute: no "interweaving [the nation's] destiny with any part of Europe." This would seem to suggest that in the case of the Greek struggle for independence the United States should take no active part. Washington's words also seemed to suggest that the nation should act only when its own interests were at stake, not those of others.

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[1] Washington, "Farewell Address," in Washington, *Writings*, 22-23.
[2] Ibid., 26-27.

This too would seem to admonish the United States against getting involved in a conflict taking part at the far end of the Mediterranean.

Alas, in his message Washington also went on to ask:

> Can it be, that Providence has not committed the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? . . . And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion . . . reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can be maintained without religion.[3]

Reason, order, morality, religion, as Washington presented them, were mutually supportive propositions. Passion evidenced by emotion-driven action was the abnegation of these qualities.

This was the theory. The practice could easily become a very different matter. Diplomatic recognition for the Greeks was a case in point. Did a moral, even a religious, duty require that the government of the United States exert itself to support the cause of freedom by extending diplomatic recognition? Or did such duty mandate that the United States stay out of quarrels which did not directly affect the welfare of the nation? Or did moral duty mandate that the United States act to support the cause of freedom, unless there was clear concrete evidence that in doing so it compromised the nation's own security or its own commercial interests? Following Washington's admonitions was not as easy as it appeared on a first reading.

True, Washington's rules of conduct were not malleable. They clearly mandated remaining neutral in struggles that did not involve the nation's own "destiny." However, he left nebulous the meaning of what conduct was consistent with religion and morality. As a result, he seemed to leave room for his successors to determine whether his precept of neutrality should bend if and when they felt that religion and morality demanded a more activist foreign policy. Therein lay the seeds for future conflict over the direction of the nation's foreign policy. How and why this was the case will provide the substance of the pages that follow.

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[3] Ibid., 20.

We will see, for example, that Adams had long spoken of the moral, almost religious, responsibility of preserving and fostering the freedom and welfare of the United States. What was vital for him was to follow Washington's admonition to stay out of the quarrels of others. Henry Clay spoke in similar terms of moral duty. For him, though, a moral, almost religious, duty mandated that the United States Government actively support mankind in its struggles to attain the freedom Americans enjoyed as citizens of the United States.

In early 19th century terminology, Clay and Adams had battled over the "system" of moral values and principles which each felt should define proper conduct in the nation's foreign affairs. A direct result of their differences showed up in the specific and concrete actions each felt the nation should take in its relations with other states. Clay had repeatedly urged a policy of extending diplomatic recognition for the express purpose of supporting the cause of freedom outside the nation's borders. Adams had over and over opposed basing the extension of diplomatic recognition on such ideological grounds. Given Washington's silence on what constituted moral and religious obligation, each was able to take a position which was reconcilable with Washington's overall frame of reference. This shared heritage, however, did not in any way diminish the passionate disagreements between the two statesmen.

The longstanding conflict between Adams and Clay was in reality more than a conflict over differing interpretations of moral and religious principle. It was more than sharp and biting differences in the concrete policies and actions each wanted the government to pursue. Beneath the surface there was also the raw issue of power and the very personal issue of who should exercise it. Persistently and eloquently, Clay had long attempted to influence and even to control the conduct of foreign affairs from his position as Speaker of the House of Representatives. In debates over appropriate support for the cause of Latin American independence, Clay had long asserted that Congress had the power, *pari passu* with the executive, to influence and even to decide whether and when to extend diplomatic recognition. For example, in March 1818 Clay argued on the floor of the House of Representatives in favor of "the legislature participating in the administration of the foreign interests of the country, when we are called upon in our legislative capacity to defray the expenses of foreign missions, or to regulate commerce." In Clay's view, "the Constitution nowhere says the executive act of sending a minister to a foreign country should precede the legislative act which shall provide for the payment of his salary." Accordingly, Clay proceeded to move for the appropriation of one year's salary and "an outfit" for a minister to the United Provinces of La Plata.[4] The Monroe Administration at the time had not yet acted to extend any diplomatic recognition requiring "an outfit." What Clay had argued in the case of Latin America was a precedent and a warning as public pressure to extend diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic mounted in the United States during the fall and winter of 1823. Adams and Monroe had every reason to feel apprehensive about whether Clay or, in his stead, someone who shared his stated principles would advocate extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic, and do so very dramatically on the floor of the House of Representatives.

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[4] Clay, March 24, 1818, in Clay, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 2:537.

In past congressional debates Clay had tried to discredit and belittle Adams' integrity and character. One mild example occurred during a congressional debate in 1818. At that time Clay asserted:

> I should not be surprised of our sending a Minister to the Porte [Sultan of Turkey]. But let a minister come from a poor republic, like that of La Plata, and we turn our backs on him.[5]

The subject Clay addressed in 1818 was the extension of diplomatic recognition by the United States to support the people of Latin America, a people then struggling to assert their right to freedom and self-rule. Should Adams or Monroe recall Clay's allegations, they might well feel some discomfort. In August 1823 they were in the process of deciding to dispatch a secret envoy to Constantinople to negotiate closer trade relations with Turkey.[6] They and Clay were most definitely not in agreement on the principles and values which should guide the nation in its relations with other states.

Still, in the summer of 1823 there was no foreign policy issue generating ongoing public conflict over conduct of the nation's foreign relations. In due course—in 1822, to be precise—the Monroe Administration had extended diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics. Even so, there were a number of close parallels between the struggle of the Greek people for freedom and the struggle which had so recently taken place in Latin America. Were not the Greeks, like the Latin Americans before them, engaged in a struggle for independence from tyranny? To judge by the press reports we reviewed in chapter

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[5] Clay, March 25, 1818 (ibid., 2:552).

[6] See chapter 5, pp. 178-80.

1, the Greeks had not only waged a heroic war to free themselves; in 1823 they appeared to be winning that war. Given such parallels, the ingredients for a renewed battle for control over the nation's foreign policy appeared to be rapidly falling into place.

There was one very important additional fact. At the time of the Greek War of Independence, Clay had personal political ambitions which clashed with those of Adams. Both wanted to succeed Monroe at the end of his term in March of 1825. In an age when honor and public respect were a vital part of a man's persona, Clay had felt personally slighted by Monroe. When Monroe became President he had chosen Adams as his secretary of state, a post Clay himself wanted and expected. Clay had reasons of personal vindication as well as personal interest and principle to thwart and to discredit Adams. The 1824 Presidential election provided an incentive to bring all these motivations together.

As early as 1822 the upcoming political campaign had already begun. In December of that year *Niles* reported the following:

> Resolved by the Kentucky senate and house that Henry Clay, late speaker of the house of representatives of the United States, be recommended as a suitable person to succeed James Monroe as President.[7]

Niles went on to say, "A meeting of the legislature of Missouri has been held in like manner at which it was, also, agreed to recommend Mr. Clay."[8] Adams had commented on the upcoming election in his diaries. In February 1822 he wrote his friend Joel Lewis:

> This system of secret defamation [of Adams] has been pursued with special industry, since the attempt at the

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[7] *Niles* 23 (December 21, 1822): 245.

[8] Ibid., 246.

> close of the last year to obtrude upon the Union at this present session of Congress a caucus for the Presidential election of 1824.[9]

The defamation referred to consisted of allegations that in negotiating the Treaty of Ghent which ended the War of 1812, Adams had not protected the rights of New England fishermen. *Niles* in December 1822 actually published letters of Clay and of Adams on the subject. The letters which each submitted to *Niles* for publication were sarcastic, even venomous.[10] They appeared in *Niles* just one page after the announcement that the Kentucky and Missouri legislatures had endorsed Clay for the Presidency. What they evidence is that relations between Clay and Adams were potentially on a collision course as public interest in the Greek cause rose in late 1822 and throughout 1823—and the presidential election came closer. If Adams denied support to the cause of Greek independence, and if that cause became a matter of urgent, pressing concern among politically active Americans, the ingredients for renewed conflict between the two would fall in place. The opportunity and the incentive for confrontation would come together.

In the summer of 1823 Adams and the Monroe Administration could not know for certain how Clay would respond to the Greek cause. Nevertheless, Clay's prior positions in favor of extending diplomatic recognition to peoples struggling to achieve political freedom and independence from established authority were clear and well known, as were his prior efforts to embarrass the Monroe Administration.

In the pages that follow, we will explore in detail this background. What is important to note is the following: The positions which Clay and Adams took on the issue of extending diplomatic recognition to the new Latin American republics defined the approach each would take in deciding what action was appropriate on the issue of extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek Republic. This did not happen by coincidence. As we will see, acting from principle was frequently the most expedient way to behave, even if it led to taking an unpopular position on a specific issue.

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[9] Adams to Joel Lewis, February 20, 1822, in Adams, *Writings,* 7:208.

[10] *Niles* 23 (December 21, 1822): 246ff.

Moreover, there is strong evidence that statesmen of the time actually did hold beliefs, and were willing to make personal sacrifices for their beliefs. The historian Robert Remini put the matter aptly. Speaking of Henry Clay, he asserted: "Clay understood that the purpose of politics is power, that the purpose of power is to govern, and that the purpose of governing is to advance the welfare of the nation, even at the risk of sometimes supporting unpopular positions."[11] Adams stated his own motivations in very similar terms.[12] Such a frame of reference might well command respect. It did not invite flexibility, nor did it invite compromise.

Speaking of the conduct of foreign affairs in the early 19th century, the British historian Temperley stated: "They [an interlocking set of principles known as a system] are particularly open to criticisms in the sphere of foreign affairs, which is so often a shifting kaleidoscope colored by the passions and interests of a dozen conflicting states."[13] As the pages of this dissertation will document, American statesmen, and their European counterparts as well, tended to neglect the practical and unique realities of a given diplomatic challenge in favor of applying broad principles, both to the interpretation of facts and to the response they made to a specific diplomatic challenge. In such a context, the positions which Adams and Clay took on the subject of extending diplomatic recognition to the newly independent Latin American republics were particularly apt to define how they would approach the subject of diplomatic recognition in the case of Greece—both as a matter of principle and as a matter of expediency.

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[11] Remini, *Henry Clay*, 84.

[12] Adams to Robert Walsh in Adams, *Writings*, 7:113-118; see discussion of this letter on p. 128.

[13] Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 447. Similar limitations plagued the foreign policy of European states. See *inter alia* ibid., 21, wherein he discusses Metternich's almost religious adherence to his system.

What Adams and Clay and most of their contemporaries failed to fully recognize is now largely taken for granted, namely, an acceptance that power relationships among sovereign states change with circumstances and also change over time, and with such changes comes change in the appropriate course of conduct in a nation's foreign policy.

The conflict that pitted Clay against Adams is an apt illustration. Not only did Adams and Clay embrace competing foreign policy principles. Based on their stated sense of moral conviction, their principles appeared rigid and irreconcilable, and also seemed largely impervious to changes in circumstances. The Latin American states were not Greece and Greece was not a Latin American state.

In the construction of what would become their competing and antagonistic systems, the year 1818 marks the first important milestone. In March that year Clay delivered an impassioned speech on the floor of the House of Representatives.

> If an abused and oppressed people willed their freedom; if they sought to establish it, we had a right, as a sovereign power, to note that fact, and to act as circumstances and our interest required.[14]

Clay's purpose was to urge extending diplomatic recognition to the newly independent Latin American republics. Of particular significance was how he justified his proposed course of action. He "had no idea of succumbing to every little potentate in Europe . . . because in the course of the existing war [for the freedom of the Latin American republics] some little injury might be done to our commerce."[15] The issue, as Clay articulated it, was whether the United States Government would compromise its own freedom by succumbing to the fear of how others might respond. Clay left little doubt that he wanted his listener to perceive that the course being pursued in Latin America by Adams and the Monroe Administration was self-serving, cowardly and unmanly, and therefore unworthy of the nation.

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[14] *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 31:1478-1479 (March 25, 1818).

For Adams, assessment of risk was the central part of any decision to extend diplomatic recognition to a newly emerging state. Using diplomatic recognition to validate the nation's freedom was not the frame of reference that he advocated. On August 18, 1818 he wrote Monroe as follows:

> But there is a stage in such contacts when the party struggling for Independence has, as I conceive it, a right to demand its acknowledgment by neutral parties, and when the acknowledgment may be granted, without departure from the obligation of neutrality. It is the stage, when the independence is established as a matter of fact so as to leave the chance of the opposite party to recover their dominion utterly desperate. The neutral nation must then judge for itself when this period has arrived; and as the belligerent nation has the same right to judge for itself, it is likely to judge differently from the neutral, and to make it a cause or pretext for war . . . as apparently Britain did against France in the revolution. The moral right or wrong may depend upon the justice, sincerity and independence with which the recognizing nation took the step.[16]

Adams went on to say:

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[15] Ibid., March 18, 1818, 38:1426.

[16] Adams to Monroe, August 24, 1818, in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong., Reel 7.

> That the justice of a cause, however, may enlist individual feelings in its favor is not sufficient to justify third parties siding with it. The fact and the right alone can authorize a neutral to acknowledge a new and disputed sovereignty.[17]

For Adams there were clear preconditions of a de facto independence before diplomatic recognition could legally and as a matter of principle even be considered. Even then, the extension of such recognition was a matter of moral right for the United States, not of moral responsibility. Exercise of that moral right was a matter of discretion. Properly guided, that discretion should exclude any "individual feelings" of empathy for those who had successfully struggled to gain their freedom.

Adams' principles and the system of diplomacy which they framed were almost a direct rebuttal and refutation of Clay's principles. For example, in May 1818, the very year that Adams advised Monroe to eschew individual feedings, Clay argued for diplomatic recognition of the Latin American republics with these words: "Was it for yourselves that you so nobly fought [in the war for independence from Britain]?" Clay's answer was a rhetorical no. "Americans fought for posterity."[18] Support for the cause of freedom should transcend what he viewed as petty interests of what he termed "the present day only." It was these very "petty interests" that Adams would have defined as the practical consequences of extending diplomatic recognition. The "individual feelings" that Clay stimulated were just what Adams wanted to keep out of the nation's foreign policy.

In April 1820 Clay again made an emotion-based appeal to extend diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics. From the floor of the

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Clay, May 24, 1818, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 2:522.

House he pleaded, "Let us break these commercial and political fetters [which bound the United States to the will of European statesmen]; let us no longer watch the nod of any European statesman."[19] Fear of enslavement—or, more exactly, fear of being perceived by others as a slave—was Clay's focus. As he had two years earlier, he squarely appealed to the sense of manhood and bravery of his listeners.

Looking back from the present, Clay's remarks are apt to appear puzzling. The people Clay addressed were free; they did not need to exert themselves in Latin America to prove that freedom. They certainly did not need to put the nation in danger to demonstrate that they were willing to sacrifice for the cause of human freedom. Put in the context of our own time, it is easy to dismiss Clay's statements as empty rhetoric.

In the perspective of his own time, however, Clay's remarks take on a much more substantive and persuasive meaning. Clay and many of his contemporaries felt that they needed to prove their identity as free American citizens by demonstrating to themselves and to others that they were truly free. To do this they apparently needed to demonstrate their capacity to act in defiance of others. For example, Clay advocated acting in defiance of the major European powers as a way of proving the nation's own freedom. It was an exercise of proving the nation's bravery by courting and then standing up to danger.

Clay's rhetoric on the floor of the House of Representatives established his own willingness (at least rhetorically) to stand up against danger. If applied to the cause of the Greek people in their struggle for freedom from Turkey, Clay's rhetoric of personal courage and national honor could pose powerful impediments to the interests of commerce and to the overall security of the nation. As we will see in chapter 5, any intervention to support Greek independence appeared to risk war with Turkey and the Barbary pirates as well as appearing to threaten vital interests of the major European powers in the eastern Mediterranean.

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[19] Ibid., April 10, 1820, 2:857.

Such were the foreign policy risks. Domestically, if Clay spoke out in favor of the Greek cause he just might sway voters to support his candidacy in the upcoming election. In the context of his time and place, Clay's rhetoric was anything but empty. When the time came for Adams and Monroe to assess diplomatic recognition for a Greek republic, they were on notice. Eloquence itself carried with it in the early 19th century a power which it no longer has in the present day. In the words of Cmiel, "Rhetoric implied a whole social order: those who ruled were eloquent,"[20] and those who were not eloquent were not qualified to rule. Put in the context of early 19th century culture Clay's rhetoric was powerful and, as a result, it could be powerfully disruptive.

Beyond the persuasive power of rhetoric Clay also argued that his position was legally sound. "So far as we are concerned, the sovereign de facto is the sovereign de jure . . . . If then there be an established government in Spanish America, we were morally and politically bound to recognize it."[21] For Clay the extension of diplomatic recognition was not a matter of choice. It was a moral obligation.

Adams himself had not always stated clearly the very critical distinction between legal right and moral obligation which he emphasized in his 1818 letter to Monroe. After the United States extended diplomatic recognition to the Latin

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[20] Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence*, 28.
[21] Clay, March 24, 1818, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 2:525.

American republics in 1822, Adams wrote a letter to the Spanish minister in Washington:

> The US had yielded to an obligation of duty of the highest order, by recognizing as independent states nations, which after deliberately asserting their right to that character, had maintained and established it against all the resistance which could be brought against it. . . . It is the mere acknowledgment of existing facts . . . which it is the moral obligation of civilized and Christian nations to entertain reciprocally with one another.[22]

In contrast with his earlier advice to Monroe, Adams actually told the Spanish minister that in the United States the standards justifying recognition were quite mechanical, at least for countries that were Christian. As Adams expressed it, these standards involved clearly ascertainable facts of de facto independence which, once established, triggered a binding and seemingly automatic moral obligation to extend recognition.

In this one instance, Adams' words closely paralleled those which Clay had used. Had he stuck with the words "moral right" rather than "moral duty," he could have used his letter as a precedent for either extending or withholding recognition, depending on the circumstances of how recognition would affect the commercial and security interests of the United States. Adams' letter to the Spanish minister in Washington, however, was an ex post facto justification. It does not provide a reliable benchmark indicating that Adams and Monroe viewed recognition as a mechanical exercise in moral duty. In the case of the Latin American republics, the Monroe Administration had long withheld diplomatic recognition even where the conditions of de facto independence were well established and the further condition of functioning governments was readily apparent.

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[22] Adams to Don Joaquin de Anduaga, April 6, 1822, in Adams, *Writings,* 7:216-218.

Clay did not stop with such legal arguments. He even went well beyond a statement of the need to validate the nation's own honor and freedom. He asserted a Christian duty to use the power of the United States Government to act against barbarism. Speaking of the wars for independence in Latin America, Clay spoke of "the horrible character which the royal arms have given to the war." He referred to "revolting scenes," "the butchery of prisoners," "wanton and useless barbarity." He asserted, "Neither the weakness of their sex, not the imbecility of old age, nor the innocence of infants, nor the reverence due the sacerdotal character, can stay the royal vengeance."[23]

Parallels with the later barbarisms of the Turks against the Greeks are striking. For example, on September 15, 1821 *Niles* reported:

> In Constantinople, five priests, who had just celebrated mass in the open air with more than ordinary fervor have been massacred, and their corpses horribly mutilated . . . . Several wealthy Turks repaired to the slave market, and paid 25 piastres for the pleasure of killing a Greek. One hundred and fifty virgins, whose parents had previously been assassinated, and who were of the first Greek families . . . were abandoned to the brutality of the Turks in the open bazaar, at the rate of a crown apiece. The greater part of these young women perished in consequence of this inhuman treatment.[24]

It would be altogether consistent for Clay to support the extension of diplomatic recognition for the Greeks on grounds of Christian compassion and Christian obligation. As for Adams, nowhere in the extant record did he propose using the power of the nation for the purpose of satisfying a moral, Christian obligation to help others. After the fact, though, he was quite willing to use moral obligation as a justification for action already taken. His letter to the Spanish minister illustrates this willingness.

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[23] *Annals of Congress*, 15th Cong., 1st sess., 36:1479 (March 25, 1818).

[24] *Niles* 21 (September 15, 1821): 47.

To buttress his arguments urging diplomatic recognition for the Latin American republics, Clay had also urged that the commercial interests of the nation would benefit from his chosen course—all the while heaping the contempt of selfishness on those who differed from his position. It is as if Clay believed that principle were not enough to ground securely the course the United States would be prepared to follow. For example, in 1820, supporting the new Latin American republics, Clay spoke in terms of acting "as our interest required." He referred specifically to "our commercial and manufacturing interests." He also argued the advantages of supporting countries that could ally with the United States in any struggles against the despotism of the Old World.[25]

In the case of Latin America, Clay tried very hard to show that interest was symbiotic with his moral imperatives. Whether Clay or any one else would be able to make arguments demonstrating that American commercial and security interests either justified or supported active involvement by the United States Government in the cause of Greek freedom was by no means clear as public interest in the Greek cause rose in late 1822 and 1823. If not supported by such interests, any arguments for extending diplomatic recognition would have to rest primarily on principles alone—a key distinction in the arguments which Clay had used in the case of Latin America.

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[25] Clay, April 10, 1820, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 2:857.

Even in the absence of interests to support them, Clay's arguments did contain great power of persuasion. When aggregated, his arguments were broad-based and mutually reinforcing. As he articulated his positions, exercise of the power to extend diplomatic recognition was: a manly exercise in virtue; an act necessary to demonstrate the free sovereign authority of the nation; the fulfillment of a moral Christian duty to help others; and an act required by settled legal precepts, as well as moral law. As we saw in chapter 2, Edward Everett in October 1823 later incorporated these very arguments to support his case for extending diplomatic recognition to the Greeks.[26]

From the standpoint of domestic politics, there was great power to Clay's rhetoric. No matter which way Adams and Monroe turned, Clay was in a position to attack, and to do so in a manner which he could reconcile with his prior statements. If Adams and Monroe were cautious and prudent, they could be found wanting in courage; if they were bold and assertive, they could be found reckless with the security and the well-being of the country. Moreover, Clay embraced values and principles which appealed to the honor and the deep belief in freedom of the American people.[27] Clay's frame of reference made it very hard for those who were responsible for the nation's foreign affairs to act in ways that protected American security and commercial interests, and at the same time protected their standing as leaders of a nation dedicated to freedom and republicanism. Politically, Clay's arguments apparently had Adams and Monroe "boxed in." Whichever way they turned on the issue of diplomatic recognition for a Greek republic, Clay held a very good hand. His speeches on Latin America had put him in an excellent position to criticize and undermine respect for the administration's foreign policy.

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[26] See chapter 2, pp. 87ff.

[27] "Liberty and independence are magic words in this country." *National Gazette*, February 10, 1821, cited and discussed in Whittaker, *United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 334.

If Adams and Monroe failed to support steps leading to diplomatic recognition for a Greek republic, they appeared to risk a bitter and damaging political confrontation within the United States. Alternatively, there were risks that a positive response could undermine America's commercial interests with other nations and possibly even the nation's physical security.[28] Clay was in an enviable political position. Either way, Adams and Monroe could be put in a compromising position. Carried to the ultimate, Clay's emotional appeals, if ever applied to Greece, just might lead to a loss of control over the formulation of the nation's foreign policy. Granted, this had not happened in debates in Congress over extension of diplomatic relations to the Latin American republics. Still, even without congressional leadership the Greek cause had ignited powerful emotional appeal throughout the nation. Judging by the press reports we reviewed in chapter 1, the Greek cause was generating an emotional response very similar to the one which had brought the nation into its war with Great Britain in 1812. Clay had been a key proponent of that war. He had not at that time alerted the nation to the practical consequences of armed conflict with Great Britain.

As the president's key foreign policy advisor, and as a candidate for the Presidency, Adams needed to deflect domestic political dangers. As a result his principles needed to be acceptable to educated and politically active Americans. Concomitantly, any actions taken would need to be compatible with the perspective of foreign nations. In addition, his decision would need to reflect consistency with prior statements of principle and prior actions taken by the United States in the conduct of its foreign policy. (Otherwise he risked charges of acting from political expediency.) If he could do all this, he would go a long way toward formulating a foreign policy that was strong and acceptable both in his own country and overseas. Adams did not face an easy task, but it was a task he could not avoid.

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[28] See arguments indicating this danger which are presented throughout chapter 5.

Clay was free to urge principles which risked confrontation, even war, with other nations. He did not have the responsibility for the consequences of acting on any proposed course of action. Adams did have this responsibility. Unlike Clay, Adams needed a system of principles which would work in the real world, a world where the exercise of power needed to produce substantive, positive effects.

Unwittingly, Clay in 1821 provided Adams with an opportunity to display his values and principles to the public. The opportunity came when Clay publicly challenged and provoked Adams.

The challenge came on May 19, 1821, when Clay delivered a moving and well-publicized speech in Lexington, Kentucky.[29] His stated purpose was to assert his position on how the United States Government should act to support the newly formed governments of Latin America. His remarks were consistent with what he had earlier said in debates in the House of Representatives, specifically that the government of the United States should act "to countenance, by all means short of war that great cause [liberty]." Clay was advocating conduct Adams and the Monroe Administration had not followed in Latin America and gave no evidence of wanting to follow in the future. It was a foreign policy very close to the one advocated by the liberal *Edinburgh Review,* a policy that caused Adams to feel anxiety and alarm.

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[29] Clay, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins May 19, 1821, 3:80-81; see *inter alia Lexington, Ky. Reporter*, May 21,1821 and response May 28; *Washington National Intellegencer*, June 6 and 19, 1821; all cited in Clay, *Papers*; also see *Niles* 20 (July 7, 1821): 301.

In his speech Clay made a point of excoriating the Holy Alliance. In his view, the Alliance was a nefarious organization, one which "would push the principle of legitimacy, a softer and covered name for despotism, to the ultimate extent." He reminded his audience that the United States had escaped the depredations of this despotism for two reasons, and two reasons only: "our distance from Europe and the known bravery of our countrymen." Using these two pillars—distance from Europe and his countrymen's bravery—Clay proceeded to make a fundamental and radical proposal.

Clay proposed that "a sort of counterpoise to the Holy Alliance should be formed in the two Americas, in favor of independence and liberty, to operate by the force of example and moral influence; that here a rallying point and an asylum should exist for freemen and freedom." Presumably the added strength of this "counterpoise" would give the United States added protection from any efforts of the Holy Alliance to subvert the liberties and security of the United States. It would also support the cause of freedom in the rest of the Western Hemisphere.

What Clay proposed sounded like a marriage of principle and convenience. Still, the nature of this "counterpoise" was something that Clay did not spell out. It apparently involved some form of commitment to act to protect the freedom of other peoples, in the instant case the peoples of Latin America. On the surface at least, Clay appeared to depart markedly from the detachment and neutrality that Washington had urged upon the nation in his Farewell Address. He also appeared to depart from an important precedent set in the very recent past. During the War of 1812 with Britain, the United States had not entered into any alliance with

France. At that time the nation had defended itself against Great Britain without the "counterpoise" of an alliance with any other major power. Clay did, however, appear to support a moral and religious grounding for conduct as Washington had urged. And was it not consistent with reason to adopt measures aimed at protecting the nation's own security?

As Clay expressed it, his "counterpoise of freedom" appeared on the surface to have a geographic limitation. He spoke explicitly of distance from Europe. If taken literally, Clay's statements would seem to exclude support for the Greek people on the basis of geography. This, however, was not the case. The defensive counterpoise Clay had in mind encompassed a counterpoise of nations committed to the principles of freedom and popular sovereignty, without regard to geographic location. For Clay, Europe was distant primarily because its political system was different from that of the United States.

Clay's own statements provide repeated and excellent evidence that his intention was a counterpoise based on nations with compatible political systems. The year before his Lexington speech, on May 10, 1820 on the floor of the House of Representatives, Clay stated:

> This Republic, with the exception of the people of South America, constituted the sole repository of political and religious freedom, and can it be possible, said he, that we remain passive spectators of the struggle of those people to break the same chains that bound us? The opinion of friends of freedom in Europe is that our policy has been cold, heartless and indifferent towards the greatest cause which could possibly engage our affections and enlist our feelings in its behalf.[30]

Even earlier, on May 24, 1818, Clay had asserted that there was

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[30] Clay, April 10, 1820, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 2:859.

> no question that South America once independent, whatever might be the form of the governments established in its several parts, those governments would be animated by an American policy. They would obey the laws of the system [political principles] of the New World of which they would be a part, in contradiction to that of Europe.[31]

The theme that the locus of liberty was the New World recurred in congressional debates in December 1822. At that time Congressman Trimble urged, "It was the will of Providence that this continent should be the arena of successive revolutions . . . that lead to man's political regeneration."[32]

What was important, however, was that the United States obey the duty imposed by Providence to support the struggle for freedom—wherever it broke out. In April 1820 Clay stipulated:

> But however important our early recognition of the Independence of the South might be as regards our commercial and manufacturing interests, was there not another view of the subject, infinitely more gratifying. We should become the center of a system which would constitute the rallying point of human freedom against the despotism of the Old World . . . . Let us become real and true Americans, and place ourselves at the head of the American system.[33]

What Clay appeared to sponsor was divorcing the United States from the entanglements of an alien political "system," a system which he defined as "the despotism of the Old World." His American system was one defined by principles of governance, not by geography.

When Clay made his Lexington speech in 1821, neither Clay nor his countrymen were yet aware of the impending struggle against Turkey. The issue of diplomatic recognition for a Greek republic lay in the future. Still, Clay's impassioned rhetoric strongly suggested that he would favor active, even aggressive, steps by the United States Government to use diplomatic recognition as a tool to support the cause of Greek freedom. In his 1821 Lexington speech, for example, Clay had spoken expressly of the need "to countenance, by all means short of war that great cause of liberty." Those who deserved that support were "the friends of liberty throughout the world." And in the case of Latin America, the support in question had been the extension of diplomatic recognition.

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[31] Ibid., May 24, 1818, 2:519.
[32] *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 40:1390 (December 24, 1822).
[33] Clay, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 2:857.

As early as 1818 Clay had brought forth a separate and, as he saw it, compelling reason for extending diplomatic recognition to those who were founding governments on the principle of liberty. The United States as a sovereign nation had the right to extend diplomatic recognition. To exercise an American "right" was to express the freedom and independence of the United States. So framed, the argument in favor of diplomatic recognition touched on America's own identity as a sovereign nation—a very different foundation from a moral obligation of intervening to support the freedom of others, and also a very different foundation from forming an alliance for freedom to protect and enhance the security of the United States. In his words, "If an abused and oppressed people willed their freedom, if they sought to establish it, we had a right, as a sovereign power, to note that fact, and to act as circumstances and our interest required."[34]

By adopting this frame of reference, Clay asserted that Americans affirmed their own freedom and citizenship.

> Let us break these commercial and political fetters; let us no longer watch the nod of any European politician.

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[34] Ibid., May 17, 1824, 517.

> Let us become real and true Americans, and place ourselves at the head of the American system.[35]

Clay's allusion to "fetters" is a thinly veiled reference to the distinction between free men and slaves. "True Americans" are ostensibly those who had the courage to act without constraints imposed by others. The very presence of slavery in their own country must only have reinforced the need "true Americans" felt to assert their own freedom.

In sum, Clay's words evidenced support for struggles for freedom wherever they took place, presumably even at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Others had also used the words "American system." Their focus, like Clay's, was on nations founded on the principle of liberty, a focus which had no apparent geographic location. For example, in congressional debates in March of 1822 one congressman stated:

> The American system is free government and free trade, monarchy and monopoly is that of Europe; but the European system is artificial and will perish with the spurious changes that produce it. The American system is natural, and therefore, durable . . . natural because it springs from public opinion . . . from the embodied will of nations acting freely for themselves: durable because it reposes upon written constitutions.[36]

By late 1823 press reports were providing strong evidence that the Greek people had a functioning government, one founded on the "American system" of popular sovereignty and democratic rule. So founded, was not the Greek republic also "natural and durable"?

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[35] Ibid., April 10, 1820, 2:858.

[36] *Annals of Congress,* 17th Cong., 1st sess., 39:1386 (March 28, 1822).

Adams himself used the term system, but used it in ways which appeared much more restrictive than Clay had apparently intended. In an April 1823 Instruction to Hugh Nelson, Adams stated:

> The political system of the United States is also essentially extra-European. To stand in firm and cautious independence of all entanglement in the European system has been the cardinal point of their [United States] policy under every administration of their government since the peace of 1783 to this day . . . . It may be observed that for the repose of Europe as well as America, the European and American political systems should be kept as distinct as possible . . . . As members of the League [the Holy Alliance] . . . the US might appeal to principles which might not harmonize with those of any European member of the Bond [the Holy Alliance].[37]

In Adams' lexicon, the relevant system was the set of principles defining relationships between states as well as the principles of governance followed within an individual state. Adams' comments in a meeting with the British minister in Washington in June 1823 further illustrate this. According to his diaries, Adams told the minister, "It has always been the policy of the United States to keep aloof from the European system of politics."[38] Adams had made it clear that how European nations chose to organize themselves internally and how they chose to settle disputes amongst themselves was their concern, not that of the United States.

Clay's stated position was very different. Clay eschewed the limitations which Adams imposed on the use of the power of the United States. From his perspective the United States was morally bound to support the cause of freedom by exercising its sovereign power of extending diplomatic recognition.

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[37] Adams to Nelson, April 18, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 4.

[38] Adams, June 19, 1823, *Memoirs*, 6:151-52.

Was an American system defined by geography (New World vs. Old World) or by the character of government (popular sovereignty vs. autocracy)? The answer to this question would greatly influence the nation's policy toward the Greek people in their struggle against Turkey. Since Adams' American system was geographically as well as ideologically based, applying it meant that official United States support for Greece was inappropriate on the ground of geography alone. Clay was less clear. His prior conduct indicated quite strongly that he would urge positive action to support the cause of freedom, as he put it, "throughout the world." Still, he had not yet explicitly stated that the principles he used to urge diplomatic recognition in Latin America also applied in the Old World. Until he did so, his words were essentially a rhetorical flourish.

It was a flourish that left an opening. Therein lay an opportunity which Adams could exploit if he decided to block efforts to move toward diplomatic recognition of the Greeks. If he were clever, Adams just might be able to take Clay's term, "American system," and publicly define it in ways that would keep the United States away from any revolt of a people in the Old World. How Adams and Monroe proceeded to do just this in late 1823 will provide the substance of chapters 8 and 9. In the interim, it is important to trace how Adams met the challenge of Clay's 1821 speech and in the process gave a ringing expression of his own values and the foreign policy system that he believed should guide the nation's conduct.

On July 4, 1821 on the steps of the Capital in Washington, Adams gave his public response. He did so in the form of a patriotic address. What Adams said brought into sharp relief principles that forcefully rejected what Clay had articulated.[39] If applied to Greece, the principles that Adams articulated meant that the United States would take no active substantive steps leading to diplomatic recognition. Here are Adams' words:

> Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will be her heart [the heart of the American Government and people], her benediction, and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the vindicator only of her own. She will recommend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benign sympathy of her example. She well knows that by enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy and ambitions, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxim of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. She might become the dictatress of the world. She would no longer be the ruler of her spirit.[40]

The collision with Clay was aggressive. Adams stated that the United States must not go "abroad in search of monsters to destroy," for if she did she risked undermining the foundations of liberty at home.

From Adams' perspective, a build-up of military power was necessary to support foreign ventures. As he expressed it, such a course threatened the very democratic institutions on which the nation was founded. In Adams' day the longer-range security of America's democratic institutions had yet to run the test of time. There was real concern that over time the nation would in fact "no longer be the ruler" of its spirit. Adams and his contemporaries believed that all governments based on popular sovereignty ran the risk of degeneration into dictatorships. It had happened in ancient Rome; it had happened more recently as the French Revolution degenerated into the dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte. As Adams would later emphasize in a private meeting with Clay, the risk of foreign wars carried with it the risk of the buildup of a dangerous military power within the United States, a power which could subsequently undermine America's own freedom.[41] This is the danger which Adams had in mind when he uttered his remarks.

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[39] There is no evidence that Adams consulted Monroe before delivering his speech. Ostensibly Adams was acting in a private capacity. See Whittaker, *United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 351.

[40] *Niles* 20 (July 21, 1821): 231.

Clay's own position was much more ambiguous. True, he had urged that the nation act to further the cause of freedom by "all means short of war." He had not urged war itself as an appropriate means to support the cause of freedom outside the nation's borders. Still, he had urged taking actions which ran the risk of provoking others into war with the United States. Diplomatic recognition was just such an action, having provoked Britain to declare war on France at the time of the American Revolution. In his advice to Monroe in 1818, Adams himself had referred to this very risk. Nowhere in Clay's forceful advocacy of extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics did he explore the practical possibility of harm to the nation's own security. Clay focused on the duties of the nation to mankind. He argued from principle while ignoring any unpleasant consequences of his proposed course. He also suggested that those who opposed his position were pusillanimous and contemptible.

Adams spoke of policies which protected and enhanced the welfare of the United States. He framed his argument so that what was right and proper conduct depended upon whether it led to a positive, practical result for the United States.

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[41] Adams, December 2, 1823, *Memoirs*, 6:224.

Adams focused on the consequences of action. Clay started with his perception of rightly grounded action, and then either ignored or rationalized that there would be no harmful consequences.

Ironically, Adams and Clay were both devoted nationalists. Both were dedicated in their allegiance to the American nation and its future. Their differences lay in the way they approached their commitment. Clay sought to build a shared allegiance to American values and ideals, what he called his American system of popular sovereignty and republicanism. Adams sought to insulate that very system from the harm of hostile actions by other powers, and to do so by using the power of the nation only when it furthered the nation's own security and commercial interests. As they presented their points of view, Clay focused on the appeal which his statements would have for his fellow citizens. Adams focused on the possible reactions of other nations to any initiatives which the United States might undertake.

On a more personal basis both statesmen tried to demonstrate that they had the courage to stand up and face danger. Adams, for example, did just this before concluding his July 4, 1821 address. He heaped scorn on Great Britain and the powers of Europe which, in his view, had not yet reached the plane of freedom that the people of the United States ostensibly enjoyed.

> Britain has intelligence and spirit. How much of these two qualities, the fountain of all amelioration in the condition of men, was stifled by these two principles of subservience and ecclesiastical usurpation, and of holding rights as the donation of kings, this is not the occasion to inquire.

Adams lauded Britain's achievement in science and commerce, achieved while being "bound and crippled as it were by the double cords of ecclesiastical imposture and political oppression." It was a statement that his American audience would respect and appreciate. It contained a paean to American exceptionalism, achieved by diminishing the stature of America's longstanding nemesis, Great Britain.

Adams' words were biting. He spoke of the British heritage as one which

> exhibited a conflict almost continual, between the oppression of power and the claims of right. In the theories of the crown and the mitre, man had no rights. Neither the body nor the soul of the individual was his own. From the impenetrable gloom of this intellectual darkness, and the deep degradation of this servitude, the British nation had only partially emerged.[42]

Writing about his speech to his friend Robert Walsh on July 17th, Adams said he had wanted to assert "our peculiar and imperishable principles," contrasting these principles with those "which emperors and kings maintain yet at the point of their bayonets and at the mouths of all their cannon."[43] To judge by Adams' statements, even the most liberal of the European powers was fundamentally hostile to the United States. Under such circumstances, staying outside the European arena would appear to be both a proper and a necessary course for the United States.

In Adams' Anglophobe statements there was a clear element of self-serving political interest. He needed to undercut Clay's harsh condemnation just one year earlier on the floor of the House of Representatives. Bitingly, Clay had said at that time:

> If Lord Castlereagh [the British foreign secretary] says we may recognize [the Latin American republics] we do, if not we do not. A single expression of the British minister to the present Secretary of State . . . [Clay] was ashamed to say, had molded the policy of our

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[42] *Niles* 20 (July 21, 1821): 326.

[43] Adams to Walsh, July 21, 1821, in Adams, *Writings*, 7:114.

> government towards South America . . . . Our institutions now make us free; but how long shall we continue if we mould our opinions on those of Europe?[44]

Adams openly defied a powerful foreign nation. He pledged his allegiance to the exceptional character of the American people and their government. With his remarks Adams attempted to show his fellow Americans that he had the credentials to lead the nation and, more immediately, to oversee the nation's foreign policy. These were assertions he needed to make. Clay had garnered great renown and credibility because he was accepted as a brave proponent of American freedom. One early expression of this feeling is contained in the following words, taken from a letter written to Clay in September 1817:

> I believe the manly generosity of your feelings in all cases where liberty is in question, has already induced you to meditate upon it with that heartfelt anxiety which it ought universally to inspire; and that it would even lead you to run some risk and to make some sacrifices for the emancipation of millions of fellow beings, pressed to the earth by military, commercial and religious tyranny.[45]

In the spring and summer of 1823 it was not yet clear whether the issue of support for the cause of Greek independence would become a replay of battles fought over extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics. What *was* clear was that a situation with intriguing parallels had very recently caused deep and biting conflict among American political leaders; public interest in the cause of Greek independence was strong and growing; and the presidential election of 1824 was drawing nearer, with Clay's name already endorsed by the legislature in his home state of Kentucky.

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[44] *Annals of Congress,* 16th Cong. 1st sess., 33:2227 (May 10, 1820).

[45] Stewart Skinner to Clay, September 30, 1817, in Clay, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 2:385.

What Adams' diplomatic letters to American ministers in Europe also make clear is the consistency of his position from his 1821 speech forward. In an April 1823 letter to the American minister in Spain, Adams gave a good summary of his position:

> It has been a maxim in the policy of the United States from the time when their independence was achieved to keep themselves aloof from the political system and contentions of Europe. To these principles, it is yet the purpose of the President to adhere and in the war about to commence [the French invasion of Spain] the attitude to be assumed and maintained by the United States will be that of neutrality.[46]

To judge by his comments, Adams precluded any partisan involvement by the United States Government in the "contentions of Europe." This seemed to rule out support for the Greek cause, and to do so as a basic matter of principle. In fact, Adams used words of detachment and neutrality in ways which closely paralleled George Washington's Farewell Address. As Washington would have wished, Adams also gave clear evidence that his position was one supported both by reason and by morality, namely, the principle of promoting the freedom of the United States. In any future conflict over support for the Greek people, Adams had established a clear record which could prove useful in defining (and justifying) the principles he believed should govern the nation's foreign policy.

Adams, however, was not the final arbiter who would determine how the United States Government would treat the issue of diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic. Monroe would have the final say within the Administration on both the substance and the phrasing of the nation's policy. And there was, of course, a still higher authority which in the longer run would set the nation's course.

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[46] Adams to Nelson, April 28, 1823, *Instructions*, Reel 4.

The people of the United States were sovereign. As such, they were the final arbiters. President Monroe, in his December 1823 annual message to Congress, put that sovereignty in these terms:

> The people being with us exclusively the sovereign, it is indispensable that full information be laid before them on all subjects, to enable them to exercise that high power with complete effect.[47]

Whether the nation would, over the longer run, pursue Adams' policy of strict neutrality or pursue what Clay defined as an active interventionist "moral duty" was an issue which neither Clay nor Adams could resolve by themselves. Should the issue of support for the Greek people become a central matter of political interest for educated and politically active Americans, the upcoming 1824 election would provide an excellent opportunity to choose leaders who embraced the policies which voters favored.

In the interim, Adams' 1821 speech and his diplomatic correspondence laid a broad, frequently reiterated foundation around which Adams and Monroe could address the issue of diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic. By way of contrast, Clay's 1821 speech at Lexington and his debates in Congress provided strong arguments which were readily applicable in favor of extending recognition to the Greek people in their struggle for freedom.

According to press reports such as those we reviewed in chapter 1, by the summer of 1823 Greece appeared to be rapidly approaching a state of de facto independence. The Greek people allegedly enjoyed a functioning government founded on principles of the American political system. Adams' statements and the conduct of the foreign policy of the Monroe Administration had not in the past been based solely on such facts. In the case of the Latin American republics, the Monroe Administration had used its time and its discretion in extending diplomatic recognition. If Adams and Monroe stuck to the principles Adams had outlined in his official correspondence and in his 1821 speech, there would be no automatic extension of diplomatic recognition even if there were a clear showing of a de facto independent Greek state.

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[47] Monroe, December 2, 1823, "Seventh Annual Message," in *Writings*, 7:325.

In the past, Adams and the Monroe Administration had exercised the power of the United States only where the nation's own freedom and the nation's own interests were at issue. Maintaining distance from the struggles and conflicts of European powers had been a cornerstone of their policies. They had given no evidence that they favored exercising the nation's power merely to prove they or the nation they led was free to act without the coercion of others. In his July 4th speech Adams made very clear that involvement in the struggles of others for freedom ran the risk of compromising freedom within the United States itself.

In the case of Latin America, Monroe had called years earlier for forbearance in the face of danger. Writing to Albert Gallatin in Paris in May of 1820, Monroe had stated:

> for I am satisfied that had we joined them [the Latin American republics] in the war, we should have done them more harm than good, as we might have drawn all Europe on them, not to speak of the injury we should have done ourselves. By the present attitude we have given to the other powers an example of forbearance, and retained the right to communicate with them as friends on that interesting subject. . . . A mere recognition, as our ports are open to them, as freely as to

> Spain and other powers would be a dead letter, while we would have been especially in the earlier stages exposed to all the objections.[48]

For the Greek cause, Monroe's letter is significant. The parallels to what might happen if the United States proceeded to recognize Greek independence from Turkey are readily apparent. It could encourage the major European powers to intervene in ways which subverted the goal of a free Greek nation based on popular sovereignty. The continental powers in particular greatly feared an international conspiracy to overthrow all "legitimate" thrones.

Still, Monroe's statements leave the impression that he felt he had to justify why his Administration had not pursued a more active role in support of the cause of freedom. It was almost as if he felt the Government did have a moral responsibility to support freedom outside the nation's borders and justified failure to act as a means of achieving optimum support for the cause. In later chapters we will explore in more detail other examples of this ambivalence.

At this point it is important to note that Monroe's commitment to Adams' policies of neutrality and detachment was quite different from that of Adams himself. Monroe sometimes left open the possibility of taking action to support the cause of freedom where there was not demonstrable risk of harm to the nation, and he sometimes rationalized taking no action on the basis that this was good for the cause of freedom. Adams was clear and unequivocal. He wanted to know how the United States would benefit from any action it took, in terms of promoting either the nation's security or commercial interests. Between Adams and Monroe there was room for disagreement over the proper course for the nation to follow in support of Greece and elsewhere.[49]

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[48] Monroe to Gallatin, May 20, 1820, in James Monroe Papers, NYPL, Reel 4.

On the surface, though, the two had long appeared to be in close harmony. In July 1822 Henry Middleton, the American minister in St. Petersburg, wrote a Despatch that is illustrative:

> An ambitious inquiry is often advanced to me (and by people of no small distinction) whether the US will afford no aid [to Greece]. I have generally answered that there are principles against any interference whatever in the internal concerns of foreign countries.[50]

In his annual message to Congress in December 1822, Monroe reaffirmed this principle of nonintervention. Speaking of the struggles to assert freedom in Portugal, he stated:

> It is nevertheless a sacred maxim, equally with the Government and the people, that the destiny of every independent nation in what relates to such improvement of right belongs and ought to be left exclusively to themselves.[51]

Significantly, Monroe's words came very soon after he used his message to express his and the nation's "great excitement and sympathy" for the struggle of the Greek people for their independence. Words were not necessarily a prelude to substantive action.

It appeared unlikely that there would be any consideration of recognition absent a clear showing that the Greek people were in fact exercising full and independent rule as an independent sovereign power. Even then, if Adams and the

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[49] See discussion on these points throughout chapters 8 and 9.
[50] Middleton to Adams, July 8, 1822, *Despatches: Russia*, Reel 9.
[51] Monroe, December 3, 1822, "Sixth Annual Message," in *Writings,* 6:299.

Monroe Administration had their way, extension of diplomatic recognition would certainly not be automatic.

In the spring of 1823 at least, Clay's public position on the subject of support for the Greeks was not a threat. In March 1823 he delivered a speech in Philadelphia. He focused on the struggle for freedom in the Old World and actually seemed to support a distancing from the unfolding struggle in Greece.

> We may be destined to behold the afflicting spectacle of the extinction of the light of liberty in the land of Homer and Leonides, and in the adopted country of Columbus [Spain] and all Europe may be encircled in the dark mantle of inexorable despotism. Whatever may be the issue, we shall, at least, have the consolation of cherishing our own principles and of giving all that is consistent with our posture and our institutions to communicate our fervent prayers and best wishes for every people, wherever situated, whether in the old or new world who are struggling to establish and to preserve their liberties.[52]

Clay then toasted "the illustrious patriots of Greece and Spain . . . engaged in a glorious struggle for the imprescriptable rights of human nature, may Heaven crown their efforts with success."

Clay's rhetoric of support for freedom was largely unchanged from earlier support for the struggles for freedom in Latin America. What was missing was any urging that the United States project its power to support the Greeks in their struggle against Turkey or, for that matter, to support the Spanish against the French. One finds no indication that nations of the Old World, the liberal, constitutionalist government in Spain and the emerging Greek republic in particular, should be included as part of the counterpoise to autocratic rule which Clay had envisaged in his 1821 speech in

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[52] Clay, "Toast and Speech at a Public Dinner" (Philadelphia, March 29, 1823) in Clay, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 3:403.

Lexington. To judge by Clay's words, both Spain and Greece seemed outside the pale of freedom. The cause of freedom in the Old World seemed doomed. Nevertheless, Clay's words did not foreclose the possibility of supporting the cause of freedom in the Old World should prospects become more encouraging. His criterion seemingly was one of whether actions by the United States would carry tangible benefit to those who sought to live in freedom. Like Adams, Clay appeared to focus on pragmatic, practical consequences. Yet there was a crucial difference. In his speech Clay focused on the consequences to others outside the United States. Adams had consistently focused on the consequences to the United States itself. The following illustrates this key difference.

As early as 1818, Clay had asserted on the floor of the House of Representatives that "a nation, in exercising this incontestable right . . . in pronouncing upon the independence in fact of a new state, takes no part in the war."[53] There was, in Clay's view, no cause for just complaint by foreign nations in America asserting its sovereign right. To the contrary, Clay argued that recognition created "a just neutrality." What Clay failed to note was that other nations, no more and no less than the United States, would exercise their right to determine what was or was not considered a just neutrality. From their viewpoint, a proper extension of diplomatic recognition to a new state required the granting of sovereignty to that state by the ruler previously in control. De facto control was not enough.[54] There was a risk that, in the future, Clay would apply his principle of "just neutrality" to the cause of Greek independence and urge that the United States extend diplomatic recognition to a government representing the people of Greece. If he did so, he would expose the nation to possible harm.[55]

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[53] *Annals of Congress*, 15th Cong., 1st sess., 31:1487.

[54] See chapter 5, p. 196.

Monroe himself had been very clear in defining the practical dangers involved in extending diplomatic recognition. On February 2, 1820 he wrote the following:

> It is obvious that a recognition of any of the colonies [the Spanish colonies of Latin America] if it did not make us a party to the war, as the recognition of the United States by France made her, it would have no effect, but be a dead letter and if it made us a party it would as I have already observed do more harm than good.[56]

Monroe went on to speak of actions from abroad that could impair access to the Mississippi and to the repugnance of the Eastern states for hostilities. From Monroe's perspective, where other nations felt that their interests were threatened, they just might exercise their power to retaliate against the United States. Their response risked danger to the United States even if, as Clay asserted, the United States was morally on sound ground and any opposition was unjustified. How Clay would respond if a foreign nation reacted to what he would term an "unjust" infringement of the nation's sovereign rights as a nation is a possibility that Clay did not explore in his debates on Latin America. Monroe in his letter to Jefferson did just this. Monroe pointed to the powerful precedent of Britain's decision to declare war on France as a result of French recognition of the independence of the United States. Although Monroe did not allude to it, there was also the more recent precedent of the War of 1812, when Britain resisted by armed force claims which Clay and other American leaders at the time felt were just.

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[55] See chapter 6.

[56] Monroe to Jefferson, February 2, 1820, in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong., Reel 7.

Clay's March 1823 speech suggested that all reasonable hope for the success of freedom in Greece was gone, but he was in a position to change his course if he felt conditions in Greece offered a more promising outcome. Adams and Monroe, for their part, were in a position, if they were clever enough, to preempt or at least to diffuse any attacks that Clay made on their management of the nation's foreign relations. Clay's statements left open the opportunity to maintain active, tangible support for an American system (of popular sovereignty)—but then give that system a geographic boundary, namely, the geographic confines of the New World.

In any future battle over whether the United States Government should give active, tangible support for the cause of Greek independence, each held a strong hand. Over time, much would depend on how well they played their cards. Much also would depend on the public's reaction to news of unfolding events in Greece.

One could conclude from Clay's Lexington speech that the United States Government should commit the nation to make sacrifices for freedom where, and only where, there was the power to make the sacrifice effective (the New World, at the time of his Lexington speech); and also where the physical security of the nation was enhanced by fostering the cause of freedom (Latin America, according to that same speech). So qualified, Clay's principles become transmuted into principles which Adams had long adhered to. Such a course did leave its advocates open to the charge of a lack of courage and manly virtue. On the other hand, if Adams and the Monroe led the nation into danger by supporting freedom in far-off lands, Clay was in a good position to attack his opponents as reckless by then qualifying his statements.

A clever opponent just might be able to qualify the principles contained in Clay's system and then interpret these principles in ways which Clay had to agree to, or else face a charge of inconsistency. For example, in the case of Latin America, self-interest, as Clay saw it, did not contradict principle; self-interest supported principle. In the case of Greece, diplomatic recognition might well further the cause of freedom and the cause of freedom might theoretically enhance the geopolitical security of the United States. In practical terms, though, one would be hard pressed to make a case that American commerce or the physical security of the United States would benefit from extending recognition to Greece. One could much more readily make the case that Turkey and the major powers of Europe were in a good position to respond in ways harmful to the United States.

Clay had handed his opponents a longer-range opportunity to reinforce their own positions by using Clay's own arguments, but then qualifying them. For example, if Clay needed the nation's self-interest to support his case for recognition of the Latin American republics, Adams and Monroe just might find a way to use self-interest to deter diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic.

CHAPTER FOUR

GREECE REQUESTS DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION

On February 24, 1823 Benjamin Rush, the United States minister to the Court of Saint James, wrote to advise John Quincy Adams of a meeting that had taken place on the 22nd at the American Legation in London. It was with Andreas Luriottis, described by Rush as "an agent or deputy from Corinth" who came "on behalf of the cause of the Greeks."

As Rush described it, Luriottis' mission was twofold. He wanted to initiate steps leading to "the establishment of diplomatic relations" between the United States Government and the Greek Government he claimed to represent. He also wanted Washington to contribute funds to support the cause of Greek independence. Luriottis left with Rush a letter for the secretary of state.[1]

What Luriottis wrote was an impassioned exhortation, one which evoked the time of Pericles: "The seat of early civilization stretches out her hands imploringly," hoping that "the youngest and most vigorous sons of liberty" would come to the support of Greek people. "Everything opposes us," with "nothing to encourage us but our patriotism." Yet with patriotism alone, Luriottis indicated, his people were "subduing every force which has been sent against us."[2]

Subtly yet unmistakably, Luriottis tried to lead his reader to accept that ancient Greece was the spiritual fatherland not only of contemporary Greeks, but of contemporary Americans well. Both were sons of liberty. Luriottis spoke of patriotism, technically the duty to sacrifice for the land of one's father. Was it not appropriate for brothers to share in a common sacrifice for the cause of freedom?

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[1] Rush to Adams, February 24, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.
[2] Ibid.

He did not express himself so bluntly or directly, but his words certainly contained such a message.

Luriottis continued by reaffirming that the Greek people "have met and vanquished the dominion of cruel and reckless tyrants . . . . The armies and the fleets which have been sent against us have been subdued by our own troops and marine." Such achievements did not come by chance, at least not in the account Luriottis gave Adams. Luriottis wrote of "our fortunes and our honor" pledged to the cause of a free people.[3] Again, the words resonate with the spirit of shared heritage. Had not the signers of America's own Declaration of Independence pledged their own fortunes and honor to the cause of freedom on July 4, 1776?

Stripped of its rhetoric, the message Luriottis wanted to convey was very straightforward. There was a spiritual, seemingly a familial, bonding between the people of Greece and the people of America. Family members had an obligation to help each other in times of trouble. From Luriottis' standpoint, the people of the United States through their government could meet this obligation in two practical ways: by extending diplomatic recognition to the Greek republic he claimed to represent; and by disbursing money from the United States Treasury.

Luriottis indicated that, like Americans themselves, the Greeks—by virtue of their own heroism—were worthy heirs of the heritage of ancient Greece. On this ground too, they had presumably earned a moral right to expect support from the "youngest and most vigorous sons of liberty." After all, Luriottis' contemporaries had defeated all the forces sent against them, forces which were those of a mighty empire. Had America's own sons of liberty not done the same in winning their freedom from the mighty British Empire? Though not explicit, the parallel is hard to escape.

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[3] Ibid.

In making his case, Luriottis also stated that the people of the United States were different, even exceptional, and most certainly not like those who ruled on the far side of the Atlantic. "Though fortunately you are so far removed . . . so much above the narrow politics in Europe as to be little influenced" by them.[4] The sovereign people of the United States, unlike those who ruled in Europe, were above petty interests. Presumably they could demonstrate their freedom from such interests by supporting the Greek cause. One senses that it would be shameful for "sons of liberty" not to do so. Although Luriottis did not appear to recognize it, this last argument was a dangerous one for him to make. As we saw in the preceding chapter, Washington, and Adams after him, had urged that the United States stay out of the "broils" of European politics, precisely because they were so distant from America's own interests and welfare.

Simply put, Luriottis sought to validate three concrete assertions, each for him a matter of settled fact. First, de facto the Greeks were securely a free people. Second, their heroism and valor gave them a legitimate—defined as a moral—right to be free. Third, the relationship between the people of Greece and of the United States was one of a uniquely shared heritage, one which imposed on the United States Government and the people it represented a moral obligation to help the Greek people in their hour of need.

Luriottis continued, "You will probably have seen our organic law approximating to that constitution in which your nation, so happily and so serenely is now in force."[5] He guided his reader to accept that the Greek people were exercising their freedom with responsibility. The parallel with America's exercise of its own sovereignty, also legitimated by the will of the people, also exercised under the rule of law, was clear—as was the bond of a common heritage of bravery in the struggle for the freedom.

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[4] Ibid.

Contained in the letter that Luriottis wrote to Adams were two key substantive issues of foreign policy. First, did the right of the Greek people to freedom create an obligation for the United States Government to act to support their cause? Second, did the de facto state of independence, including a functioning government under established law, either legally or morally obligate, or even justify, action by the United States Government to extend diplomatic recognition? These were the policy issues that Adams, Monroe and the cabinet would have to consider when they met to decide on whether, and if so how, to respond to Luriottis.

As we saw in the previous chapter, there was at the time no consensus within the United States on how to answer these questions. In the case of Latin America these very questions had proved contentious and highly divisive within the arena of domestic politics. There was little reason to assume they would not be so in the instant case. Actually, the spiritual brotherhood which Luriottis sought to establish between the Greek and the American peoples injected a new element, one which could easily acerbate political tensions within the United States. For some, even for many, it could generate emotional commitments closer to family obligations than the abstract principles of obligation to any people struggling for freedom which Henry Clay had articulated in support of extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics.

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[5] Ibid.

The Luriottis letter and Rush's accompanying message are marked "received" at the State Department on the 17th of April. The lapse in time between dispatch from London and receipt in Washington was not unusual. At that season of the year it would normally take four to six weeks for a message to cross the Atlantic, even if connections were made with the packet that left Liverpool on a regular basis for New York. The delay underscores a key reality of foreign relations of the period.

Physically, the State Department could not direct its representatives abroad with precision on how to handle their job of representing the United States. Of necessity much had to be left to the discretion of the resident minister, in this case the minister in London. Guidance from Washington rested on general principles of policy and on periodic updating of these principles, primarily through correspondence from Washington. Without such a system, diplomatic dialogue would have faced either unbearable delays in exchanging positions and making appropriate decisions or, alternatively, a delegation of authority to the diplomat in residence which abdicated any effective control from Washington.

The exchange between Rush and Luriottis provides a good example of the context within which the United States conducted its foreign relations in the opening decades of the 19th century. Operating on his understanding of the general principles governing American foreign policy, this is how Rush reported his meeting with Luriottis:

> I assured him that the fortunes of his country were dear to the people of the United States, who, cherishing the freedom which the members [of the States making up

> the Union] themselves inherited and enjoyed, looked with warmest sympathy upon the struggles of the Greeks for their national liberties, and that the government of the United States participated in this feeling. Of the latter, I considered the late mention of the subject by the President in his message to Congress as authentic proof.[6]

Rush went on to tell Luriottis that he felt that the United States "could feel no backwardness" in opening relations when "the proper day arrived." He cited as precedent the fact that the United States had been the first country to extend diplomatic relations to the Latin American republics after their recent wars to gain independence from Spain. Rush then indicated that the specific commitments which Luriottis sought would have to be "carefully weighed" in Washington, as he was not informed of what position his government would take.

Without making commitments, Rush had conveyed to Luriottis two matters of importance. First, he confirmed to Luriottis that the United States Government had no hesitation in continuing to articulate strong verbal support for the cause of Greek independence. Second, he confirmed that the United States had embraced the principle of recognizing governments founded on revolution against previously recognized sovereign authority. His comments implicitly indicated that Washington would consider the matters raised by Luriottis in a manner consistent with these principles. The principles themselves were clearly favorable to the Greek cause. To judge by Rush's words, the possibility, though not the certainty, of a positive response was there.

Although Rush did not say so in his Despatch, both he and Adams knew that what Luriottis proposed violated the principles and the practice which then governed relations among the major European powers. Luriottis sought official recognition for a government founded on revolution against established authority. In addition he sought acceptance of change in the borders of a state generally recognized as having sovereignty over the territory and people who were in revolt. In the early 19th century there were no precedents in Europe for extending official diplomatic recognition under either of these conditions.

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[6] Ibid.

When Rush met with Luriottis, none of the major European powers had yet extended official diplomatic recognition even to the Latin American republics, republics much more securely in place than the Greek government that Luriottis claimed to represent. They were well-established and in all cases had clearly exercised de facto rule over their territories for a substantial number of years. But since they were established by revolution against established authority, no European government had acknowledged their legal right to independence.

Luriottis had few options. Words of encouragement and the articulation of principles that would support a timely future recognition of a revolutionary government in Greece founded on popular sovereignty—these were nowhere evident in the attitudes and behavior of any of the governments of the major European powers. For them, extending diplomatic recognition would not only violate established norms of conduct; such an act would violate international law. The very principle of popular sovereignty instituted by force was, from their standpoint, "illegitimate."[7] Turkey was the acknowledged and recognized state with sovereignty over the territory and over the people of Greece who were in revolt.

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[7] See chapter 6.

When Luriottis wrote to Adams, no European government had even extended to Greece the status of a belligerent. Such status would have recognized as fact that the revolt against Turkey had progressed to the point where the people of Greece had certain powers which the international community was prepared to respect. Luriottis was asking the government of the United States to depart, and to depart decisively, from principles of conduct that were generally accepted by every major European power.

Hence, Luriottis in his letter to Adams felt it necessary to demonstrate that the Greek people through their own efforts had in fact established their independence. Similarly, in his meeting with Rush he stated explicitly, "Independence had been placed on a solid basis."[8] Luriottis cited recent victories of Greek arms which resulted in freeing virtually all of the Morea (now referred to as the Peloponnesus). Whether the present situation was tenable, beyond the ability of Turkey to reimpose its control and sovereignty, is a subject that Luriottis did not address explicitly, either with Rush or in his letter to Adams. His statements simply iterated as fact that Greek independence from Turkey was firmly established and presumably permanent.

In his Despatch Rush reminded Adams that England "at that day" (i.e., early in the Greek revolt) had probably shared Russia's hostility to the revolt of the Greek people against Turkish rule. "But," Rush went on to say, "there is reason to suspect that, unlike Russia, her policy in that respect has undergone some alteration, the result of intervening events and her doubtful position in relation to the European alliance." Rush did not elaborate on the cause of what he termed

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[8] Rush to Adams, February 24, 1823, in *Despatches*: *Great Britain*, Reel 24.

England's "doubtful position," nor did he define what he meant by the term. He did not need to do so. Both knew that Russia, Austria and France had each embraced the principle that revolution in one nation could and should be suppressed as a matter of right by the force of arms of other countries. Evoking this principle, they had sanctioned a policy which had quite recently given France the "right" to send its army into Spain for the purpose of overthrowing that country's revolutionary government and restoring the rule of the Spanish king as absolute monarch. England had expressed strong opposition to such intervention into the internal affairs of another country. Nonintervention and respect for the right of each state to settle its own internal affairs were longstanding, well-established and basic principles of English diplomacy.[9]

England's principles and policies clashed with those of the continental powers and so undermined England's standing with her European allies. This did not mean that England supported the cause of freedom from oppressive rule. In his Despatch Rush specifically cautioned Adams, "I do not believe that it [a possible change in Britain's attitude toward Greek independence] rests upon the certain principles of any attachment in the cabinet of England to the liberties of Greece."[10]

Though Rush did not expand on the foundations for a possible change in British policy towards Greece, one can reasonably assume that Great Britain would have looked with alarm at any action in Greece of the sort just undertaken by France in Spain. Such incursions into another country opened up the possibility of becoming permanent or, alternatively, of creating a satellite power. For England the prospect of the extension of Russian naval power into Greek waters, under whatever pretext, would have seriously changed the balance of power so carefully put in place at the Congress of Vienna at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Such an extension of Russian power could have threatened Great Britain's ability to project military force into India and the East; it could have threatened key trade routes covering the eastern Mediterranean. It seems likely that Rush was alluding to these potential threats and to a determination of the British Government to consider options for diffusing such threats, including the option of changing its policy toward the Greek revolt against Turkish rule.

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[9] Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 168.
[10] Rush to Adams, February 24, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.

At the time of the Luriottis letter Adams was well aware of this general background. Nevertheless, he could have no clear picture of whether intervening events in Greece or elsewhere—and if so, what events—would cause Britain to change its policy toward Greece. The most Adams would be able to surmise from Rush's comment and other available information was that there was flux in British policy toward Greek independence. Adams could not know whether action by the United States Government to move toward diplomatic recognition would provoke hostility from Britain. What he did know was that Russia vigorously opposed the principle of sovereignty based on the power of a people to choose their own form of government and their own rulers. In short, Adams was in a good position to see that if the United States responded positively to Luriottis, it risked stepping right into the middle of a conflict between the two most powerful nations of Europe.

In his letter to Adams, Rush projected a calm, analytical, lawyerlike approach to the issue of diplomatic recognition, focusing on principles and precedents. His comments on Russia and England centered on an exercise of state power to influence or control events. Presumably he conveyed such information because he believed it relevant to how Adams and the Monroe Administration would go about assessing the Luriottis request for support.

Luriottis' purpose in writing to Adams was quite different from Rush's. Luriottis was an advocate who presented his case in order to win his argument. Rush had no case to win. His aim was to provide those in Washington with analysis and factual information which would let them make a fully informed decision. This difference is important to note. Reasoned analysis might well lead to one conclusion, one based on the practical consequences of one's actions, whereas emotional commitments might well lead to a course of action in which feelings of moral obligation overrode or ignored practical consequences.

Adams could make no decision on his own. The president had the final power and authority to decide on any response to Luriottis.[11] Adams' role as secretary of state was that of senior advisor to the president. Even though Adams could, and most often did, exert a strong, even a controlling, influence, Monroe actively sought a wide range of opinions before making his decisions.[12] He kept former presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison abreast of key policy issues and solicited their advice.[13] Monroe also received private letters from

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[11] Whittaker: *United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 380. For a contrasting view, see May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 247. May states that in Monroe's Administration cabinet officers had independent constituencies and were less servants of the president.

[12] See November 1823 cabinet meetings discussed in chapter 8, especially p. 299. For ambiguities in Monroe's 1823 Annual Message, see chapter 9.

[13] Monroe to Jefferson, March 14, 1822, in Monroe, *Writings*, 6:214; Madison to Monroe, August 18, 1823 (ibid., 6:395-396); Madison to Monroe, August 1, 1818 in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong., Reel 7. See also discussion in chapter 8.

American ministers abroad, most specifically from Benjamin Rush in London and from Albert Gallatin, the United States minister in Paris.[14]

Monroe used cabinet meetings as a forum for discussing and even on occasion for deciding by vote the position the United States should take on matters of foreign policy.[15] For example, Adams' diary on October 25, 1817 contains a memorandum Monroe had sent to all his cabinet officers. The memorandum asked:

> Will the sending or receiving of a minister to a new state be considered an acknowledgment of its independence? Has the executive power to acknowledge the independence of new states where independence has not been acknowledged by the parent country and between which parties a war exists on that account? Is it a just cause of complaint to any other power?[16]

Adams had a key, but not necessarily a final, say in what the Monroe Administration would do in answering the Luriottis letter.

It behooved Adams to frame his recommendations in ways that promoted harmony. For example, on November 21, 1823 Adams described in his diaries a meeting with Monroe to review a draft on an Instruction which Adams proposed to send to Rush in London. Adams wrote that he had a "lengthy discussion" with Monroe "upon one phrase, which seemed to me to require none at all." Adams concluded, "The president did not insist upon any of his amendments which were not admitted by general consent."[17] On the same date Adams ended up taking a more petulant tone. "I finished the draft of my second dispatch to R. Rush upon

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[14] See *inter alia* Monroe to Gallatin, April 26, 1820, in Gallatin, *Writings*, 131-132; Rush to Monroe, August 6, 1820, in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong., Reel 7.

[15] Adams, November 21, 1823, *Memoirs*, 6:193.

[16] Monroe to Cabinet, October 25, 1817, in Adams, *Writings,* 6:31.

[17] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:193 (November 21, 1823).

Canning's proposals. And there must be a third."[18] By conduct like this, Monroe made it quite clear that Adams was responsible for proposing what should be done in matters of foreign policy, but the cabinet would also have an important influence on the nation's foreign policy. Monroe likewise reserved the right to debate at length whether Adams was free to use a specific phrase in his official correspondence. Adams needed to keep in mind what would be acceptable to Monroe, not just what Adams' own independent judgment would have dictated. The result was on occasion not only tension; there could be compromise, even confusion, in the statement of policy itself. We will document and explore the significance of this in chapters 8 and 9. It is a reality not generally addressed in histories of the Monroe presidency.

In his meeting with Rush and in his letter to Adams, Luriottis had stated that freedom from Turkey was an established fact. Luriottis clearly had a vested interest in asserting this. He wanted to encourage the United States Government to support the Greek cause by providing money and extending diplomatic recognition. Before making any recommendations to Monroe and the cabinet, Adams, as the chief foreign policy advisor to the president, would have found it helpful to test and, if possible, to confirm what Luriottis had stated. To do this Adams needed reports from independent, reliable sources. Only with such sources could he know with reasonable certainty whether Greece had actually achieved its freedom from Turkey or, alternatively, was virtually assured of doing so.

Unless Greece really had good prospects for a sustained exercise of the powers of a sovereign nation, any recognition by the United States would run the risk of being at the very least a futile, perhaps even an absurd, gesture. It would also have violated the minimum standards which had heretofore governed United States recognition of foreign governments. Getting the needed information was not an easy task and certainly not something that could be managed quickly, if at all.

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[18] Ibid., 196.

For readily available sources, Adams did have access to correspondence already received from American diplomats in Europe. However, even a brief review of the State Department Archives and the private papers of Monroe and Adams reveals that the reports they received from Europe generally contained only fragmentary information based on newspaper reports or meetings with officials of the major European powers and fellow diplomats. At the time of the Luriottis letter, only rarely had the subject of Greece made its way into the correspondence. This source provided no strong evidence that Greece had already achieved de facto the status of an independent nation.

Adams had access to the ministers of foreign governments resident in Washington. Here, as in much of the information received from official channels in Europe, a question of bias was inescapable. Diplomats normally conveyed information for a purpose, and the purpose was usually to serve the interests and policies of their governments. In understanding what was happening in Greece, such information would probably have contained very little of probative value. Even so, such information was useful. Both correspondence received from American diplomatic representatives abroad and any exchange of information in Washington could give Adams and Monroe insight as to the possible foreign relations consequences of their response to the Luriottis letter. Both sources provided critical clues as to the values and interests of other nations and their willingness to act to protect those values and interests.

With such limited, dated, fragmentary sources of information available to them, how could Adams and the Monroe Administration know whether the Greek people had gained their freedom? On June 28, 1823 *Niles* reported:

> We have seen [says the *London Chronicle*] a gentleman who has served with distinction in Greece . . . . The progress they have made during this struggle, he says, is quite surprising, and [he] considers their prospects to be most favorable. The foreigners [those individuals in Europe who had volunteered to fight with the Greeks] have been of great assistance, in giving the confidence to fight regularly, in which they were necessarily deficient.[19]

According to *Niles*, the freedom of Greece remained a promising work in progress, but was certainly not a *fait accompli*. Luriottis claimed much more. Even the reliability of the *Niles* report was doubtful. *Niles* did not identify the "gentleman who had served with distinction in Greece" except to imply that he had aided the Greeks in their struggle. From Adams' perspective, *Niles* and other newspapers could not be impartial sources of information. What they could do was nevertheless quite important. Newspapers could keep Adams abreast of how educated and politically active Americans were apt to perceive and respond to the Greek struggle.

Overall Adams faced a situation where information was limited, often unreliable, and where communications to and from Europe required extended amounts of time. He needed a frame of reference adapted to the situation he faced. Such a framework did exist.

Adams and Monroe were in a position to base their response to the Luriottis request on the fundamental principles and precedents which they had previously used in formulating their foreign policy. In the previous chapter we saw at some length how Adams defined his principles and, even more important, how he and the Monroe Administration had applied these principles to policies and actions taken in the case of extending diplomatic recognition to the newly formed republics of Latin America. In that case the record shows that Adams and the Monroe Administration had proceeded by a process of what we would call contextualization. They looked at and interpreted the facts available to them in the context of the general principles and precedents. In essence their approach was the one that Rush had taken in his meeting with Luriottis in London.

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[19] *Niles* 24 (June 28, 1823): 265.

Adams and Monroe were also in a good position to place any response they made to Luriottis in the context of their larger concerns about relations among the United States, the major European powers and also the Turkish Empire.[20] They were very much aware of the general values and interests of the major European powers.[21] This put them in a position to make reasoned judgments, even though they had incomplete, imperfect and dated information.

Finally, Adams and the Monroe Administration were most certainly in an excellent position to assess what type of reaction they could expect within the United States itself. They knew all too well that the issue of whether the United States Government should extend active support for people struggling for their independence had in the past become a matter of bitter, acrimonious debate in Congress. They were both on notice that any action they took, or failed to take, in responding to the Luriottis letter might well provoke political controversy in the Congress and possibly in the nation as well.

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[20] See chapter 5.
[21] See chapter 6.

The decision-making framework available to Monroe, Adams and other statesmen did carry with it certain constraints. Individual actions needed, almost of necessity, to be consistent with broad and general principles. For example, such a decision-making framework meant that the conditions which had prompted the Monroe Administration to withhold or to extend diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics operated as a vital precedent in assessing whether to take steps leading to diplomatic recognition for the government Luriottis claimed to represent.

The Latin American precedent was significant in two ways. First was the need to apply the basic principles which had governed the nation's foreign policy in the earlier case. Second was whether there was consistency in the policies pursued. One would expect Adams to test whether in the past conditions of a de facto independence and a functioning government had been both a necessary and also a sufficient ground either justifying or mandating diplomatic recognition.

Without such a process of contextualization and consistency, it would have been hard for Adams and Monroe to have a framework within which to make their judgments. They were in no position to react and adjust to unfolding events. They knew too little and the response times were too long.

In such an environment, if there were disagreement with other political leaders—in Congress, for example—the disagreement was apt to start with argument over the appropriate principles that should guide and govern the nation's foreign policy. So focused, this meant there would be disagreements over matters of right and wrong—or what people in the early 19th century called principle and morality.

Then as now, struggles to define right and wrong conduct tended to produce rigidity and discourage compromise. Since one's own values and resulting conduct were ostensibly those that were morally right, it could appear immoral to give ground. Also, a focus on principle tended to discourage making compromises based on changes in circumstances, for change in one's position risked compromising one's principles. Where political leaders espoused different principles, there was apt to be unyielding tension, if not outright conflict. The prior battle between Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams over diplomatic recognition for the Latin American republics was a case in point. So too was the ideological underpinning of the positions taken by Tsar Alexander and the Holy Alliance which we will discuss in chapter 6.

There was of course the possibility that political leaders would disagree on the specific actions which the United States Government should pursue in a given situation. Such differences were much easier to reconcile by compromise. In the history before us, however, we will see that disagreements centered on an acceptable foundation for the nation's foreign policy rather than on an appropriate execution of agreed-upon principles.

There were shortcomings in this approach. Still, one needs to recognize that a frame of reference based on principles and precedents did have its advantages. Given limited information and long time lags in communication, the approach gave political leaders like Adams and Monroe a sense of direction which would have been very difficult otherwise. The approach provided both the ability to interpret the significance of the limited information available and the confidence necessary to respond to the challenges they faced.

Adams himself provided a good example of both the strengths and weaknesses of the decision-making process he and other statesmen of the time used. In April 1823 he wrote Richard Anderson:

> The European alliance of emperors and kings have assumed as the foundation of human society the doctrine of unalienable allegiance. Our doctrine is founded on the principle of unalienable right.[22]

As Adams expressed it, the world was ideologically polarized. Speaking of the revolutions for independence from Spain which had so recently taken place in South America, Adams judged:

> The European allies, therefore, have viewed the case of the South Americas as rebellion against a lawful sovereign. We have considered it as the assertion of national right. They have invariably shown their disapprobation of the revolution, and their wishes for the restoration of Spanish power. We have constantly favored the standard of independence of America.

As Adams saw it, differing principles—in this case differences in the principles of governance—led to policies that were in conflict. He concluded by saying:

> Civil, commercial and religious liberty are but various manifestations of one great principle founded on the inalienable rights of human nature, and before the universal application of which, the colonial domination of Europe over the American hemisphere has fallen, and is crumbling to dust.[23]

Conduct grounded on principles that were morally right contained the power to achieve results. This provided yet another reason to stick with one's principles, and to do so without compromise.

A private letter written by Adams in 1821 provides further perspective. Writing to his personal friend, Edward Everett, Adams reviewed the July 4, 1821 speech which we explored in the previous chapter.

> The merits of whatever . . . I have given to the world, either as a literary man or as a politician, consists in the application of moral philosophy to business, in the

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[22] Adams to Anderson, April 27, 1823 Instruction, in Adams, *Writings*, 7:452.
[23] Ibid., 7:466.

> incessant reference direct or indirect of all narrative, argument and inference to the standards of right and wrong.[24]

He told Everett that his recent July 4, 1821 speech, indeed all his public writings, "are dedicated to an appeal to truth and to justice." As Adams expressed it, his principles fused morality with the very law of nature.[25] They were what he termed "eternal truth and justice." And not coincidentally his principles were also "our [the nation's] peculiar and imperishable principles."

With such a decision-making framework one could hardly expect Adams to seek a modus vivendi with those who disagreed with him. As Adams used them, principles became much more than a rationalization for actions statesmen wished to take for other reasons. Principles, or what Adams called the "very law of nature," were important in interpreting and understanding the significance of specific events and in giving a sense of direction as to how to respond to challenges. Principles were levers which, in Adams' world view, exerted great influence over the exercise of state power. Clay's approach to the issue of extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics was quite similar, even though the substance of his principles was very different from that of Adams. Both made the application of principle the centerpiece of their proposed policies. Both appeared to interpret events through the prism of their values and principles.

In no sense, however, did this focus on principles lead to a single predetermined course of action. In responding to specific events, such as the Luriottis letter, Adams and Monroe still had options, albeit framed within what was consistent with their principles and the precedents of how they had applied their principles in the past. For example, in responding to the Luriottis letter, Adams and Monroe could have encouraged the government that Luriottis claimed to represent to send representatives to Washington to discuss the issue of recognition. Alternatively, they could have urged upon Luriottis the need to explore trade relations as a means of encouraging dialogue in London. Adams and Monroe could have claimed that extension of diplomatic recognition required further factual evidence, inviting Luriottis to supply it or else taking steps of their own to obtain it. What they could not easily do was violate the general principles of when and whether to extend diplomatic recognition which they had used in the past. Adhering to principles was a constraint on how Adams and Monroe would respond to the Luriottis letter.

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[24] Adams to Edward Everett, July 31, 1821, in Adams, *Writings*, 7:202.
[25] Ibid.

Apart from channeling their own conduct, Adams, Monroe and their contemporaries used their perception of principles to gauge how other nations would interpret and respond to any initiatives taken by the United States Government. Adams' comments over a long period of years are illustrative. In 1817 he wrote to Benjamin Rush in London:

> Its principal governments [those of Europe] are leagued together for the purpose of maintaining through all its borders the state of things which has been established. The operation of this system in its parts, the resistance which it has to encounter, as in the element of discord never extinguished between the parties to the compact themselves, its effects upon the civil liberties of the individual subject, and upon the political independence of each of the nations thus associated, are deserving of the most careful and scrutinizing observation.[26]

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[26] Adams to Rush, November 6, 1817, in *Instructions*, Reel 3.

European principles were different from those of the United States. But Adams assumed the governments of Europe would calibrate their actions in ways that supported their principles.

As Adams' comments also indicated, he and those who shared his perspective believed that the European state system was fundamentally flawed, weakening those who adhered to it. He made it quite clear that what he described as the European system was not based on the laws of nature and morality. It lacked what he defined in his letter to Everett as "our peculiar and imperishable principles." Here too one finds a frame of reference which discouraged rather than encouraged compromise and the seeking of a modus vivendi.

In practice Adams' own principles and the order they assumed contained an easily overlooked challenge. His focus did not make it easy to reconcile what we would now call competing interests. For example, at the time of the Greek War of Independence the United States was the leading nation founded on the principles which Adams had eloquently defined as the "inalienable rights of human nature." The United States was a major marine power as well, and widely respected in that capacity.[27] For example, in August 1823 George Canning, the British foreign secretary, told Rush:

> the large share of maritime power of the world which Great Britain and the United States share between them, and the consequent influence which the knowledge of a common policy [on Latin America] would make their joint position irresistible.[28]

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[27] Earle, "American Interest," vii, 90, 114.

[28] Adams to Rush, August 16, 1823 Instruction, in Rush, *Residence at the Court*, 361.

Within the United States, the Industrial Revolution and the development of internal markets were proceeding, but slowly in the early 1820s. At the time of the Luriottis letter, the United States perceived itself above all as a trading nation. As such, the Government had to consider foreign trade and relations with foreign powers as matters of vital importance to the nation. The very fact that President Monroe and his two predecessors, Madison and Jefferson, had both been secretaries of state is compelling evidence of this fact. In his November 14, 1820 annual message to Congress, President Monroe gave a good summary of America's focus on trade and commerce. He spoke of

> the progress of a nation inhabiting a territory of such vast extent and great variety of climate, every portion of which is engaged in foreign commerce and liable to be affected in some degree by the changes which occur in the condition and recognition of foreign countries.[29]

Adams, in his July 1821 letter to Everett, alluded to a way to bridge any perceived gap between support for freedom and the commercial interests associated with being a major commercial power. He posited an integration of freedom of commerce with the inalienable rights of human nature. He actually spoke of national independence and of freedom of commerce as interchangeable. Adams' approach leads to a conclusion that may well appear startling. Commercial interests became moral principles and their promotion is not self-serving. To support United States commercial interests is fulfilling a moral duty to adhere to the principle of freedom imbedded in the laws of nature.

There were—or, more accurately, there should have been—obvious problems with this approach. A foreign policy based on support for commerce can, as a practical matter, undermine support for the principle of human freedom. These principles—freedom of commerce with other nations and a moral responsibility to support struggles for freedom outside the nation's borders—very easily run in opposite directions. In the past, adherence to just one of these principles had provoked conflict with other nations.

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[29] Monroe, Fourth Annual Message (November 14, 1820), in Monroe, *Writings*, 6:156.

For example, a triumph of the principle of freedom over the need to maintain supportive relations with foreign nations had brought on the War of 1812. It was a dangerous precedent. Henry Clay's often-quoted speech at the time aptly illustrates the danger: "If we fail, let us fail as men, lash ourselves to our gallant tars, and expire together, in one common struggle, fighting for seamen's rights and free trade."[30] Clay's speech did help create an emotional commitment to the principles which he enunciated and in the process did encourage the United States to undertake war with Great Britain. One of Clay's admirers described the speech in these terms: "In conception, it was forceful. In diction sublime. In eloquence impressive and in action great."[31] The speech and the reaction it provoked had the power to move events. Unfortunately, Clay's eloquence did not prevent the burning of Washington. His rhetoric did not prevent the New England states from undertaking at the Hartford Convention a process which could have led to the dissolution of the Union itself.

Like Clay, Luriottis had appealed to a commitment generated by emotion. As Clay had demonstrated, such an approach provoked impulses which at times were both irresistible and damaging, even potentially ruinous. The fact that preoccupations in Europe encouraged the British to sign the treaty of Ghent ending the war does not obscure the dangers of Clay's inflammatory rhetoric.

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[30] *Annals of Congress,* 12th Cong., 2nd sess., 659-676, cited in Remini, *Henry Clay*, 100.

[31] Remini, *Henry Clay*, 101.

As we will see in chapter 6, extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic risked trade relations with Turkey as well as interference with trade throughout the Mediterranean by the Barbary pirates. Put in this context, an answer to the Luriottis request needed to rest on principles that promoted supportive relations with foreign governments in a position to influence the welfare of the country. With the approach of the presidential election, Adams in particular also needed to find an answer to Luriottis that engaged the support of politically active people within the United States. And for credibility, Adams and Monroe needed to take a position that was congruent with precedents articulated in their prior policies and statements of policy. Integrating all these factors was a daunting task.

It was also a task that neither Adams nor other American leaders could undertake with complete objectivity. Beyond differing political interests, they shared as well a common prejudice or, more accurately, a common insecurity. American political leaders believed the major European powers were innate enemies of the United States and the political system of freedom that the nation stood for. At the end of the War of 1812, Adams characterized the British with these words:

> They never have observed, and never will observe, toward us the ordinary laws of war which they respect in their quarrels with other nations . . . . The hatred and revenge rankling in the hearts of Britain against the French is deep and deadly, but is mercy and compassion when compared with their malice toward America.[32]

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[32] Adams to Levett Harris, Ghent, November 24, 1814, in Adams, *Writings*, 5:210.

This atmosphere of distrust was much more than an emotional outburst against wartime atrocities. What Adams said was quite typical. In 1818 Benjamin Rush wrote to Monroe:

> I am not without a knowledge, of other facts showing the unwillingness of the newspapers of both parties to publish what bears favorably upon the character and strength of the United States.[33]

One month later Rush wrote to Monroe to describe a separate matter. It was one which could easily have led to armed hostility between Britain and the United States. During an incursion into Florida (then owned by Spain), General Andrew Jackson had hanged two alleged British spies. As reported by Rush to Monroe, the response from London was as follows:

> Strong noise . . . out of doors (by the general public) . . . but the government has taken no part in the clamors, because of the unreasonableness of British hostility.

Rush then stated that one needed to put in the scale of right and wrong

> the men, women and children of America, butchered since the beginning of the war of liberation by the scalping knife which British hands have supplied, the hundreds of American citizens who have either died or been slain in the battle while doomed to impressments in their ships.[34]

In point of fact the British Government had refrained from using the incident to provoke a confrontation with the United States, even though there was much public pressure to do so. Quite possibly the British Government was animated by a desire to build good will, not animus. Rush apparently could not see this. As a result, he may well have missed an opportunity to explore and possibly even to resolve trade issues which divided the two nations.

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[33] Rush to Monroe, July 21, 1818, in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong., Reel 7.

[34] Rush to Monroe, August 19, 1818 (ibid.).

In a letter to Robert Walsh in July of 1821, Adams himself underscored the enduring sense of deep and persistent enmity he continued to feel toward Britain.

> The animosity which we now encounter from Britain is purely national. It is rather discounted than stimulated by the government, and is inspired by two of the deepest and most malignant passions of the human heart—revenge and envy—revenge for the national humiliation of two successive wars, envy at the unparalleled growth and prosperity which associate with all their thoughts of America—the torturing error of a rival growing every day more formidable to them. We must be duly prepared to meet that form of British hostility wherever it may be displayed.[35]

He went on to claim that "with few exceptions it [animosity] pervades them all."

In his July 4, 1821 speech Adams had just expressed very undiplomatically his strong feelings of Anglophobia. The Russian minister in Washington, in his report back to St. Petersburg, described Adams' message:

> Mr. Adams' speech was nothing more than a diatribe against England, mixed with exaggerated republicanism, calculated to appeal, not to the enlightened part of the nation, but to the numerical majority of the American public.[36]

Put in the context of the time Adams' comments were understandable. The United States was virtually the only nation which embodied the principles of popular sovereignty and republicanism. It was isolated in a world that gave much evidence of contempt and hostility for what America stood for. Albert Gallatin's comments from Paris exemplify the sense of righteousness, moral superiority and impatience felt by American statesmen of the period. Writing to Monroe in the spring of 1823, Gallatin lamented:

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[35] Adams to Walsh, July 21, 1821, in Adams, *Writings*, 7:115.

[36] Poletica to Nesselrode, July 21, 1821, in Ford, "Correspondence of Russian Ministers to Washington," *American Historical Review*, 18:327. At the time of this letter, Poletica was the Russian minister in Washington and Nesselrode was the minister in St. Petersburg responsible for foreign affairs.

> I understand all too well the language and have mixed too much with the statesmen of this country [France] to be able to preserve perfect silence and neutrality on general questions, such as those of Spain and the Greeks.[37]

Despite the contempt and distrust felt on both sides of the Atlantic, a practical reality remained. America's political leaders needed to consider carefully how any response would affect relations with other powers. They had evidence in Adams' July 4th 1821 address that words alone would not provoke hostile actions. Words, however, were not substantive actions. Extending diplomatic recognition *was* a substantive action. In the words of Arthur Preston Whittaker, "For it had long been and still was the almost unanimous opinion of European authorities that recognition of a belligerent during the course of hostilities was an unneutral act."[38]

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[37] Gallatin to Monroe, June 1, 1823, in Monroe, *Writings,* 6:313.

[38] Whittaker, *United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 360.

CHAPTER FIVE

RELATIONS WITH TURKEY AND THE GREAT EUROPEAN POWERS

To place the Luriottis letter in the context of the nation's overall foreign policy, Adams and the Monroe Administration needed to assess three critical variables: (1) the importance of Turkey and each of the major European powers to the well-being of the United States; (2) the significance of the Greek revolt for each of the major European powers and how they were responding to unfolding events in that country; (3) whether, and if so how, any response by the United States would affect relations with other nations. More generally, they would need to place their response to Luriottis in the context of their overall interests and concerns with what was happening within Europe

The general context was not reassuring. On November 14, 1820, just four months before the uprising of the Greek people, President Monroe used his annual message to Congress to alert his fellow citizens to what he felt were troubling events taking place on the far side of the Atlantic. His words contained a warning, one which he would repeat with increased urgency by the time of the Luriottis letter. In 1820 Monroe's words were general and tentative. He projected a note of caution, nothing more.

> Foreign wars [i.e., wars between the major European powers] may again expose us to new wrongs, which would impose on us new duties for which we ought to be prepared. The state of Europe is unsettled, and how long peace may be preserved is altogether uncertain.[1]

In the Kingdom of Naples, in Piedmont (then a part of the Austrian Empire), in Spain and in Portugal, rebellions against established authority had broken out. These insurrections had brought to power governments which based their rule on national identity and popular, democratic consent. To judge by appearances at the time, they were a repeat of the French Revolution. Such a situation spelled danger for the United States. As Monroe's audience knew, in the wars that followed the French Revolution, violation of the rights of neutrals to trade with belligerent powers had ended up bringing the United States into the War of 1812. A possible reemergence of this danger was what Monroe felt the Congress and the nation should recognize.

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[1] Monroe, November 14, 1820, Fourth Annual Message, in Richardson, *Compilation of Messages,* 644.

From the standpoint of the United States, the issue of neutral rights to trade with belligerent powers had never been satisfactorily resolved, nor had the related and highly emotional issue of impressment of sailors on American-flagged vessels. The United States had long insisted on the inalienable right of an individual to choose his nation of allegiance, to act as a free "citizen." Great Britain did not acknowledge this right, nor did the other major powers of Europe. Russia, France, Austria and Britain all rejected the principle of what would later be called political self-determination. For the major European powers, the duty of a subject to submit to established authority was one which the subject had no right to question and no right to change. What Monroe suggested was that the United States might again face the threat of warships boarding American merchant vessels and determining whether any sailors were subjects of one of the major European powers, as these powers defined the status of seamen serving on American-flagged vessels.

There was another reason for Monroe to feel concern when he first alerted Congress and his fellow citizens to the danger of war in Europe. What happened in Europe might affect the future independence of the newly independent republics in Latin America. In 1820 not even the United States had yet given them diplomatic recognition, but many of them were in fact clearly free of Spanish imperial rule. As we will explore later in this chapter, the future of the island of Cuba in particular had vital strategic importance for the United States. Its harbors could potentially shelter warships capable of controlling commerce from New Orleans—at the time the sole viable means of transporting goods to market from the emerging states bordering the Mississippi.

Two years later, on December 3, 1822, the president's annual message again expressed his concern over developments in Europe. This time Monroe was more expansive, and his words conveyed a greater sense of alarm. His message incorporated the additional fact that the people of Greece had been fighting for their freedom from Turkish rule since March of 1821. "When we see that a civil war, of the most frightful character rages from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, that strong symptoms of war appear in other parts," Monroe felt it was necessary for the United States to speak up and state its position. This he did, saying, "The United States owe the world a great example, and by means thereof, the cause of liberty and humanity a generous support."[2]

In identifying the people engaged in "the frightful war" then under way between "the Adriatic and the Black Sea," there was no ambiguity. The only such war in that area of the Mediterranean was that of the Greek people in revolt against Turkish rule. Turning specifically to them, Monroe spoke in these terms:

> The mention of Greece fills the mind with the most exalted sentiments, and arouses in our bosom the best feelings of which our nature is susceptible. Superior skills and refinement in the arts, heroic gallantry in action, disinterested patriotism, enthusiastic zeal and devotion in favor of public liberty, are associated with

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[2] *Annals of Congress,* 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 40:18 (December 3, 1822).

> our recollections of ancient Greece. That such a country should have been overwhelmed and so long hidden as it were from the world, under a gloomy despotism, has been a cause of unceasing and deep regret to glorious minds for ages past. It was natural, therefore, that the reappearing of these people in their original character, contending in favor of liberties, should produce great excitement and sympathy in their favor, which has been so signally displayed throughout the United States. A strong hope is entertained that these people will recover their independence, and resume their equal station among the nations of the earth.[3]

Thomas Jefferson had used the expression "equal station among the nations of the earth" in the Declaration of Independence. Monroe's choice of words may well have been mere coincidence, but it did fit a general pattern of the time to link America's struggles for independence with those of the Greek people.

Luriottis in his February 1823 meeting with Rush in London would refer to President Monroe's comments.[4] Actually, the points of verbal support for Greece that Monroe covered in his message to Congress were some of the very points Luriottis would later stress in his letter to Adams.

For Monroe's audience, his words carried a significance which shows just how much he and other leaders used images to convey their thoughts. As Monroe expressed it, not only was Turkey's rule a despotism; it was also what he called gloomy. At the time of Monroe's statement, the thought that what he described as a gloomy or dark-skinned people should rule over those of a lighter skin was apt to evoke discomfort. He and his audience lived in a nation which tolerated chattel slavery and almost invariably treated all dark-skinned people as inferior.

Still, it is not at all clear whether Monroe wanted to inspire more than feelings of empathy and sympathy. On the one hand, he expressed concern for the potential danger to the United States caused by political instability and the possibility of wars among the nations of Europe, wars which represented efforts of peoples on the far side of the Atlantic to free themselves from autocratic rule. On the other hand, Monroe articulated quite vigorously his respect and support for these very efforts to secure freedom, including most specifically efforts of the Greeks to free themselves from Turkish rule. Where did Monroe intend to lead his audience? The substance of what he meant by "generous support" was not clear. Monroe left an ambiguity. He failed to define the benchmarks which he believed should guide the nation in deciding how to proceed.

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[3] Ibid, 19.

[4] Rush to Adams, February 20, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.

In today's world, one is tempted to conclude that Monroe failed to show decisive leadership, because he failed to show the nation the path that he wanted it to follow. We will explore other instances of such ambiguity in the final chapters of the dissertation. We will also assess whether his behavior was really an abdication of his leadership role, or an effective exercise of that role in the context of his time and place.

What was clear at the time was Monroe's vigorous verbal support for the efforts of other peoples to secure the freedom that educated and politically active Americans of the time felt they enjoyed. This in itself was a support for the cause of freedom that no other recognized and established government was prepared to extend. In a world hostile to popular sovereignty and republicanism, Monroe's words in themselves were an act of courage. This was particularly true in the context of the threat of wars among the major European powers.

In April 1823, just days after receiving the Luriottis letter, Adams was quite specific in stating that the United States did face serious threats if the major

European powers were drawn into war with each other. In an Instruction to Hugh Nelson, the United States minister in Spain, Adams stated:

> There is therefore great reason to apprehend that if Great Britain should engage in the war just kindled in Europe [by the French army's recent invasion of Spain in order to overthrow that country's liberal government] the United States will again be called upon to support by all her energies, not excepting war, the right of [United States] independence, enjoyed in the persons of their seamen.[5]

In any review of relations with Turkey and the European powers, Adams and Monroe would be very much aware of the general context of instability which then gripped Europe, and the danger this instability might pose for the United States.

Under the circumstances, how much danger would the nation actually run in supporting efforts of the Greek people to secure their freedom? How much danger *should* the nation run to support freedom outside its own borders? Any decision to go further than words and give tangible, substantive support to the cause of freedom in Greece posed questions which the overall situation in Europe made it extremely difficult to answer with any precision. There were, moreover, the nation's more specific relationships with Turkey and the major European powers.

With Turkey, the United States did not maintain diplomatic relations at the time of the Luriottis letter. The United States did maintain a resident consul at Smyrna to oversee matters of trade and commerce. Commerce with that port supplied the opium the United States used in its trade for tea with China. Although specialized, this trade was significant to the United States.[6] Prospects for broadening trade relationships with Turkey are a theme of recurring importance in diplomatic correspondence both before and during the Greek War of Independence. At no time, however, did the United States Government publicly acknowledge what appear to be its repeated efforts to open a dialogue on trade expansion.

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[5] Adams to Nelson, April 23, 1823, in Monroe, *Writings*, 7:352.

[6] Field, *America and the Mediterranean World*, 128.

In May 1816 then secretary of state James Monroe wrote to a special envoy sent by the United States to Naples:

> The relationship between the United States and the powers bordering the Mediterranean are becoming more interesting. Our trade with the dominions of the powers of Europe in that quarter is already important, and is extending to those of Turkey, in Europe and Asia, and of Russia on the Black Sea.[7]

Such trade with Russia on the Black Sea required transit of the Dardanelles, then under the sovereignty of Turkey. Monroe concluded his message with this mandate:

> Find out about our commerce with the Italian states and the Levant . . . and the disposition of various countries, including Turkey, to encourage it.

In a debate in Congress in March of 1818 Henry Clay brought up the matter of trade relations with Turkey. Clay derided the thought of sending a minister "to Constantinople for a little trade" and referred to newspaper articles which he claimed documented such a mission. With contempt Clay asserted:

> Even now the gentleman from Maryland would have us send a Minister to Constantinople to beg passage through the Dardanelles to the Black Sea, that, I suppose, we might get some hemp and breadstuffs there, of which we produce more.[8]

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[7] Monroe to Pickering, May 10, 1816, in *Instructions*, Reel 3.

[8] Clay, March 25, 1818, "Speech on the Independence of Latin America," in *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 2:552.

While sarcastic, Clay's message was also substantive. If the United States was willing to use diplomacy to support its commerce, the nation should certainly be willing to use diplomacy to support the noble cause of freedom. If the United States was eager to initiate diplomatic negotiations with a despotic regime, then certainly it should be willing to initiate diplomatic negotiations with governments in Latin America that were based on the principle of popular sovereignty and republicanism. Should the occasion arise, Clay was in an excellent position to argue that any future willingness to pursue diplomatic negotiations with Turkey only strengthened the case for opening diplomatic relations with the Greek people.

Clay's assertion of negotiations with the Turkish Government was not a hypothetical one. There is substantial evidence that the Monroe Administration did in fact make repeated efforts to negotiate trade issues with the Turkish Government both before and during the Greek War of Independence. Some of these negotiations were confidential in nature, some were the subject of reports in the press. For example, in his memoirs Benjamin Rush recounted a May 14, 1819 dinner in London hosted by the Spanish ambassador. After dinner he

> had conversation with Mr. Ramadini, charge d'affaires from Constantinople, on our admission to the commerce of the Black Sea. I adverted to the reciprocal advantages which might be expected to flow from opening commercial intercourse between the United States and Turkey, Britain, France, Russia and Austria having the privilege of sending their vessels to the Black Sea. I reminded him that the United States had a larger foreign commerce than any one of these nations, Britain excepted, and might therefore as I thought, for reasons operating both in his country and mine, naturally seek, participation in the trade of that sea.[9]

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[9] Rush, April 14, 1819, in *Residence at the Court of London,* 42-43.

Such trade required good relations with Turkey, and also with Russia. The ultimate object was increased commerce with Russia.

On October 10, 1820 Adams sent the following Instruction to Henry Middleton, the United States minister at St. Petersburg. Adams directed:

> You will, however, pay suitable attention to the actual state of commerce with Russia, and particularly to the condition and prospects of Russian establishments on the Black Sea.[10]

On March 7, 1821 Benjamin Rush wrote to President Monroe, contributing further evidence of efforts to increase trade relations with Turkey.

> I dined yesterday in the company of Sir Robert Liston, late British Ambassador at Constantinople. He having been formerly in our country brought us into conversation and I gladly [took the occasion to ask about] commerce on the Black Sea . . . . [Liston] asked if the United States had not lately sent an agent to Constantinople to treat for the admission of our flag to the Euxene. I replied I knew nothing of such a measure, though I had seen, probably like himself, some allusions to it in the newspapers.[11]

On April 4th Rush again wrote to Monroe to report

> It was not within my expectations that I should so soon afterwards receive a voluntary communication from Lord Castlereagh [the British Foreign Secretary] on the subject.[12]

Rush told Monroe that Castlereagh wanted the United States to know that, despite rumors, Great Britain had "not lent itself to any steps to thwart our objects in that quarter."

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[10] Adams to Middleton, October 10, 1820, in *Instructions*, Reel 4.

[11] Rush to Monroe, March 7, 1821, in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong., Reel 7.

[12] Rush to Monroe, April 4, 1821 (ibid.).

The Monroe Papers now in the Library of Congress contain an unsigned and undated paper entitled "Notes Made on Commerce at Odessa, Constantinople and Smyrna." To judge by its placement, the date of the note is probably late 1820 or early 1821. The note discouraged further exploration of trade through the Dardanelles to Russia. It spoke of "the great distance and adverse winds as obstacles to trade with Odessa." Despite its conclusions, the note is important. It provides one further bit of evidence indicating the intensity of efforts by Monroe and Adams to explore whether, and if so how, they should expand trade relations with Turkey and, through Turkey, with Russia.

Smyrna also figures in the notes found in the Monroe archives. Smyrna was, according to the writer, a different matter.

> The commerce with this port is much more considerable than that of Constantinople, both as to imports and exports. It supplies many of the islands of the archipelago and nearly the whole of Asia Minor. Although the United States has no treaty with the Turkish government, yet the Americans generally receive fair treatment at Smyrna . . . . However they are subject to the Sultan's laws, which are arbitrary and uncertain.[13]

The note concluded:

> In short, until the maritime powers of Europe shall be at war with one another, I can see no inducement for the citizens of the United States to turn their attention to the commerce at Constantinople or the Black Sea, even if our flag is admitted there.

With the exception of the undated paper in Monroe's Papers, the evidence indicates that the United States had long tried to enhance and strengthen its trade position with Turkey. The Rush letters, Henry Clay's comments in Congress, and the notes in the Monroe archives all provide strong evidence that Monroe and his administration engaged in an active and ongoing effort to assess prospects for trade with Turkey and, through Turkey, trade with Russian ports on the Black Sea.

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[13] "Notes Made on Commerce at Odessa, Constantinople and Smyrna," (ibid.).

On December 29, 1821 Henry Middleton sent Adams what he termed a communication. It was written in French and contained what was described as a message from the "charge d'affaires of the King at Constantinople" (presumably the king of England). The message indicated that a Mr. Bradish "has been empowered by the American government to conclude a treaty of commerce and friendship" with the Turkish government. It went on to state that, the circumstances not being favorable, Mr. Bradish had traveled to Egypt and Syria in the interim and, upon his return, circumstances were still not favorable to his mission. The note concluded by saying, "He must wait."[14]

On May 13, 1822 Adams wrote an acerbic note back to Middleton stating:

> Mr. Bradish never had any authority from this government to negotiate a treaty with the Sublime Porte [the Sultan], nor any commission beyond a passport and a presumption to give us any information that he might collect and choose to communicate. He had some temporary agency from Commodore Bainbridge, limited to the powers he could give, and which ceased upon that officer's return from the Mediterranean.[15]

Subsequent correspondence in State Department files and in press reports suggest that Adams' statement was misleading, if not deceiving.

On August 30, 1824 Middleton wrote from St. Petersburg, describing a meeting he had had with Sir Charles Bagot. Bagot, a former minister of Britain in

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[14] Middleton to Adams, December 29, 1821, in *Despatches: Russia*, Reel 9.

[15] Adams to Middleton, May 13, 1822, in *Instructions*, Reel 4.

Washington, had been sent to St. Petersburg on a special mission. In Middleton's words:

> I have mentioned to this European gentleman, that our citizens should have admittance to the ports of the Black Sea. To such an arrangement he of course would be well disposed, Russia having a direct interest that they shared. I presume, however, that it is not the intention of the President that any step should be taken [toward] the attainment of that object, until there shall be a more settled state of things in the vicinity of the Bosporus. Such at least is the inference I have drawn from . . . Bradish, who has just arrived here [and who states] that the Porte has given its written engagement to form an advantageous commercial treaty whenever the United States may send a minister for that purpose.[16]

In the fall of 1823, at virtually the same time as Adams responded to the Luriottis letter, the Monroe Administration was in the process of dispatching another agent to Constantinople. On December 4, 1823 Adams wrote in his diaries that he told Joel Poinsett, a powerful member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, that "there was a person probably in Constantinople upon an errand which might suffer by the movements in Congress," which was about to debate how best to support the cause of Greek independence from Turkey.[17] Adams refrained from identifying the agent's mission as one of strengthening ties with the very government that was trying to keep the Greek people in bondage. However, on February 14, 1824 *Niles Register* reported that a "Mr. G. Bethune English of Boston has arrived at Constantinople, where he was supposed to be an agent from the American government to negotiate a treaty with the Porte."[18] *Niles* made no reference to the earlier mission of Mr. Bradish.

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[16] Middleton to Adams, August 30, 1824, in *Despatches: Russia,* Reel 10.

[17] Adams, December 4, 1823, *Memoirs*, 6:227.

[18] *Niles* 25 (February 14, 1824): 373.

At the very least, the principles of supporting political freedom and freedom of commerce appeared hard to reconcile. Moreover, Clay's earlier comments are evidence of the domestic political tension and possible embarrassment that could ensue if the Monroe Administration courted the Turkish Sultan and turned its back on Greek patriots. Adams and Monroe faced a dilemma in answering the Luriottis letter.

Also, expansion of trade with Russia through Turkey and protection of the existing trade at Smyrna were not the only commercial interests at stake. The Barbary states were in nominal terms subject to the sovereignty of the sultan at Constantinople. From the time of Jefferson's presidency to the time of the Luriottis letter, concern to protect commerce from piracies emanating from the Barbary States had preoccupied American diplomats. As early as 1816, then secretary of state James Monroe recognized the ability of the Turkish Government to influence the behavior of its nominal vassal states. On May 16 of that year Monroe sent to the American minister at St. Petersburg the following Instruction:

> You will acknowledge at a proper time the friendly offer of the Government of Russia, of its good offices in favor of the United States with the Porte [the Sultan of Turkey], to obtain an honorable accommodation in favor of the United States with the Dey of Algiers.[19]

A *Niles Register* article of September 1821 suggested that there was, in modern terminology, a continuing "linkage" between the Barbary States and the Turkish Empire. As Niles reported it, "The states of Barbary have been summoned to join their ships to the fleet of the Porte [Turkey]" in the struggle to put down the Greek revolt from Turkish rule. *Niles* went on to state:

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[19] Monroe to Pickering, May 10, 1816, in *Instructions*, Reel 3.

> The Americans, who are in a state of war with the Barbary states . . . and fearing that this measure might prove injurious to American trade, have declared the ports of Algiers and Tripoli in a state of blockage and have detached a part of their squadron to enforce this declaration.[20]

One should always question the facts presented in *Niles* reports. Still, the suggested linkage was reasonable.

In his second inaugural address, President Monroe stated:

> As early as 1801 it was found necessary to send a squadron to the Mediterranean for the protection of our commerce and no period has intervened, a short time excepted, when it was thought advisable to withdraw it.[21]

When Adams later became president and sent his first annual message to Congress, he reinforced the persisting need to use American naval force to protect the nation's trading interests in the Mediterranean. On December 6, 1825 he told Congress:

> The constant maintenance of a small squadron in the Mediterranean is a necessary substitute for the humiliating alternative of paying tribute for the security of our commerce in that sea, at the mercy of every caprice of the Barbary States . . . . an additional cause for keeping a respectable force stationed there at this time is the maritime war waging between the Greeks and the Turks, and in which the neutral navigation of this Union is always in danger of outrage and deprivation.[22]

Trade with the Mediterranean was a matter of significance for the nation, so relations with Turkey were important to the United States. In answering the Luriottis note, Adams needed to consider any potential impact on overall United States commerce in the Mediterranean as well as trade with Turkey itself.

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[20] *Niles* 21 (September 1, 1821): 14.

[21] Monroe, March 14, 1821, *Writings*, 6:171.

[22] Adams, First Annual Message (December 6, 1825) in Richardson, *Compilation of Messages*, 2:474-5.

There was also the question of the physical safety of American citizens living in the Turkish Empire at the time. On March 17, 1824 David Offley, the United States commercial representative in Smyrna, wrote to Adams expressing concern over the safety of American property and American lives. Offley referred explicitly to reports of American support for the Greek cause of independence.[23] At the time there were no treaties between the United States and Turkey giving American citizens protection from the laws or customs of the Turkish Empire.

Relations with Russia were more complex and, from an American standpoint, even more important than those with Turkey. Unlike Turkey, Russia was an imposing and powerful state. Adams put this fact in apt perspective. In April 1823 he wrote to Nelson in St. Petersburg that "his [the Tsar's] territories are the most extensive, his military establishment the most stupendous, his country the most improvable and thriving . . . . He is therefore, naturally the most obnoxious to the jealousies and fears of his associates [his fellow sovereigns]."[24] Because of his power, the tsar needed to be treated with circumspection; his prejudices and values needed to be weighed carefully.

There were even more tangible and specific reasons to weigh carefully how the tsar might respond to any American diplomatic initiatives supporting the cause of popular sovereignty and republicanism in Greece. Increased trade through the Dardanelles to Russian ports on the Black Sea was one. In a Despatch he sent to Adams on December 29, 1821, Middleton summarized two others, even more important. The first concerned an arbitration proceeding. The tsar had promised to arbitrate conflicting claims between the United States and Great Britain arising under an article of the Treaty of Ghent, which had terminated the War of 1812. (In 1822 the tsar gave his judgment, which was quite favorable to the American cause.) As for the second, Middleton enclosed with his letter a ukase promulgated by the tsar. Its terms prohibited all foreign vessels from entering what were referred to as "Russian possessions" on the Northwest Coast of America. It established a three hundred mile territorial limit, far in excess of the norms of international law of the time. Thus, Adams had specific notice that Russia on the one hand acted in a friendly fashion to the United States and on the other hand had taken positions in the Western Hemisphere that were adverse to both the territorial integrity and trade interests of the United States.[25]

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[23] Cline, *American Attitude*, 179.

[24] Adams to Nelson, April 18, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 4.

While the tsar's position on the Northwest coast was disturbing, overall relations between the two countries had long appeared peaceful and mutually supportive. This was not by chance. Much earlier, in December 1816, Monroe, as secretary of state, wrote the United States minister at St. Petersburg, referring to

> the desire expressed by Count Capodistrias [the Russian foreign minister] in your conference with him to strengthen amicable relations between the two countries. It is surely in the interest of Russia to promote the commercial prosperity and maritime strength of the two countries, since without interference with her views in any one circumstance, it cannot fail to promote them, in many of the highest importance to her own welfare.[26]

So strengthened, one must assume, the two countries posed more of a counterpoise to the great naval and maritime power of the British Empire.

Certainly over the years Russia had acted as a powerful friend of the United States. Intervening with Turkey to restrain the Barbary pirates was one example.

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[25] Middleton to Adams, December 29, 1821, in *Despatches: Russia*, Reel 9.

[26] Monroe to Harris, December 11, 1816, in *Instructions*, Reel 3.

There were others. For instance, in a special message to Congress on March 27, 1819 Monroe acknowledged the support that Russia had provided the United States in getting Spain to ratify the treaty that ceded Florida to the United States. "Of this friendly disposition the most satisfactory assurances have been given to the minister of Russia residing here."[27] Still, as the Middleton Despatch suggested, in no sense should Adams and Monroe take relations between the two nations for granted.

The good will of the most powerful empire of the time was in itself an important, if intangible, asset for the United States. The vulnerability of the Northwest Coast and the recent arbitration of claims arising under the Treaty of Ghent were two more concrete reasons to consider respecting Russia's stated principles and values, particularly in a region of the world close to Russia and far from the United States. Finally, as we have seen, the evidence documents quite forcefully that Adams and Monroe attached importance to maintaining and strengthening trade relations with Turkey and, through the use of the Dardanelles, to establishing closer trade relations with Russia. For all these reasons, Adams needed to assess carefully how diplomatic recognition of a republican government in Greece would affect relations with Russia.

To help Adams in making this assessment, *Niles Register* provided a ready source. In an entry dated May 16, 1821 *Niles* reprinted a "Declaration of Russia and Austria in Relation to the Insurrection of the Turkish Provinces." The declaration was dated March 25,1821 and stated the following:

> Express orders are given to the commanding general of the Russian armies to observe the strictest neutrality in

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[27] Monroe, March 27, 1820, in Richardson, *Compilation of Messages,* 2:638.

> the troubles which have broken out in the principalities of Moldavia and Walachia.

It went on to state that this resolution was to be communicated to the Russian ambassador at Constantinople, with orders to communicate it to the Porte, the ruler of the Turkish Empire.[28]

The conference referred to took place at Laibach, then a town in the Austrian Empire. The declaration did not deal expressly with events in Greece. That revolution had only begun in March 1821 and at the time of the conference was not yet known in Europe. Even so, the revolt in Moldavia and Walachia was similarly a revolt of Christian subjects living in provinces of the Turkish Empire located in Europe, adjacent to two of the principal continental powers of the time, Russia and Austria. In addition, Prince Ypsilanti, the leader of the revolt, was an officer formerly in the service of the tsar and a man of Greek descent. His brother was to become one of the early leaders of the revolt in Greece itself.

The Laibach conference set a vital precedent. It provided strong evidence that the Russian Government would not come to the aid of members of the Orthodox Christian faith, even those living close at hand in Europe, who were struggling to gain freedom from an autocratic, non-Christian government.

The conference took place in March 1821. By June the revolt of the people of Greece against Ottoman rule was well known in both Europe and in the United States. Referring to Greece, *Niles* on June 6th reported that the Laibach position was one which posed potential problems of order within the Russian Empire itself. With sarcasm and indignation *Niles* reported:

> A number of Russian officers, engaged in this illegitimate opposition to the Turks, have been

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[28] *Niles* 20 (May 16, 1821), 206.

> dismissed from the services of the great legitimate [Tsar] Alexander; but on the other hand, he is said secretly to encourage turmoil that he may come in to settle it, for which he has an army at hand.[29]

Niles then stated:

> These things [the events in Greece and support for it within Russia] are attributed to the influence of secret societies, and the plan of a secret rising appears to extend through all parts of ancient Greece among members of the Greek church. The Russians are of the same religion, and it is expected that many volunteers will join them without consulting the views of the emperor . . . . The contest will probably be Christian against Turk, and may extend to every part of the Ottoman Empire in Europe.[30]

Niles went on to say:

> The Porte is greatly alarmed [by the revolt in Greece] . . . but an idea is entertained that it will not comport with the views of Russia and Austria to see an independent Greek empire established, and they will interfere to end the struggle, in confidence of adding some of the provinces to their own possession in the future.[31]

According to *Niles*, the tsar believed that the Greeks were part of the Carbonari, a greatly feared international conspiracy, one bent on the overthrow of the "legitimate" right of all European sovereigns to rule their subjects.

Still, the Greeks and Russians were both Orthodox Christians. Press reports did not define what is obvious now in retrospect, that the tsar faced a dilemma. To side with the Turks against the Greeks supported legitimate rule, which the tsar strongly favored. Siding with the Turks, though, meant turning against a people who shared the same Christian faith. If the tsar followed this line of reasoning, he would end up appearing to support barbarians at the expense of his coreligionists.

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[29] *Niles* 20 (June 6, 1821): 225 (underlines in the original).

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

The tsar needed to resolve the conflict posed by a Christian people in rebellion against non-Christian rule, and there were no binding precedents to guide him. Treaties had defined legitimate rule within a European state system, but were silent on how to deal with states outside that system. The norms of legitimate rule in Europe might or might not apply to the Turkish Empire.

In a December 1821 Despatch from St. Petersburg, Henry Middleton documented how the tsar and his government tried to resolve their conundrum. He enclosed a copy of a note of July 6th delivered to the government of the Sultan by Count Stroganoff, the resident Russian ambassador at Constantinople. The note stated that Russia saw risk for the Turkish Empire in its handling of the rebellion in Greece. Atrocities committed against Christians could result "in placing Turkey in a state of hostility against all the powers of Europe, against all the Christian world."[32]

Stroganoff referred to existing treaties between Russia and Turkey. He claimed they gave the tsar the right to act as protector of Christians within the Turkish Empire. Invoking this right, Stroganoff stipulated in a note of July 12th that "the Emperor [of Russia] desires a categorical explanation of the policy of the Turkish government that the atrocities committed reflect the impulses of lunatic and fanatical men," not the policy of the Ottoman Government. In the absence of such an explanation, Stroganoff advised the Turkish Government, he would leave Constantinople, effectively breaking off diplomatic relations.

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[32] Middleton to Adams, December 29, 1821, in *Despatches: Russia*, Reel 9.

In his report to Adams, Middleton enclosed the Turkish response. It was forceful, indignant and even patronizing. "Each sovereign is the absolute master of the tranquility of his subjects as well as of the nations under his care." (No one embraced that very principle with more religious fervor than the tsar.) The Turkish note continued, "Religion is one thing, crimes and derelictions are something quite different."[33] It asserted that the leaders of the Greek Church were in fact also the leaders of the Greek rebellion, and further stated that the Turkish Government had in its possession letters which proved the guilt of the leaders of the Greek Church. In its conclusion the note alleged that the Turkish Empire maintained tolerance in the practice of all religion. The Turkish government also categorically denied that it had willfully caused churches to be destroyed.

This Turkish response to the tsar put Adams as well on clear notice. To intervene in the Greek struggle was to touch a very sensitive nerve. Russia, for its part, had established the principle of neutrality in a rebellion of a Christian people against "barbarian" rule, doing so even though the Greeks and the Russians both shared the Orthodox faith. At the same time, Russia had established the principle of intervention inside the Turkish Empire if Turkey could not maintain the order necessary to protect the lives and religious practices of its Christian subjects.

In January 1823 an article in *Niles* offered Adams clear confirmation that any move to recognize a Greek state founded on rebellion violated the principles which Russia had already made clear.

> Envoys of the Greeks attended [the conference of sovereigns] at Verona, but they were not officially admitted to the presence of the sovereigns.[34]

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[33] Ibid.

[34] *Niles* 23 (January 13, 1823): 310.

Just one month prior to the dispatch of the Luriottis letter from London, the European powers were not prepared to meet with representatives of the Greek people, much less to treat them as sovereign and independent of Turkey. Also, as *Niles* had earlier reported, Russia's claimed right to intervene by armed force was based on the need to impose order, not on any support for the right of the Greek people to choose their own rulers or assert their independence from constituted authority. If Adams were to follow the precedent set at Verona, he, as secretary of state, would not even make an official response to Luriottis, but would limit any response to an informal communication through Rush in London.

Despite all this, relations with Russia and Turkey were not the matter of most immediate concern to the United States. The immediate concern was much closer to home: Cuba, a Spanish colony, located just ninety miles off the coast of Florida. By mid-1823 it was clear that Cuba had become what one European newspaper described as the "Turkey of Trans-Atlantic politics, apparently sick and tottering to her fall, easy prey to an enterprising and adventurous power, whether France, England, the United States, Mexico or Columbia."[35] The significance for the United States of how Cuba might "fall" is spelled out in a letter dated March 8, 1823, written from Havana by Brig. Gen. Dernard to John Calhoun, the Secretary of War.

> Whether the rumors of an occupation of Cuba by Great Britain are founded or not, the consequences of such an undertaking would be too serious not to merit some investigation.[36]

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[35] Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 168.

[36] Brig. Gen. Dernard to Calhoun, Havana, March 8, 1823, in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong., Reel 8.

Dernard pointed out that in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic, "Great Britain augments her power by acquisition of island bastions," citing Malta and St. Helena as two examples. (He did not mention the Ionian Islands just off the coast of the area of Greece in revolt against Turkey, but they too were acquired for much the same reasons after the Napoleonic Wars.) Dernard noted:

> The British being masters of Cuba could in time of war blockade the outlets of the Mississippi, thus leaving this noble stream no other safe communication to the sea . . . . With Cuba the British navy could prevent any communication by sea between the states on the Atlantic and those on the Gulf of Mexico.[37]

He suggested the result would be to "keep in continual alarms the southern states" and "threaten with expeditions the vulnerable point of the maritime frontiers."

Adams did not need antagonism with Britain at this juncture. But the Dernard letter reflected only part of a much broader and long-lasting concern. Cuba had long been perceived as a matter of high risk to the security of the United States. As early as 1818 Henry Clay spoke of the importance of the island to the nation's well-being.

> Having but the single vent of New Orleans, for all the surplus produce of their country [Clay was speaking of the new states bordering the Mississippi], it was quite evident that they would have a greater security for enjoying the advantages of that outlet, if the independence of Mexico upon any European power were effected . . . . Such a power, owning at the same time Cuba, the great key to the Gulf of Mexico, and all the shores of the Gulf . . . must have a powerful command of our interests.[38]

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[37] Ibid.

[38] *Annals of Congress,* 15th Cong., 1st sess., 31:1486-7 (March 25, 1818).

Debates in Congress in April of 1822 show that this early concern persisted. One speaker rhetorically asked:

> What sir, is more reasonable than to suppose that Spain, finding herself about to lose her Spanish colonies, will seek to turn to some account those that remain to her, by selling them to some purchaser who will be able to retain them? And this apprehension derives considerable support in the most recent intelligence from Spain, by which it would appear that the subject of transfer of her territories has actually been agitated in the Cortes [the Spanish parliament]. Now suppose that Spain should cede Cuba to England, or even the Havana, which the latter would gladly take at the price of Gibraltar.[39]

In his diaries, Adams in November 1822 wrote the following entry:

> Crawford [Secretary of the Treasury] reports that Hyde de Neuville [the French Minister in Washington] had made a communication to him, entirely confidential, and which must therefore now be received as confidential, which was, that the French Government know for a certainty that the British Government had been for two years negotiating with Spain for the island of Cuba, and had offered them for it Gibraltar and a very large sum of money.[40]

In an Instruction to the American minister in Madrid dated December 17, 1822, Adams noted that both France and Great Britain had political agents in Cuba "observing the course of events and perhaps endeavoring to give them different direction." Adams concluded by saying that it was the policy of the United States to favor retention of the island by Spain.[41] (Unlike Britain and France, Spain was not a major power and could pose no threat to the United States.)

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[39] *Annals of Congress,* 17th Cong., 1st sess., 38:1520 (April 10, 1822).

[40] Adams, November 28, 1822, *Memoirs*, 6:112.

[41] Adams to Forsythe, December 17, 1822, in *Instructions*, Reel 4.

By early 1823 the Monroe Administration did indeed have reason for heightened concern over the future of the island. Reports from Europe indicated that France was on the brink of occupying Spain with its army, for the purpose of restoring to power the absolute rule of the Spanish king. In February Benjamin Rush wrote from London:

> The portentious events hanging over Europe [the pending French invasion of Spain] have not yet burst upon us, though ready to do so. That England must before long become a party to the war, now seems inevitable.[42]

The general concerns about unrest which Monroe had expressed in his 1820 and 1822 annual messages to Congress had now become more ominous. France, Russia and Austria all judged that the Spanish Government then in power, namely, one installed without the free will of the reigning monarch, was a threat to international peace and security. At their conference in Verona they had jointly agreed that France had a right to invade Spain and restore the "legitimate"—that is to say, the absolute—rule of the Spanish King.

Great Britain had long opposed in both private and public statements such interference in the internal governance of other states. As we saw in the last chapter, Britain's position had resulted in the isolation that Rush had alluded to in his February letter advising Adams of the Luriottis request for diplomatic recognition and aid. At that time Adams had indicated that "the principles and the policy of the United States coincided with those of Great Britain and not those of the European Continental Allies."[43] The principles and policy Adams referred to were neutrality and nonintervention in the affairs of other nations. At least on the surface, a positive response to Luriottis would seem to violate British policy.

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[42] Rush to Adams, February 13, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.

[43] Adams to Rush, July 18, 1822 Instruction, cited in Monroe, *Writings*, 7:357.

With respect to Cuba, the United States had good reason to view with alarm the potential British response to the risk posed by French invasion of Spain. On January 7, 1823 Benjamin Rush wrote:

> The English journals of a fortnight back announced that a squadron of ships about to sail under Admiral Owen, were intended as a reinforcement of Admiral Rodney's squadron at Jamaica, for the purpose of being employed to take possession of the island of Cuba, should Spain be forced into war with France.[44]

Rush added that he could not verify the accuracy of the information. He did tell Adams that the Spanish parliament had authorized a commercial treaty with England, signaling strengthened relations between the two states. Whether the two nations would subsequently agree to change the status of Cuba was not discussed. But to judge by debates in Congress, it was a matter Adams and Monroe could not ignore.

Independent of any such agreement with Spain, Great Britain clearly had the "maritime ability" to seize Cuba. On March 8th *Niles Register* reported:

> Commodore E has arrived at Barbados with a squadron consisting of the Glouster 74 and four smaller vessels. His appearance has caused much speculation.[45]

Just one week later Adams recounted a cabinet meeting in these terms:

> Calhoun [the Secretary of War] is for war with England if she means to take Cuba. I assume for granted that they [Cuba] cannot maintain their independence, and that this nation will not, and could not, prevent by war the British from obtaining possession of Cuba, if they

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[44] Rush to Adams, January 17, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.

[45] *Niles* 24 (March 8, 1823): 4.

> attempt by force to take it. The debate grew quite warm.[46]

A March 17th entry in Adams' diary provides perspective on just how seriously the United States Government took the risk of British control over Cuba:

> The P. of the US proposes to offer to GB a mutual promise not to take Cuba. Objections by Calhoun and me.[47]

Adams went on to express concern that the result of such a proposal was that "we should plunge into the whirlpool of European politics." This principle of keeping distance from what George Washington had earlier described as the broils of Europe is quite revealing. It suggests avoiding acts which other nations could interpret as partisan to one of the major European powers.

On April 6th Joel Poinsett wrote to Monroe to emphasize "the fact that the island is deeply interesting to us in the south, and there is nothing I would not do to prevent the British from getting possession of it."[48] To judge by Poinsett's words, the future of the island of Cuba could easily become more than a pressing issue in the nation's foreign relations. It was potentially explosive in the arena of domestic politics.

Adams himself again underscored the importance of Cuba in an Instruction of April 28, 1823 that he sent to Hugh Nelson, the United States minister in Spain. In it Adams stated, "The islands have become an object of transcendent importance to the political and commercial interests of the Union, with commanding positions to the Gulf of Mexico and the West Indian Sea." In Adams' judgment, "The transfer of Cuba to Great Britain would be an event impropitious to the interests of the Union." He asserted that he did not believe that the Holy Alliance (of France, Russia and Austria) would countenance transfer. Since the people of the island were not, in Adams' words, "one blood and color," Adams posited that in any revolt on the island there would be hesitation in joining Cuba to the Union.[49] (Coming so soon after the Missouri Compromise of 1820 had created a balance between slave and free states in the Union, the injection of a slaveholding state like Cuba would undoubtedly have created the risk of another constitutional crisis. Adams' comment alluded to this reality.)

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[46] Adams, *Memoirs* 6:137-8 (March 15, 1823).

[47] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:138 (March 17, 1823).

[48] Poinsett to Monroe, April 6, 1823, in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong., Reel 8.

Niles Register on May 24th provided further evidence to corroborate Rush's warnings.

> The occupation of Cuba was made the subject of an inquiry in the House of Commons, when Mr. Canning, the British Foreign Secretary replied that considering emergencies arising out of a state of war, it was impossible to give a direct answer on this point.[50]

Certainly any seizure of Cuba would either have reflected or risked precipitating hostility with the major continental powers. It is not something Britain would have undertaken lightly. Still, it was a matter which the British Government might well have under consideration.

Was the situation in Cuba at all relevant to what Monroe and Adams did in responding to Luriottis? In the context of making decisions that were calibrated to implement principles and precedents, the answer is a decisive yes. Taking into account the limited information available on the actual behavior of European leaders, the answer is also yes.

On January 6th Gallatin wrote from Paris:

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[49] Adams to Nelson, April 28, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 4.
[50] *Niles* 24 (May 24, 1823): 189.

> As to any formal or perfect recognition of any of the new states of South America, I greatly doubt whether this government will give in to it, except on consultation with the European Alliance, when the hope of preserving peace in the East will probably tend to bind them still more closely together.[51]

The peace in the East which Gallatin referred to was the uneasy peace then prevailing between Russia and Turkey. The unease was caused by the seemingly ineffective efforts of the Turkish government to restore order in its Greek provinces. In Gallatin's judgment, what happened at the eastern end of the Mediterranean was relevant to the issue of extending diplomatic recognition to the newly independent Latin American republics.

Such evidence suggested that Adams and Monroe needed to move cautiously. From the standpoint of Russia and the other continental powers, official recognition of any government founded on the violent overthrow of established authority violated, and violated overtly, the principles that they felt should govern relations among established states. Such behavior was repugnant and offensive. United States recognition of a Greek republic just might create both an incentive and an excuse for Britain or one of the continental powers to intervene in the New World. Adams and Monroe would need to weigh this possibility in any response they made to Luriottis. The major European powers might well relate actions taken in the New World with actions taken toward Greece.

Even without acting in ways that might provoke the major European powers, Monroe and Adams still had reason for concern. French influence in Spain risked becoming French efforts to exercise power in the New World.[52] The drift of events in Spain meant that, even if the United States did nothing, it ran a big risk of British occupation of the island—creating the very situation Dernard and others perceived as threatening the nation's physical security and commercial prosperity. What Adams and Monroe needed was a rapprochement or understanding with Great Britain.

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[51] Rush to Adams, January 6, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.

[52] Adams, June 19, 1823, *Memoirs*, 6:151-2; see also Adams to Rush, July 29, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 5.

As Adams saw it, the United States and Great Britain espoused a common principle. Both opposed intervention in the internal affairs of other states, while Russia, France and Austria took the opposite position. Britain's isolation from the other major European powers had, on the one hand, created danger for the United States, potentially motivating Britain to find an excuse to seize the island of Cuba. But on the other hand, being isolated, Britain might well be amenable to a rapprochement with the United States. Adams seized the opportunity. He mounted a vigorous campaign aimed at such a rapprochement.[53] The nature of that campaign is relevant to how Adams ended up handling the Luriottis letter.

On March 27th Stratford Canning reported to the Foreign Office in London that Adams had talked to him about the crisis in Spain. In their meeting, Adams reportedly had emphasized United States support for the very principle of nonintervention which was the core of British policy toward Spain. Adams urged upon Canning the fact that this principle was in "immediate danger," brought about by the impending conflict in Spain. Adams also reportedly commended Great Britain for "the liberality of her policy." According to Canning, Adams claimed that Britain's principle of nonintervention was parallel to the principle of national independence which lay at the core of America's own principles. On May 3rd

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[53] Adams to Middleton, August 13, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 5.

Canning again wrote to the Foreign Office that Adams had talked of the great similarity of English and United States policies. In a private letter Canning indicated that both Adams and Henry Clay "were favorably disposed to us with regard to Cuba, and more inclined to work in harmony with us." Canning concluded by saying, "The communication of your correspondence with France has had its effect."[54]

The communication that Stratford Canning apparently referred to has come to be known as the Stuart memorandum, named after Sir Charles Stuart, the British ambassador who presented it to the French Government on March 31st. On April 17th Benjamin Rush reported from London that the memorandum had been placed before Parliament. It stipulated the following: "Time and the course of events appear to have substantially decided their [the Spanish colonies'] separation from the mother country." Rush added that the document further stipulated that Great Britain had "no desire to appropriate any of the possessions [of Spain in the New World], disclaiming all intentions of appropriating for herself the smallest portion of the late Spanish possessions in America, expressing also her conviction, that neither will France attempt to bring under her dominion any of those possessions either by conquests or cession from Spain." In Rush's judgment, since the start of hostilities between France and the liberal, constitutionalist government of Spain, England "retreats into a strict and undeviating neutrality."[55]

By its action in making its position a matter of public record, Britain not only made its position clear; it also made it quite difficult to change. Here Adams would seem to have a stable point of reference.

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[54] Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, March 27, 1823, 487.

[55] Rush to Adams, April 17, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.

The timing of the communication to London by the British minister in Washington is intriguing. It suggests that the substance of the memorandum presented in Paris on the 31st of March was probably sent on its way to Washington before it was a matter of public knowledge in Great Britain, possibly even before it was communicated to the French Government. It was almost physically impossible for Britain's minister in Washington to have received the Stuart memorandum from London, met with Adams before the 3rd of May, and written his response if a copy of the memorandum had been dispatched to the United States after the British Government had confirmation of its delivery in Paris on the 31st of March.

Luriottis would not have been pleased with the way Adams and Stratford Canning discussed support for governments founded on the principle of popular sovereignty. Nor would he have been pleased with the logic of the Stuart memorandum. Taking no action to support or to oppose those struggling to achieve political freedom appeared to be the fundamental policy espoused both by the United States and by Britain. This suggested taking no steps toward diplomatic recognition of a Greek state.

From Adams' perspective, what the Stuart memorandum and the report laid before Parliament did not say was also relevant to his decision on the Luriottis letter. The Stuart memorandum made no mention of any formal recognition by Great Britain of the independence of the Latin American countries from Spain. The memorandum made no mention of the right of self-determination for the peoples of Latin America or any other people. Presumably French influence in Spain, leading to French ownership or control over Cuba, would represent a shift in the balance of power among the major nations of Europe. Continued ownership by Spain presumably would not. It represented the status quo ante. Moreover, Spain was not a power of major rank in Europe at the time, as the invasion by France was making abundantly clear. The Stuart memorandum provided Adams with strong evidence that support for the cause of civic freedom and republicanism were not values which motivated British policy.

In June 1823 Adams described one meeting with Stratford Canning:

> I mentioned "But Great Britain had repeatedly separated herself from the counsels and measures of the Alliance. She avowed principles which were emphatically those of this country [neutrality and nonintervention in the internal affairs of other countries], and she disapproved the principles of the Alliance, which this country abhorred . . . . The coincidence of principle, connected with the great changes in the affairs of the world, passing before us seemed to me a suitable occasion for the United States and Great Britain to compare their ideas and purposes together, with a view to the accommodation of great interests upon which they had heretofore differed."[56]

As Adams reported it, he explicitly told Stratford Canning that his proposal for a rapprochement was not a proposal for alliance.[57] In Adams' words, the United States wished "to keep aloof from the European system of politics." Had Adams and the Monroe Administration been actively considering a positive response to Luriottis, Adams would hardly have made such a statement to Canning. But Adams was not the final arbiter of the nation's foreign policy. Monroe occupied that position.

In pursuing his discussions with Canning, Adams was in an excellent position to see that Britain was not motivated by support for the principles of popular sovereignty and republicanism that American statesmen respected and honored. For example, in a January 1823 Despatch, the American minister in Madrid warned Adams that Britain and France might find a common ground in the New World. Written before the French army invaded Spain, this is what the Despatch reported:

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[56] Adams, August 13, 1823, *Memoirs*, 6:151-152.

[57] Stratford Canning was the first cousin of the British foreign secretary George Canning. Stratford Canning would later become British ambassador at Constantinople.

> I am persuaded that England and France have held out to the Spanish Government as an inducement to change the constitution [away from a liberal constitutional regime] the idea of assisting in the recovery of the whole or a part of Spanish America. During the Congress of Verona we had a report that the Duke of Wellington proposed to tempt the Spaniards with such an offer on the part of the assembled sovereigns, but that proposition was rejected. At the time I paid no attention to the report. Subsequent circumstances have so often recalled it to my recollection that I am disposed to believe there was some foundation for it.[58]

When applied to Greece, similar balance of power considerations suggested that Britain would try hard to prevent Greece from falling into the hands of a power which could threaten its interests. As the power controlling the Ionian Islands, Britain already had a base of operations. Like Spain, Turkey was not a major force to contend with, at least not on the periphery of its empire. There is no evidence that Britain at this time considered Greece (unlike the Latin American republics) a viable state, independent of domination or influence by other European powers.

H.W.V. Temperley provides a good analysis, one which would have been readily apparent to Adams and to European diplomats as well. In his judgment, Turkey and Greece were of vital importance to Britain. From a geopolitical perspective, and also from a trade perspective, secure access through the eastern Mediterranean to Asia was essential in assuring Britain control over her possessions in the East, India in particular. There were obvious power conflicts with Russia. Russia had long desired free and secure access to the Mediterranean. With such access she would acquire the ability to station a powerful navy in the Mediterranean, a prospect which could limit Britain's security and freedom of action. As a result, what happened in Greece and who assumed control over its ports was a key concern to Britain.[59] One can mount a good argument that Greece played for Great Britain much the same role that Cuba played for the United States. Each was vital to the commercial and geopolitical well-being of the respective nations. Certainly the very fact that Britain had acquired the Ionian Islands as part of the settlement at the Congress of Vienna was evidence of the importance she attached to the eastern Mediterranean, and the waters off the Greek archipelago in particular. The Ionian Islands were bastions, quite similar in purpose to Gibraltar and Malta.

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[58] Forsyth to Adams, January 31, 1823, in *Despatches: Spain*, Reel 23.

In November 1821 *Niles* reported, "There is much prospect of a rising of the people of the Ionian Islands to drive out their protectors . . . in which we most heartily wish them success."[60] In his February 1823 meeting Benjamin Rush had questioned Luriottis about the Ionian Islands and whether there was the prospect that they would join the emerging Greek nation. Luriottis assured Rush that they would in fact become a part of Greece. Rush, however, advised Adams that this could happen only if the British permitted it, as their fleet could provide effective protection for their rule.[61]

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[59] Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 321.

[60] *Niles* 21 (November 24, 1821): 195.

[61] Rush to Adams, February 24, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.

As early as September 15, 1821 *Niles Register* had underscored the potential for power rivalry.

> It is hardly to be expected, however, that Britain and France will passively behold a transfer of European Turkey to the Russian scepter . . . so long the favorable object of Russian domination. There are various speculations as to the course which the other powers will pursue, provided Russia shall declare war against Turkey.[62]

Time and again, reports from Europe indicated that what was happening in Greece risked bringing about what European statesmen most feared, namely, instability.

Put in this context, any decision to extend diplomatic recognition to a government founded on revolt against established authority was a very serious matter, one which could have grave consequences. At the same time, the principles of freedom to choose one's own rulers and rebel against established authority were the principles that had justified and validated America's own revolt against British rule one generation earlier. They were also the very principles that made the Greek cause appealing to politically active Americans.

Diplomatic correspondence, though, focused on the need for supportive relations with Britain in particular. In an Instruction sent to Middleton in Russia in August 1823, Adams reaffirmed the importance of Great Britain to the United States. For Adams, Great Britain "is the nation from which the United States has the most to gain by peace" and "the most immediate danger of being involved in war."[63]

At the time Adams received the Luriottis letter, there were no firm understandings between the two countries. For example, on July 28th Adams had written to Rush stating that if Great Britain remained "unshaken in her belligerent intentions," then there would be no room to negotiate outstanding differences. He then indicated to Rush that Stratford Canning admitted that "some of the principal collisions between the US and Britain had been due to the exceptional circumstances of war."[64] The very next day, on July 29th, Adams wrote to Rush to express his hope that the two countries were on the verge of what Adams described as "a more harmonious concert of public policy, and community of purpose between our two countries than has ever existed since the period of our independence." Important negotiations were about to begin in London, conducted by Rush and aimed at what Adams referred to as the regulation of maritime, neutral and belligerent rights.[65] In his July 29th letter to Rush, Adams even went so far as to say of the British minister in Washington, Stratford Canning:

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[62] *Niles* 21 (September 15, 1821): 33.

[63] Adams to Middleton, August 13, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 5.

> He has a high sense of honor, and connected with it a quality inestimable in a statesman, a conscious sense of moral obligation.[66]

Adams' statement is remarkable and surprising, particularly so since it appears in an official communication. Adams, like many of his contemporaries, had an innate and strong distrust and dislike for the British. Despite his prejudice, however, Adams went on to tell Middleton that he was hopeful of "producing a convention for perpetual peace between the United States and Great Britain."

Behind this campaign was the key reality of Britain's physical power. In debates on the floor of the House of Representatives, Henry Clay had brought the matter into plain relief as early as 1818. "Except for England, any war resulting from recognition [of the Latin American republics that had been Spanish colonies] was a war without a maritime ability to maintain it."[67] Great Britain, the dominant naval and maritime power, was capable of projecting physical force to disrupt American trade in both the Western and Eastern Hemispheres. Great Britain was the nation with the most immediate ability to threaten what were intense American interests in keeping Cuba out of the hands of any of the major European powers.

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[64] Adams to Rush, July 28, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 5.
[65] Adams to Rush, July 29, 1823 (ibid.).
[66] Ibid.

Still, Clay oversimplified his case. As a major maritime power the United States needed good relations with Turkey and each of the major European powers, even though Britain alone was best positioned to project military might into the New World. Complications with Britain or with any of the major continental powers were not in America's interest at the time of the Luriottis letter.

With his letter, Luriottis forced American leaders to examine closely the role that principles and ideals of support for the cause of freedom should play in the formulation of the nation's foreign policy. He also made it important to assess how to resolve tensions between these values and the practical needs of the nation to maintain supportive and friendly relations with Britain and the other major European powers. There was, in addition, the issue of who should govern the actions of the United States Government. The people were sovereign, and by the end of 1823 they would give strong indication that they wanted their Government to extend diplomatic recognition to the government Luriottis claimed to represent. We saw evidence of this support in chapter 1 and we will see more in chapter 9.

What happened in Greece was vitally important to educated and politically active Americans and their leaders in Washington. It was also vitally important to the major European powers. What would be the practical foreign relations consequences if the United States took steps leading to diplomatic recognition? The following chapter provides an assessment.

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[67] Clay, March 24, 1818, *Papers*, 6:530.

CHAPTER SIX

ASSESSING THE RISK OF CONFLICT WITH OTHER NATIONS

In a Despatch to Adams dated April 22, 1822, Benjamin Rush wrote:

> Our acknowledgment of the South American states, has produced an effect on this side of the water, of which the evidences are universal in the public opinion of all circles. It seems to have spoken them into being, to have cleared away the doubts that lingered in men's minds as to their condition; to have revealed and defined before the world the maturity of their attributes for sovereign and independent existence. It has come at the happy moment when their destiny complete in all things else by conditions of their own, seemed to want only the moral evidence from the sister Republic of the North, as its last finish . . . So activism of the United States is happy to contemplate it, so mankind has hailed it.[1]

Rush's statement projected what is now referred to as "puffery," blatant vanity and pride in the virtue of his country. Still, it was much more than posturing. Looked at in terms of domestic politics, Rush's comments could only enhance a political leader's respect and standing among the electorate. Monroe and Adams had acted in ways that supported America's own political values. Extending diplomatic recognition to a people who by their own efforts had won de facto independence was a laudatory and effective use of the power of the United States Government. Standing tall for the noble cause of freedom could enhance a political leader's stature.[2] In a nation based on popular sovereignty and republicanism, such "puffery" had substantive importance.

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[1] Rush to Adams, April 22, 1822, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 23.

[2] See, for example, Edward Everett's statement of "the great and glorious part which the country will play in the regeneration of the world" and discussion of this point in Earle, "American Interest," 46ff.

There was another, more important, side to Rush's statement. Extending diplomatic recognition to those who had successfully thrown off the yoke of arbitrary imperial rule had practical, substantive power and importance outside the United States. Rush made it clear that, in his judgment at least, diplomatic recognition had in fact helped to legitimate and thereby place on a secure footing the status of freedom already achieved.

In an 1818 speech in Congress, Henry Clay had gone further. He had asserted that by extending diplomatic recognition the United States could (and should) affect the outcome of an ongoing struggle to achieve independence and freedom: "The moral influence of such a recognition on the patriot of the South [in Latin America] would be irresistible." Clay went on to urge that moral causes do have what he termed a powerful practical "effect." He chose as evidence for his assertion the example of the French Revolution. For Clay, "There was an example of the effect of moral power."[3] The very fact that Luriottis sought diplomatic recognition from the United States Government indicated that he too believed the act of extending diplomatic recognition would have practical significance for his countrymen. Political leaders of the time, in Europe as well as in the United States, *felt* that ideological beliefs had the power to influence events. Tsar Alexander, for example, based his response to the Greek War of Independence largely on his ideological commitment to the principle of rule by established monarchs. He may well have served his commercial and strategic interests better had he intervened in the Greek struggle and brought Greece within his sphere of control.

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[3] Clay, March 25, 1818, *Papers,* ed. Hopkins, 2:552-3.

Thus, diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic represented much more than a simple gesture of support for a Greek people. It would have extended an imprimatur of legitimacy that supported American principles of governance but undermined those of the major European powers. To respond positively to the Luriottis request created the opportunity to do good—from an American perspective. It also just might mean danger, if it provoked hostility from the major European powers.

In congressional debates over the recognition of the Latin American republics, one congressional leader in particular pinpointed the risk. In March 1822 Congressman Forsyth argued in a congressional debate that America's moral power to influence events mandated that the United States Government act with caution: "They [the European powers] do not fear our power, but they dread our example; they do not apprehend danger from our physical strength, but tremble at the moral influence of our institutions."[4] For this very reason he opposed Clay's assertion that the United States Government act aggressively to promote the cause of freedom outside the nation's borders. Challenging Clay's proposal to extend diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics, he asserted:

> The course advocated by the speaker [Clay] was the one best calculated to excite all their jealousies and hostilities; to confirm an idea, that Spain had been at all times exerting herself to enforce, that we were the cause of all the disturbances in her possessions, the aider and abettor of her revolted subjects.[5]

In Congress, Clay had argued repeatedly that the extension of diplomatic recognition did not justify war against the United States by other powers. To him it was a means short of war. Clay did not claim that in practice other nations would abide by his rules of what justified war. He simply maintained that, as far as he was concerned, no war was justified.

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[4] *Annals of Congress*, 15th Cong., 1st sess., 21:1503 (March 25, 1818).
[5] Ibid.

Other congressmen, like Forsyth, were more pragmatic. They focused on whether the extension of diplomatic relations would—in practice—harm the nation. They also raised the question of what would in fact constitute moral behavior for a representative of the American people sitting in Congress. For example, in a debate over whether the nation should extend diplomatic recognition to the new republics in Latin America, one congressman argued:

> But whatever may be my inclinations, personal considerations must give up when they carry me to the boundaries of my power [to commit the welfare of the nation to the support of the cause of freedom of others].

The congressman went on to say:

> It is true that they [the people of the United States] feel a deep solicitude for the success of the patriots, but it does not follow that they condemn their government for not entangling itself with their destinies.[6]

Luriottis (and Clay also) had pleaded for just such an "entanglement" based on the "inclinations" and "personal considerations" of the American people.

Given this background, Adams and Monroe were in an excellent position to place the issue of extending diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic in the context of a very complex set of variables. To judge by Rush's Despatch and Clay's statements on the floor of the House of Representatives, recognition of a Greek republic would generate encouragement for the Greeks to continue the struggle against Turkey and also influence attitudes in liberal circles in Europe in favor of supporting the Greek cause. As Forsyth pointed out, this very power also meant that the United States Government needed to move cautiously. Added to this was the issue of whether the nation's leaders had a responsibility to keep the nation out of danger or if their primary responsibility was to support the cause of freedom.

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[6] *Annals of Congress,* 16th Cong., 1st sess., 37:1053 (February 6, 1821).

Diplomatic recognition was an act which at the time appeared to carry with it the substantive power to move events. From Congressman Forsyth's perspective, this very fact meant that extending diplomatic recognition risked retaliation from other powers. Governments founded on the principle of national identity, popular sovereignty and republicanism were, from a European perspective, threatening.

In addition, important commercial and geopolitical interests were at stake. Reports from Europe suggested that a new Greek nation, once independent, would become a satellite of one of the major European powers—Russia most probably, but also possibly Britain. For instance, the British ambassador to St. Petersburg wrote a confidential memorandum in July 1822 stating, "By no means assume that the Greek population as it now subsists or is likely to subsist for a number of years, could form from its own element a system of government less defective in external or internal character than that which unfortunately presently exists [under Turkish rule]."[7] Middleton obtained a copy of this memorandum and included it in a Despatch to Adams in Washington in July 1822. Seemingly, if the Greeks succeeded in throwing off Turkish rule, the result would not be freedom for the Greek people. From an American perspective, the British ambassador's report implied that efforts to support the cause of Greek freedom were doomed to fail.

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[7] Middleton to Adams, July 28, 1822, in *Despatches: Russia*, Reel 9.

From a European perspective, Greek freedom from Turkey would lead to domination by one of the major European powers. This would lead to a breakdown in the very balance of power which had provided the key underpinning for stability and order among the major European powers since the end of the Napoleonic Wars.[8]

Meanwhile, the ongoing course of the Greek revolt appeared to threaten war among the major European powers. In his July 1822 Despatch Middleton stated, "The rupture of the peace between Russia and the Porte [Turkey] marks the signal for universal anarchy in Europe."[9] Middleton's letter was quite clear that the reason for the potential rupture was the revolt in Greece.

As early as the fall of 1821 *Niles* had suggested why European statesmen felt that the revolt of the Greek people risked "universal anarchy": "It is hardly to be expected, however, that Britain and France will passively behold a transfer of European Turkey to the Russian scepter."[10] For the Europeans, the Greek War of Independence jeopardized peaceful relations among the major European powers. Support for that war by the United States was a matter they had good reason to resist. Continued Turkish rule, not Greek independence, supported the status quo ante balance of power among the major European powers; it validated rule by a "legitimate," established and recognized ruler. A prudent response to Luriottis would need to take this perspective into consideration.

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[8] What we now know, people of the time could not know. Greece would become an independent kingdom. The Great Powers would agree to maintain its neutrality. In this way they would solve the danger of Greece falling under the control of any other power. Their solution preserved the status quo ante balance of power at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Only after 1823 would this solution come into focus.

[9] Middleton to Adams, July 8, 1822, in *Despatches: Russia*, Reel 9.

[10] *Niles* 21 (September 15, 1821): 33.

On September 28, 1822 *Niles* reported that a "congress" of the Great Powers would meet to discuss the Greek revolt against Turkish rule, as well as the refusal of the Spanish people to accept the absolute rule of their monarch. As *Niles* reported it, the purpose of the meeting was "to support kings and to keep the people in chains."[11] The fact that the Greek revolt figured in the announcement indicated how seriously the major European powers treated the Greek insurrection against established authority. Steps leading to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic by the United States could not fail to attract the attention of the major European powers.

The conference, held at Verona, ended with a powerful mandate to France to put down by force the government in Spain—a government founded on principles not much different from those espoused by the leaders of the Greek revolt, namely, the right of a people to rebel for the purpose of choosing their own political leaders. The conference at Verona produced no mandate to intervene either to support or to put down the struggle of the Greek people to secure their freedom. Implicitly, the prior position of the great powers remained unchanged. Their posture toward the Greek revolt had been one of neutrality. They would take no overt action to support either the Greeks or the Turks. However, the Verona conference reaffirmed two policies that had significance if they were later applied to the Greek revolt. First, the Great Powers forcefully condemned the principle of revolution against established authority. Second, they affirmed that they had the right to intervene within another country to preserve what they defined as orderly rule. As we have already seen, in practice this meant preserving the power of an established sovereign from the violence of a revolution aimed at replacing his authority with a government founded on the principle of popular sovereignty. Adams and Monroe had access to all the information contained in the sources cited. They were forewarned.

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[11] *Niles* 23 (September 28, 1822): 56.

Looked at from an American perspective, the Greek revolt offered a number of significant parallels to the revolts against Spanish rule which had recently taken place in Latin America. Revolt legitimated by the principle that the people were sovereign and had the right to choose their own rulers was an element common to both, as was the use of force to deprive the existing monarch of his right to absolute rule.

The distinctions, though, were even more noteworthy and should have been readily apparent to both Monroe and Adams. Clearly, the ability of the European powers to intervene with physical force in Greece and in the Mediterranean was relatively easy compared to any efforts to influence or control events in the New World. Also, what happened in the Spanish colonies was physically remote from Europe, while the revolt of the Greek people was right within the confines of Europe. The perception of danger stemming from the contagion of popular sovereignty was more immediate and more tangible, so the incentive to act was higher. Most important, neither Spain nor its colonies qualified as a major power and what happened between them did not threaten the balance of power put in place after the Napoleonic Wars. To judge by reports in both *Niles* and in Middleton's Despatch, what happened in Greece did create very serious risks of upsetting this balance of power. The independence of the Latin American republics did not appear to create comparable dangers, so long as they remained free of domination by one of the Great Powers.

Given these distinctions, it should have been clear to Adams and Monroe that the European powers might respond to American involvement in the Greek struggle for independence from Turkey more forcefully than they had in the case of United States diplomatic recognition of the Latin American republics. Still, there was on the face of it no compelling need to assess this risk—unless there was a clear and compelling reason to become involved in the affairs of Greece.

Luriottis, in his letter to the American secretary of state, had attempted—and attempted with great eloquence—to provide just such a compelling reason. A nation of free men owed duties to their brothers struggling for their freedom. Living up to that moral obligation and duty was what ostensibly distinguished a nation of free men from countries where subjects were bound in the chains of servitude.

Looking back from the distance of time, one of the most intriguing aspects of the Luriottis letter is the fact that he made no distinction between the obligations of the American people, as free and Christian citizens of the United States, and the obligations of their government. His arguments took for granted that public and private responsibilities were one and the same. Therein lay the conundrum which Adams and Monroe had to face. They were being called upon to define the duties and responsibilities of the United States Government in ways that might risk compromising either the nation's practical commercial and security interests on the one hand or, on the other hand, the values and ideals that were embraced by some of the nation's most powerful leaders.

The statements and the actions of the major European powers suggested that, at the very least, Adams and Monroe should try to verify the reaction of the major European powers before making any positive response to Luriottis. Absent such verification, Adams and Monroe faced a difficult choice. Henry Clay's powerful and eloquent pleas to extend diplomatic recognition to the newly formed Latin American republics evidenced the possible political price for delaying or declining to move toward the extension of diplomatic recognition.

In the domain of domestic politics, the Luriottis letter was doubly provocative. Within the United States there was no political consensus on whether the United States should use its official power to support the cause of freedom outside its borders. Nor was there consensus on the role of public opinion in determining the course the nation should follow.

In a May 1820 article the prestigious *Edinburgh Review* had presented a strong and very different case for official involvement by the United States Government in the cause of freedom outside its borders. For the *Edinburgh Review* it was not duty but self-interest which mandated that the United States should involve itself in support of freedom. The article was widely read in the United States—Adams himself analyzed and critiqued it. Here is what the *Review* had to say:

> It is a fact which can require no proof, even in America, that there is a party in this country not friendly to political liberty, and decidedly hostile to the extension of popular rights . . . which thinks the peace and well-being of society in no danger from anything but popular encroachment, and holds the only safe or desirable government to be that of a pretty pure and unencumbered monarchy, supported by a vast revenue and a powerful army.[12]

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[12] "Disposition of England and America," *Edinburgh Review,* 33:399. (Nominally a book review, the article is not signed.)

The article went on to assert that the United States was considered dangerous by this party because "the smallest addition of democratic influence . . . must lead to the immediate destruction of peace and prosperity, peace and religion."[13]

> It is impossible to look at the state of the Old World without seeing, or rather feeling, that there is a greater and more momentous contest impending, than ever agitated human society. In Germany, in Spain, in France, in Italy, the principles of Reform and Liberty are visibly arraying themselves for a final struggle with the principle of established abuse . . . Legitimacy or Tyranny . . . or whatever it is called by its friends or enemies.[14]

From the *Edinburgh Review*'s perspective, powerful enemies of freedom in the Old World posed a threat to the United States. The United States needed, for its own protection and self-interest, to involve itself actively in struggles to achieve political freedom in countries far removed from the United States. Only in this way could America protect itself from its enemies, namely, those who supported autocratic rule. Luriottis himself had not made this argument, nor is it one which appeared in the appeals generally made for the Greek cause.

For Adams, the ideas contained in the *Edinburgh Review* article were not only disturbing, they were actually quite dangerous. In July 1821 he wrote his good friend Robert Walsh the following:

> The *Edinburgh Review* . . . descants largely upon the importance of a good understanding between America and that party [the Whigs] and upon the supposed duty of the United States to take an active part in the impending conflicts, between Power and Right. This doctrine has already twice in the course of our history brought peace and the permanent welfare of the Union into jeopardy: under Washington's administration at the

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 33:403.

> early stages of the French Revolution; under the present administration in the efforts [presumably by Henry Clay and his associates in Congress] to entangle us in the South American conflict. The address has provoked a principle of duty directly the reverse rationale being for such interference creates an inevitable tendency to change the foundations of our government from liberty to power.[15]

Adams was alluding to the build-up of military power within the United States which would be necessary to protect the nation from any retaliatory actions by those European powers who felt threatened by efforts to supplant existing and established governments. In the French Revolution a build-up in military power had ended up in the military dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte. Adams recognized the risk of a government based on popular sovereignty degenerating into one based on the power of the bayonet.[16]

What Adams did not say was equally significant. He made no attempt to deny the underlying facts of the article, that a great struggle for power was under way throughout Europe, a struggle of competing ideologues. It pitted those who favored democratic rule against those who favored absolute monarchy. Adams' quarrel with the *Edinburgh Review* was in its conclusion. He believed that the United States should not become an active partisan in the struggle, but should remain detached from the conflict.

In June 1822 the great revolutionary hero, the Marquis de Lafayette, wrote to Thomas Jefferson. Lafayette also spoke of a violent ideological conflict. To him Greece was a part of that general conflict, but he went much further than stating the general nature of an ideologically-based conflict. Like Luriottis, Lafayette wrote of the special bonds which linked Americans to those now struggling for freedom at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. He also tried to evoke feelings of compassion and empathy for the specific circumstances of the Greek struggle: "All the governments of the Sainte Alliance are secret enemies of the liberal cross of Grecian insurrection not even excepting Emperor Alexander."[17] Lafayette spoke of "the Greek Confederacy molded with the immense improvement of American institutions." He enclosed for Jefferson's benefit a declaration of the Greek Senate which enunciated the cause of freedom in terms that were almost a copy of the Declaration of Independence, which Jefferson had authored in 1776.

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[15] Adams to Everett, July 31, 1821, in Adams, *Writings,* 7:201.

[16] Going back to the American Revolution, many political leaders accepted what Edwin A. Miles termed "the cyclical view of history, popularized by such writers as Lord Bolingbroke." It was a perspective that posited a tendency for republics to degenerate into dictatorships. See Miles, "Young American Nation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35, no. 1 (January-March 1974), 261.

Lafayette went on to make a truly remarkable suggestion.

> An other idea has seized my fancy, and I have several months ago imparted it to the president and other friends in the cabinet in Washington. It is the wish that the flag of the US should ride those seas [bordering Greece], along those coasts, yielding a refuse [i.e., a safe haven] against murder and persecution, combining philanthropic measures with such of the naval powers [as appropriate] to protect the unarmed population.[18]

Whether this would lead to armed conflict with Turkey was a question which Lafayette seemed to place at the discretion of the American navy. As far as he was concerned, war would be justified by "the advantages, moral, political and commercial that could develop for the US."[19] The possibility of danger to the United States was a matter which he apparently thought worthy of no further discussion. To the contrary, Lafayette seemed to feel that what was important was to focus on the clear and compelling benefit to the Greek people which he felt would come from America's commitment to the cause of freedom.

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[17] Lafayette to Jefferson, June 1, 1822, in Chinard, *Letters of Lafayette and Jefferson*, 410.

[18] Ibid., 411.

[19] Ibid.

When Lafayette turned to the practical benefits to the United States, he was extremely vague and abstract. He spoke of political solidarity. He alluded to commercial benefits, yet he provided no evidence of what those benefits might be. Essentially Lafayette based his arguments on American political ideals and empathy generated by the experience Americans had had in their own struggle against tyranny. He also supported his position by citing what he felt was a strong precedent: "The right of emancipation in the colonies, under constitutions which have been fully evinced in Latin America, has been profound and attested by the US." The United States had exercised its power in the past to strike a blow for freedom. It was time to do so again.

Overall the arguments that Luriottis and Lafayette used were remarkably congruent. This was no coincidence. Lafayette maintained close contact with the leaders of the Greek cause, including Luriottis himself.[20] The friends in the cabinet to whom Lafayette may have sent his suggestion included John Calhoun, the Secretary of War, and William Crawford, the Secretary of the Treasury, both of whom would oppose Adams in the presidential election of 1824. In that election Clay also would oppose Adams, and the Clay archives do in fact contain a letter from Lafayette making the very proposal that Lafayette made in his letter to

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[20] For example, on July 28,1824 Luriottis wrote Adams asking him to forward a letter to Lafayette who was then on his triumphal tour of the United States. See Orlando, J. et A. Luriottis, *Les Philhellenes et la Guerre de l'Independence*, 211.

Jefferson.[21] Gallatin, in a February 28, 1823 Despatch to Adams, made an identical proposal.[22] Gallatin would become the vice presidential candidate on Crawford's ticket in the 1824 election. In his letter to Jefferson, Lafayette specifically stated that he had made his proposal to Monroe, although the Monroe archives themselves do not contain such a letter.

Lafayette's letter brings into sharp relief the fact that any decision by the United States Government either to support or to refrain from supporting the struggle for Greek independence could easily become a matter of political intrigue within the United States. In chapter 8 we will see that the cause of Greek freedom (as well as the proposal contained in Lafayette's letter) did become exactly that in cabinet discussions in late 1823. We have already seen that Everett, in his October 1823 *North American Review* article, referred, albeit *en passant* to the presence of an American naval squadron in the Mediterranean.

It is possible that Adams was unaware of Lafayette's efforts to lobby America's political leaders to support the cause of Greek independence from Turkey. The Adams papers do not contain a letter similar to that sent to Clay, nor does material in Adams' diaries suggest any such communication from Lafayette. With the possible exception of Adams, though, many of the political leaders of the United States, including the president himself, apparently knew that a revered leader of the American Revolution had sponsored official United States involvement in the struggle for Greek independence. Given the respect Lafayette commanded as a revolutionary war hero, his standing among the voting public in the United States was quite high. There was political power in the position

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[21] Lafayette to Clay, November 5, 1822, in Clay, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 3:311.

[22] Gallatin to Adams, February 28, 1823, in *Despatches: France*, Reel 24.

Lafayette had taken, were it to become generally known.[23] Moreover, Lafayette would begin a triumphal tour of the United States in August 1824, during the very months leading up to the presidential election. The subject of active support for the cause of Greek independence accompanied him on his tour.[24]

The Luriottis letter, the Lafayette letters, the *Edinburgh Review* article all suggest that there were sustained efforts by liberal Europeans to involve the United States Government as a partisan in the ongoing struggles for freedom in the Old World. Major debates within the United States Congress had not gone so far by mid-1823.

Earlier debates, though, had urged active support by the United States Government for the cause of freedom in Latin America. In March of 1822, just eleven months before Luriottis wrote his letter to Adams, congressional debates had focused on the issue of diplomatic recognition for the Latin American republics. At that time one congressman expressed the case for diplomatic recognition this way:

> For us to deny to the people of Spanish America their right to independence, on the principle which alone sustains it here, would be to virtually renounce our own.[25]

Looking back from the present, the congressman's words are apt to strike us as childish or, at best, adolescent. The culture of the time gave his message a very different significance. In that culture, only a slave would bend his will to that of another. Failure to give the appearance of courage, of standing tall in the face of danger, could easily lead to shame and humiliation. From a practical standpoint one risked losing the credentials deemed necessary to lead a nation of free men—or, more accurately, to lead a nation which *viewed* itself as a nation of free men.

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[23] See, for example, Somkin, who stated that, in honoring Lafayette during his triumphal tour of the United States, Americans were, in words quoted from the *Virginia Herald* of October 13, 1824, "perpetuating . . . memorials of our own love of virtue and truth." Somkin , *Unquiet Eagle,* 71ff.

[24] For contacts between Lafayette and Everett at outset of Lafayette's visit to the United States in August 1824, see chapter 2, pp. 75-76.

[25] *Annals of Congress,* 17th Cong., 1st sess., 38:1315 (March 19, 1822).

In his letter to Adams, Luriottis had very subtly made the same point. To act free of the fear of coercion was what seemed to make Americans an exceptional people, a people worthy of the rights and privileges of free men.

There was also a separate issue, that of the moral obligation to support others less fortunate. President Monroe himself was deeply concerned about living up to his and the nation's duty to others. On June 2, 1823 he wrote Jefferson:

> Can we, in any form, take a bolder attitude in regard to it [the French invasion of Spain] in favor of liberty, than we did at the commencement of the French Revolution. Can we afford greater aid to that cause [of freedom], than we do now by our example?[26]

To judge by his words Monroe wanted guidance. He apparently sought to find a way to act to support the cause of freedom, but at the same time he also appeared to fear that such action might compromise the well-being of the nation.

Both the dictates imposed by a sense of moral responsibility and the need to make a public affirmation of the power to act freely were powerful inducements to support the Greek cause of freedom. However, there were no apparent practical benefits to the nation if it did in fact move to meet what some of its political leaders felt was both a moral duty and a positive right. And, in the case of Greece, an overt move toward diplomatic recognition seemed to expose the nation's security and commercial interests to potential harm.

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[26] Monroe to Jefferson, June 2, 1823, in Monroe, *Writings,* 6:310.

Nevertheless Adams and Monroe had to face the practical matter of how to respond to public opinion within the United States. Popular support for the Greek cause had become very strong. On July 19, 1823 *Niles* spoke of the Greek people in these words: "This noble people, obliged to contend, single handed against their oppressors, abandoned by civilized and Christian Europe, has defended itself for two years, with a degree of persistence, which reminds the classical reader of the finest passages of ancient history."[27] To judge by such reports, the Greek people clearly had the valor to merit America's support as well as an urgent need for that support.

In the past Clay's focus had centered on the civic virtue of those who presumed to lead the nation. For Adams, protecting the nation's commercial and security interests was the pivot for a soundly based foreign policy. Monroe appeared ambivalent. He wanted to meet what he perceived as a moral duty to support the cause of freedom, but he did not want to compromise the well-being of the nation.

Technically the Luriottis letter was a part of diplomatic correspondence and as such was not, as a matter of course, made public. Even so, Adams and Monroe had good reason to suspect that the contents of Luriottis' letter and any reply to it could well become public. It had long been the custom of the House of Representatives to request diplomatic correspondence on a subject which members wished to explore. In the past, Monroe and, through his direction, Adams had frequently made diplomatic correspondence available to Congress. Such sharing, followed by sharing with the public, was a well-established practice. In a practical sense, the Luriottis letter risked becoming a matter of domestic politics, one which might well produce divisive and even acrimonious partisan debate.

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[27] *Niles* 24 (July 19, 1823): 315.

Actually, Adams and Monroe were in a good position to suspect that Luriottis may well have intended that his letter be read and discussed by congressional leaders and by the larger body of educated and politically active Americans. The declamatory flourishes bespoke an audience wider than that used when professional diplomats and seasoned political leaders communicated privately with each other. As we have already seen, the clinical tone of Rush's Despatch to Adams describing his meeting with Luriottis stood in sharp contrast to the rising emotional cadences that Luriottis used in his letter to Adams.

Adams and Monroe were in no position to ignore the powerful emotional arguments contained in the Luriottis letter, which had already found a powerful echo in the press over the summer of 1823. They needed to respond to the Luriottis request. The issue before them was how to respond.

Essentially, Adams and Monroe needed to take a position that could withstand public scrutiny within the United States. There was the risk, even the probability, that Congress would at some point request any correspondence dealing with the Greek struggle for freedom. There was also the possibility that Luriottis or his countrymen would make the letter public in Europe. As Adams and the Monroe Administration knew, even well-established European states had made ostensibly private diplomatic correspondence public when it suited their purposes.[28] So any response to Luriottis would need to consider possible scrutiny by the European powers.

What Adams and Monroe needed was to find a way to encourage harmony under their leadership in the arena of domestic politics and at the same time cultivate positive relations with foreign powers. Furthermore, to maintain credibility and respect both in the United States and abroad, they needed to make a response that validated the principles they had previously used in defining the course of American foreign policy. In essence, they needed a response which took into careful consideration both prior precedents and the extent to which any position taken would support, complicate or limit future actions of the United States Government. It would take great skill and creativity to reconcile these disparate demands. The fact that they would have to make their decision with very little and very dated information on how the various European governments were then responding to the Greek struggle, and also on the actual state of Greek independence itself, further complicated their task.

No matter which way Adams and Monroe turned, there seemed to be the potential for conflict which threatened their authority and standing. Some of the most powerful members in Congress believed that failure to extend diplomatic recognition in circumstances very similar to those presented by the Greek revolt against Turkey had meant failure to meet the nation's moral obligation and a betrayal of the freedom, honor and integrity of the United States itself. Certainly the position that Adams and Monroe maintained in delaying diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics during their struggle against Spanish rule had provoked vitriolic attack in the halls of Congress. During debates on whether to extend diplomatic recognition in 1820, Henry Clay had gone so far as to directly impugn the manly valor of the Monroe Administration. "Why not," he asked, "proceed to act on our own responsibility and recognize these governments as independent instead of taking the lead of the Holy Alliance in a course which jeopardizes the happiness of unborn millions." Clay "deprecated this deference to foreign views."[29] His implication was clear. The nation's leaders either had to act free of the constraint of others or they were unworthy of leading the nation.

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[28] Britain's publication of a diplomatic memorandum to the French Government on the subject of Spain in 1823 is a case in point. The memorandum is now known as the Stuart memorandum.

Still, there was no consensus. Judging by Monroe's letter to Jefferson, the standards that should govern active involvement in struggles for freedom outside the nation's borders had not yet become settled in his own mind. For Adams, though, there was no question: the United States should pursue a policy which he defined as neutrality, or noninvolvement. His discussions with the British minister in Washington in the summer of 1823 underscored what was a longstanding commitment to policies of neutrality and noninvolvement in the struggles of other nations to achieve freedom.[30]

As Adams pondered how best to approach the nation's response to Luriottis, he had only to review the State Department files to get a clear and compelling picture of the concerns raised in Europe by the Greek struggle to throw off Turkish rule. No matter how complex and important the domestic political context, these foreign policy concerns were inescapable. A brief review will make this clear.

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[29] *Annals of Congress,* 16th Cong., 1st sess., 36:2227 (May 10, 1820).

[30] See chapter 8.

In a July 1822 Despatch to Adams from St. Petersburg, Henry Middleton had emphasized the great fear and aversion many in Europe felt toward any revolt against established authority.

> Because of the French Revolution . . . a large proportion of the people and proprietors, the rich and the enlightened in general, now view with apprehension the prospect of any revolution in the state; herein consists the strength of the [conservative] party. The Holy Alliance, the whole course of the negotiation between Russia and the Porte [the government of the Sultan of Turkey] and the political system of the leading powers since 1815 all evidently show that the Sovereigns know the extent of the danger. Their firm determination appears to be to maintain at all costs the actual state of . . . denominated legitimacy . . . . In fine the "fear of change" may be emphatically pronounced to be the ruling passion of the day; and the view of a common danger has produced a union of sentiment and action between parties otherwise necessarily at variance.[31]

Of particular significance, Middleton in his Despatch had identified Turkey and the revolt of the Greek people against its rule as a major cause for concern. As he reported it, what was happening inside the Turkish Empire was doubly threatening. The revolt in Greece risked destabilizing relations among states, even as it risked provoking disorder within states.

In an Instruction to Middleton in January 1820, Adams had spoken of the European powers in these terms:

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[31] Middleton to Adams, July 8, 1822, in *Despatches: Russia,* Reel 9.

> Their anxiety appears to have been to guard themselves against each other . . . . Their system appears designed to prevent a single power from dominating them all.[32]

Preservation of order, translated into a strong desire to maintain the status quo and resist change—these were the characteristics which Adams, Monroe and their fellow Americans saw in the Holy Alliance at the time of the Greek struggle.[33] As shown by the French invasion of Spain, the Holy Alliance was also prepared to use armed force to apply these principles at the very time Luriottis dispatched his letter to Adams.

Referring to the liberal government of Spain, the tsar in 1822 condemned "with the strongest and most solemn reprobation the revolutionary means put to work to give the new institutions to Spain."[34] Any change in sovereign power over either territory or the duty of allegiance had to come from the existing sovereign and—to be legitimate—could *only* come from the existing sovereign. De facto control over a people and a territory were not, in their world, the acceptable standard for diplomatic recognition. True, in time de facto rule would become an acceptable standard for extending diplomatic recognition. But prevailing European standards made extension of diplomatic recognition to a revolutionary government an immoral act, as well as one that threatened to disrupt established order within and between nations.

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[32] Adams to Middleton, July 5, 1820, in *Instructions*, Reel 4; also found in Adams, *Writings,* 7:47.

[33] "Principles of the Holy Alliance," *North American Review,* 41:340-374. (Article is unsigned.)

[34] Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 13. The tsar's statements were cited by Temperley from a state paper issued by the tsar on December 12, 1822. For a general discussion of Metternich's foreign policy and its influence on the tsar, see Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 4ff.

Looked at from the viewpoint of a European statesman of the early 19th century, it was American political leaders who were making assertions of moral principle that were a bold novelty, a novelty inconsistent with what they felt were established principles of a sound and acceptable international order. By the time of the Luriottis letter, Adams and the Monroe Administration had long been aware of the European perspective.

On August 4, 1820 Brown, then the United States minister in Paris, sent a Despatch which enclosed in French a copy of an aide memoire addressed to all the ministers of Russia on the subject of "affairs in Spain." It referred to the recent installation of a government in Spain based on the principles of popular sovereignty, a government which had forced the king to accept severe limits on his previously absolute powers to rule. The memoire read almost as an imperial edict.

> The health [and safety] of Spain as well as Europe mandates that this crime [of opposition to legitimate authority] shall be disavowed, this stain shall be washed out, this scandalous state of affairs shall be destroyed.[35]

According to the memoire, the five major European powers have "a sacred duty to make clear the principles of order." The memoire solicited from the major powers advice on how they could act to "reconcile Spain to herself as well as to the other powers of Europe." The intended "reconciliation" was one of submission by the Spanish people to the absolute rule of the King. The stain which needed to be removed was that of rule based on the free will of the people of Spain.

One Despatch to Adams suggested that the major continental powers endorsed "the legitimacy of the principle of intervention in the internal affairs of nations" for the express purpose of restoring the status quo ante.[36] Spain was one example, Turkey another. Turkey's failure to restore order and protect its Christian subjects ostensibly gave the Russian Government a "legitimate" reason to intervene to restore order. Implicitly this would take place under the established ruler, the sultan of Turkey, certainly not under a republican regime based on an exercise of the right of the Greek people to choose their own government. In dealing with Turkey, the tsar also had the advantage of claiming that prior treaties had ceded to Russia the right to act to protect the Christian subjects of the sultan, should they be threatened with violence.

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[35] Brown to Adams, August 4, 1820, in *Despatches: France*, Reel 23 (*aide memoire* translated from the French original by Charles L. Booth).

On July 28, 1822 Middleton sent Adams a copy of a confidential memorandum prepared by the British ambassador. The memorandum discussed Russian policy toward Greece and concluded that "in the present temper of the times" the emperor of Russia should not be expected "to lend his influence to the formation of an independent Greek state originating in a system of revolt when this has been reproved by the Emperor." At the same time, according to the ambassador, a weakening of Turkey in Greece suited Russia because it provided a way to enhance Russian power. In his memorandum the ambassador expressly stated that one should by no means assume

> that the Greek population, as it now subsists or is likely to subsist for a course of years, could form from their own element a system of government less defective either in external or internal character than that which unfortunately presently exists.[37]

For those who supported the cause of Greek freedom the implication was troubling. The struggle of the Greeks for freedom would be of no avail. If they threw off

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[36] Brent to Adams, April 2, 1821, in *Despatches: Spain*, Reel 21.

[37] Middleton to Adams, July 28, 1822, in *Despatches: Russia*, Reel 9.

Turkish rule, they would quickly fall prey to the influence and domination of an outside power.

On July 14, 1821 *Niles Register* published an item under the title "Holy Alliance." It was labeled "Circular Despatches, Laibach" and dated May 12th. As reported in *Niles*, the circular spoke of a "vast conspiracy, framed for a long time against all the established powers and against the right consecrated by the social order under which Europe has enjoyed so many ages of happiness and glory." It went on to state:

> The allied sovereigns saw that they must oppose a barrier to this destructive torrent, to preserve what is lawfully established.[38]

This course was justified, at least for the author of the circular, because

> the useful or necessary changes in the legislation and administration of states, must emanate alone from the free will, the reflecting and enlightened impulse of those whom God had rendered responsible for power. Everything which departs from this line leads necessarily to disorders much more insupportable than those which it pretends to cure.[39]

In short, according to the circular, action to prevent the overthrow of established authority is necessary to prevent "the baneful effects which would deliver the civilized world to the horrors of universal anarchy."[40]

Earlier, in 1820, Russia, Austria and Prussia had met in the town of Troppau, then a part of the Austrian Empire, to decide on joint action to suppress revolt against constituted sovereignty. As reported in *Niles*, the attending nations had issued a proclamation very similar to the one later issued at Laibach. The major continental powers appeared to have a stable and fixed frame of reference. The Troppau circular stated :

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[38] *Niles* 20 (July 14, 1821): 313.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

> The overthrow of the order of things in Spain, Portugal and Naples has necessarily aroused the cares and uneasiness of the powers who combated the revolution [the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars which followed from it] and convinced them of the necessity of putting a check on the new calamities with which Europe is threatened. The principle which united the great powers of the continent to deliver the world from the military despotism of an individual issuing from the revolution [Napoleon Bonaparte], ought to act against the revolutionary power which has just developed itself . . . . Without doubt the powers have the right to take in common, general measures of precaution against those states, where reform, engendered by rebellion, are opposed to legitimate governments, as example has already demonstrated, especially in the neighboring states by secret agents. In consequence, the monarchs assembled at Troppau have arranged together the measures required by the circumstances, and have communicated to the courts of Paris and London their intention of attaining the end desired, either by mediation or by force . . . . They [the signatories of the Declaration] desire only to maintain tranquility, and protect Europe from the scourges of new revolutions, and to prevent them as far as possible.[41]

The Troppau and Laibach declarations alone suggest that recognition of a Greek republic would appear to support subversion of order within the borders of another state and encourage a breakdown in orderly relations among states. Significantly, such statements were not only available to American political leaders; they were matters of record between governments. As a result, it would be difficult for European governments to change policy and take action that encouraged Greek independence from Turkey, much less a government founded on popular sovereignty and republicanism.

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[41] *Niles* 20 (March 10, 1821): 31. Adams acknowledged his first receipt of "authentic" copies of the Troppau circular on April 17, 1821. See Adams to Charles Hughes, April 17, 1821, in *Instructions*, Reel 4.

At a minimum, if the United States did move to recognize the Greek government that Luriottis claimed to represent, it risked creating the impression among European rulers that it was violating America's longstanding policy of neutrality, thereby compromising European perceptions of the nation's integrity. Given the public nature of their statements, it actually might be difficult for the major European powers to refrain from acting to counter an American initiative. If they failed to do so, they ran the risk of compromising their own credibility.

Adams and the Monroe Administration had little, if any, reason to think that opposition of the European powers toward movements of self-determination and freedom from established authority would change over time. Given British policies toward Ireland, the British Government, like those of the major continental powers, gave American political leaders very good reason to believe that Britain would resist actions which supported the principle of popular sovereignty.

Even so, the situation in Britain was quite different in one vital respect. Unlike the continental powers, Britain had consistently opposed the principle of intervention in the internal affairs of other countries unless and until there was clear evidence of threat to Britain herself. In May 1823 *Niles Register* reprinted a circular of the British Government dated January 19, 1823. The circular itself is a reprint which the British Government wanted to make of the principles of British foreign policy dating from 1821. As quoted in *Niles*, Britain wanted to reassert that the invasion of one sovereign nation by another "could not be safely admitted as a system of international law" but rather as "interference in the internal affairs of states" in ways which no treaty powers validated.[42] In essence, the British Government reasserted its long-stated policy of not intervening or attempting to influence or control the internal affairs of other states. The reprint included the following statement by the late foreign secretary, Lord Castlereagh:

> For certain states to erect themselves into a tribunal to judge of the internal affairs of others was to arrogate to themselves a power which could only be assumed in defiance of the law of nations and of common sense.[43]

Picking up on this cleavage, Adams had written Rush an Instruction in July of 1822: "The European Alliance, so far as Great Britain is a party to it, might be considered dissolved." In Adams' view, Britain was "publicly pledged to principles hardly reconcilable together, and their policy was as much at variance as their principles." Adams went on to state, "The principles and policy of the United States coincided with those of Great Britain and not those of the European Continental allies." He expressly referred to the principle of neutrality, i.e., nonintervention, as the shared common ground of principle and policy with Britain.[44] On this principle alone Britain had reason to challenge intervention by the United States in a struggle for power within the Turkish Empire. The principle which Clay had used to justify America's right and duty to intervene to support struggles for freedom was not shared in Europe, not by the British Government, not by the continental powers. Within the United States itself the principle was not validated by the prior conduct of Adams and the Monroe Administration.

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[42] *Niles* 24 (May 3, 1821): 137.

[43] Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 24. Castlereagh's original statement was on June 1, 1821.

[44] Adams to Rush, July 18, 1822 Instruction, in Monroe, *Writings,* 7:357.

For the continental powers it was vital to suppress rather than to support the principle that a people had the right to determine their own political destiny. For Britain, and also for Adams, the principle was one of avoiding interference in the internal affairs of another nation. The perspectives and principles differed; the end result was the same: no active substantive support for a people like the Greeks, engaged in an effort to obtain freedom from established and "legitimate" authority.

Apart from differences in principle, American leaders, and those in Europe who shared their passion for freedom, deeply distrusted the motives behind the behavior of those in power in Russia, in France, and in Great Britain as well. The following letter from Lafayette to Henry Clay of November 1822 provides an apt illustration of what was a widely shared mentality:

> Old governments, England, particularly, employ a great deal of cunning in fomenting divisions among nations, and in every nation among the parties, nay the individuals who enlist in the cause of mankind. Their friendship is almost as bad as their enmity.[45]

Lafayette is here referring to the position of British neutrality in the pending struggle between the liberal Spanish regime and the Holy Alliance. He goes on to caution:

> While common antipathy to the rights of man and nations link them together, the old systems and present views of each cabinet interfere with the general plan [for the suppression of freedom] of the Holy Alliance.[46]

In essence, as Lafayette saw it, European governments differed amongst themselves on policies and interests. They were united in their hostility to the cause of political freedom.

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[45] Lafayette to Clay, November 5, 1822, in Clay, *Papers*, ed. Hopkins, 3:311.
[46] Ibid.

Benjamin Rush shared very much the same perspective. On February 13, 1823, just eleven days before the date of the Despatch enclosing the Luriottis letter, Rush wrote from London:

> Nothing is more true than that the aristocracy of England is hostile to the constitutional system of Spain . . . . [If Spain is suddenly overwhelmed] the governing party in England will be removed from an embarrassment, and witness a result decidedly agreeable to all its political predilections . . . . I would wish to hope better things from the policy of this country from the vast interests to human liberty that are at stake, but for the present, I do not.[47]

In his concluding remarks Rush cautioned Adams that England has a "system where so much power is combined with so much oppression . . . such profuse contributions among the rich with so much agony among the poor."

In March 1823, less than one month after sending the Luriottis letter, Rush wrote Adams again, cautioning that in Britain

> her ministers are embarrassed between a secret, real sympathy with the principles of France and the Holy Alliance, on the one hand, fear of seeing Spain become a province of France, should France succeed in her invasion . . . They have been endeavoring to escape from this dilemma by the most anxious and extraordinary efforts to preserve peace.[48]

Rush concluded by cautioning Adams that the British Government "doesn't really want to combat the ultras [i.e., the extreme conservatives] in France."

Both on the basis of Britain's stated support for nonintervention and on a general perception of preference for autocracy, Adams and Monroe were on notice that any American intervention in the struggle between Turkey and the Greek people might well complicate relations with Britain. True, British policy toward Greece might change but, as Americans generally perceived it, the principles governing British policy were very different from principles of support for freedom. This opened up the potential for conflict should the United States intervene to support the right of the Greek people to found a government grounded on popular sovereignty.

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[47] Rush to Adams, February 13, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.

[48] Rush to Adams, March 20, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 24.

The United States was isolated. It was the only nation whose principles and values favored the cause of political freedom and independence from imperial rule—and was at the same time recognized by the major European powers as a sovereign, independent state. The nation's leaders not only perceived this isolation, they reacted with strong feelings of insecurity. For example, in a letter to Jefferson dated December 23, 1821, Monroe quoted the following words from the Laibach circular: "to preserve order in the civilized world." As Monroe saw it, "The terms civilized were probably intended to be applied to Europe only, but admitted to an appellation to this hemisphere."[49] For Monroe the reach of the system of legitimacy was ambiguous. In his judgment the system espoused by the Holy Alliance might, or just might not, have a geographic limitation. Just as Luriottis wanted American values and principles to help the cause of freedom in the Old World, the leaders of the Holy Alliance might well have more than a passive interest in extending their values and principles into the New World.

In January 1824 Middleton sent to Washington a copy of the official Russian newspaper, printed in French. It contained the following:

> With the overthrow of order in America will swiftly come the inseparable evils of chaos, where all the principles

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[49] Monroe, December 23, 1821, *Writings*, 7:342.

> which constitute social order will be forgotten. Anarchy appears following revolution, disorder follows anarchy.[50]

What the circular confirmed was that even in the New World the establishment of a regime by revolt against established authority was perceived as a threat to order in the Old World, strictly on the basis of ideology and principles of governance. The article confirmed what previous information should have already made apparent: Russia and France viewed governments founded on revolution against established authority as a threat to international peace and stability. In sum, there was strong evidence to support the assertions made in the *Edinburgh Review* that the struggle between autocracy and freedom could encompass efforts by the Old World to suppress freedom in the New World. Well before the arrival of Middleton's 1824 Despatch, Adams and Monroe had indications of this danger, which should have alerted them to the risks of intervening in the Old World to support principles of governance that Russia and France opposed.

Albert Gallatin wrote to Adams from New York on June 24, 1823 to report on conversations he had with the French foreign minister just prior to concluding his post as United States minister in Paris. In his letter Gallatin stated that he told the French foreign minister:

> [the] United States would oppose every undertaking of this kind [intervention in Latin America], and it might force them [the United States] into an alliance with Great Britain. Mr. de Chateaubriand answered in the most explicit manner that France would not undertake any attempt whatsoever of that kind or in any manner interfere in the American question. If he were sincere, he must have received some hint from the British Government similar to mine; for you may recollect the declaration that the armies and fleet of

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[50] Middleton to Adams, January 7, 1824, in *Despatches: Russia*, Reel 10 (translated from the French by Charles L. Booth).

> France would be at the disposal of Spain whenever Ferdinand was restored to his former glory.[51]

British principles and British interests would oppose any such moves, but the situation in Cuba in particular was ambiguous. As we saw in chapter 5, American statesmen feared that Britain herself might take Cuba as a way of enhancing the ability to fend off incursions by other European powers. After all, as Monroe knew, Britain did maintain such bastions as Gibraltar and Malta for the very purpose of asserting its power to protect its commercial and military interests.

The statement that the French foreign minister made to Gallatin was an oral statement of his intentions at that point in time. The French Government had made no binding commitment to refrain from actions in the New World as circumstances evolved in the future. Great Britain herself expressed deep concern about possible French ventures in the New World throughout the summer and fall of 1823. Adams was well aware of all of this.[52]

True, in the case of Latin America, protests over American diplomatic recognition had not gone beyond words. None of the European nations had broken off diplomatic relations with the United States. Only Spain had made an official protest, but what happened between Spain and her colonies did not affect the balance of power since neither was a significant or major power. What happened in Greece was a very different matter. It did risk destabilizing the balance of power among the major European powers. And the recent invasion of Spain by France showed that the continental powers were ready to use force (in Europe at least) to put down a government that was exercising its power under the aegis of popular sovereignty and had obtained that power by armed revolt against established authority. At the very least, recognizing a Greek republic might appear to be the action of a state whose actions appeared arbitrary and irrational, hence unreliable. European statesmen could actually interpret the action as part of what they perceived as an international conspiracy aimed at undermining "legitimate" authority throughout Europe.[53]

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[51] Gallatin to Adams, New York, June 24, 1823, in Gallatin, *Writings*, 2:370.

[52] See George Canning's proposal to Richard Rush for the United States and Great Britain to issue a joint declaration opposing any French moves in the New Hemisphere, discussed in chapter 8.

The situation was ambiguous. The presence of a revolutionary government in the New World posed questions of domestic order not so immediate or apparent as those posed in the Old World. From a European perspective, the rationale for action by the United States Government in the New World was stronger than it would be in the Old World. The ability of either Russia or France to project force into the New World was significantly more complicated than it would be in the Mediterranean. The British Navy had the power to decisively prevent any armed intervention by France, and even by Russia, if it chose to do so. British trade interests were well served by keeping the major continental powers out of Latin America. Also, as Lord Castlereagh had stated so eloquently, Britain opposed as a matter of principle intervention into domestic struggles for power (unless and until its own vital interests were threatened by the outcome of such struggle).

In terms of practical interests and effects, in terms of the practical ability to use power, the two situations were quite different. As a result, any official intervention by the United States Government to support the Greek cause carried a higher risk of a hostile response from the major European powers (as well as from Turkey). Therein lay a dilemma. If the Greek people either had achieved independence from Turkey (as Luriottis had suggested in his letter), or were shortly to acquire such independence, failure to extend diplomatic relations ran the risk of compromising moral principles that powerful American statesmen apparently had accepted as valid and binding. Even if freedom were not firmly established, Clay and others had argued vigorously in the case of Latin America that the United States had a moral obligation to extend diplomatic recognition as a way of supporting an ongoing struggle for freedom.

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[53] The Troppau and Laibach Declarations are evidence of this.

In mid-1823 there is no evidence that Adams and the Monroe Administration discussed the possibility that American activism in the Old World might trigger retaliation. Nevertheless, the evidence justifying such a discussion was readily available from the diplomatic correspondence and press reports just cited. Also, any alienation from the continental powers would inevitably make the United States much more dependent on the good will of Great Britain.[54] Gallatin had raised this very possibility in his final meeting with the French foreign minister in the spring of 1823. (Adams himself argued forcefully in late 1823 cabinet meetings that intervening in the Greek war for independence risked retaliation by Turkey, and possibly by the continental powers as well.[55])

By not getting involved, the United States, from a European standpoint, eschewed the role of aggressor in seeking to upset the status quo. Whether in so doing the nation also eschewed the principles which validated the mission of the United States as a Christian nation of citizens free from the coercion of outside force was a separate issue. For many educated and politically active Americans of the time this question of moral principle was the essential core issue.

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[54] See discussions surrounding the Canning proposal in chapter 8.
[55] Adams, November 21, 1823, *Memoirs*, 6:189, 195, 197.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GREEK REQUEST ANSWERED: A SYNTHESIS OF PRECEDENTS, PRINCIPLES AND INTERESTS

In August 1823 Monroe's cabinet met to consider the Luriottis letter. According to Adams' diaries, "Gallatin had proposed in one of his last dispatches, as if he were serious, that we should assist the Greeks with our naval force in the Mediterranean . . . . Mr. Crawford and Mr. Calhoun to countenance the project . . . . Mr. Calhoun descanted upon his great enthusiasm for the cause of the Greeks: he was for taking no heed of Turkey whatsoever." Adams was unmoved. "I told the President I thought not so lightly of a war with Turkey."[1]

There is no evidence Adams realized that Gallatin's proposal had originated with Lafayette or that Clay had received from Lafayette a letter containing the very same proposal Gallatin put forth. Monroe did know the background since Lafayette had written him outlining the proposal.[2] Even if Adams was not informed of the origin of Gallatin's proposal, there is every reason to assume that he realized what Gallatin, Crawford and Calhoun were doing. They were inviting and encouraging Monroe to take a position which repudiated the principles of foreign policy that Adams had put forth repeatedly in his diplomatic correspondence, in his conversations with the British minister in Washington and also in his July 4, 1821 speech on the steps of the Capital.

If Monroe sided with Adams' opponents, Adams would suffer substantial political damage. On the eve of an election year the president would have abandoned his secretary of state. Adams knew that Crawford, Calhoun and

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[1] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:173 (August 15, 1823).

[2] Lafayette to Jefferson, June 1, 1822, in Chinard, *Letters of Lafayette and Jefferson,* 411.

Gallatin would all run on tickets opposing him in the 1824 presidential election. He was in a very good position to see what was obvious. Domestic politics had obtruded into what was technically a matter of foreign relations.[3] As we saw in chapters 1 and 2, the proposals contained in the Luriottis letter were apt to prove popular with the people who would vote to choose the next president. Conversely, failure to support the Greek cause ran the risk of being politically unpopular within the United States. If Monroe did not side with Adams, he left Adams isolated, with the principles underlying Adams' foreign policy largely repudiated.

There was a further problem. Both Adams and Monroe had good reason to feel that involvement in the Greek cause, even involvement far short of armed intervention, ran a serious risk of creating friction not only with Turkey but also with Russia, and possibly with Britain and France as well. Unless handled properly, the administration's response to the Luriottis letter could generate problems, even dangers, in relations with the very powers in a position to influence the security and commercial interests of the United States.

Did Adams and Monroe have to choose between domestic and international conflict? Domestically, the precedent of Henry Clay's recent challenges to the administration's Latin American policy remained a powerful precedent. In the recent past, failure to support the cause of freedom by extending diplomatic recognition had caused political conflict within the United States. As for the nation's relations with other states, the recent French invasion of Spain was also a powerful precedent. The major European powers had provided strong evidence that they would not tolerate a government founded on the overthrow of established authority, at least not in Europe. Juxtaposed, these two precedents produced a quandary.

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[3] For further discussion on Calhoun's political maneuvering, see discussion in chapters 8 and 9.

To resolve this quandary, Adams needed to frame and Monroe needed to accept a response which "contained" rather than "developed" the issue of recognition of Greek independence. Otherwise their action ran the risk of producing factional conflict domestically and/or tensions with Turkey and the major European powers. More broadly, Adams also needed to provide a response that fit within the precedents and the principles which had characterized the Monroe Administration's prior conduct of the nation's foreign policy. Both domestically and abroad, a position taken on the basis of principle would encourage respect if not endorsement for the answer Adams and Monroe gave Luriottis.

Immediately after the August cabinet meeting, Adams met privately with Monroe.[4] He secured the president's permission to reply to Luriottis in the following terms:

> The United States could give assistance to the Greeks only by the application of some portion of their public force or their public revenue, and it would constitute a state of war with the Ottoman Porte and perhaps the Barbary powers. To make these disposals, either by force or by treasure, you are aware is by our constitution not within the competency of the Executive. It could be determined only by an act of Congress, which would assuredly not be adopted should it ever be recommended by the Executive.[5]

Adroitly and firmly Adams redefined the proposal Luriottis made in his letter. In Adams' reply, the real issue was one of war or peace with Turkey and the Barbary pirates. No longer was the focus on the act of diplomatic recognition or the giving of money for a people struggling to free themselves from tyrannical rule. It was on the consequences to the United States of any action which it took. Avoiding war, though, was not the stated rationale for refusing to take steps that could lead to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic.

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[4] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:173 (August 15, 1823).

[5] Adams to Rush, August 14, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 5.

Adams took care not to open himself up to charges of acting like a slave, of not having the courage to stand free from the coercion of others. He stated his case on grounds far removed from any fear of war, resting his case squarely on precedents and on principles which he asserted had long governed the foreign policy of the United States Government: "The policy of the United States with reference to foreign powers has always been founded upon the moral principles of natural law—peace with all mankind." For Adams, "The unvarying law of the United States has been peace with both belligerents." Adams wrote of "a succession of wars, national and civil, in almost every one of which one of the parties was contending for Liberty or for Independence." He told Luriottis that, despite the strong appeal of such causes, the United States had always remained neutral.[6] As Adams expressed it, both principle and precedent mandated that the United States Government decline to give either diplomatic recognition or grants of money to support the Greek people in their struggle for freedom.

To judge by prevailing standards of international law at the time, Adams was on sound ground. In the early 19th century, recognition of a belligerent during wartime was "an unneutral act."[7] Whether recognition of a de facto government was also an unneutral act was more debatable. American political leaders (including both Clay and Adams) stated that it was not; the rulers of Russia and the other continental powers vigorously asserted that it was. At the time of the Luriottis letter, Britain had acknowledged the de facto independence of the Latin American republics but had resisted strong commercial pressures to establish formal diplomatic relations. In sum, on the issue of de facto recognition the American standard was outside the consensus of the international community. Other nations did not acknowledge that the status of independence alone gave other nations an obligation, or even a right, to extend diplomatic recognition.

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[6] Adams to Rush, August 16, 1823 Instruction, in Monroe, *Writings*, 7:361.
[7] Whittaker, *United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 360.

Having articulated his principles and the precedents of how these principles had been applied in the past, Adams concluded his letter with the following summary:

> Precluded by their neutral position from interfering in questions of right, the United States have recognized the fact of sovereignty only when it is undisputed, or disputed without any rational prospects of success. In this manner the successive changes of Government in many European States and the revolutionary governments of South America have been acknowledged.[8]

There would be no acceptance of Luriottis' proposal to move toward diplomatic recognition of the government that he claimed to represent. Almost as an afterthought, Adams went on to suggest that "it will be a pleasure to be kept informed of the actual state of the cause, political and military." He gave Luriottis no evidence of what he would do with the information once he received it.

Substantively, Adams set a very high bar before diplomatic recognition would be considered in Washington. He was quite explicit in stating that the United States had extended diplomatic recognition to de facto governments—but was equally explicit in saying that it had not done so as a matter of course.

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[8] Adams to Rush, August 14, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 5.

> With regard to the recognition of sovereign states, and the establishment with them of a diplomatic mission, [there is] the exercise of the application of principles in which every nation must exercise some latitude of discretion.[9]

Adams gave no indication of what the United States would do in the case of a Greek republic. To the contrary, he merely stated that the United States in the past had extended diplomatic recognition only where there were "no rational prospects of reconquest by the former sovereign."

In diplomatic parlance, what Adams wrote to Luriottis was a *fin de non recevoir*. He gave answers which contained no commitment and no encouragement of any future aid. He completely ignored the vigorous assertions of de facto independence that Luriottis so eloquently phrased in his letter. He extended no invitation for further direct communication with the United States Government in Washington. His only concession was to advise Luriottis to direct future communications to the American minister in London. At the most, Rush was an agent for the transmission of information and perspective. The Monroe Administration gave him no authority to negotiate with Luriottis, much less to make commitments on behalf of the nation. (In contrast, on July 29th, just weeks before replying to Luriottis, the Monroe Administration *did* give Rush broad powers to negotiate with the British Government on such vital issues as free trade with British colonies and rights of neutral powers to trade in time of war.[10] The Monroe Administration made no parallel delegation of authority to deal with Luriottis.)

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[9] Ibid.

[10] See Whittaker, *United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 432ff.

As Adams expressed it, the United States Government was bound (one senses both legally and morally bound) to follow the negative course he outlined to Luriottis. Precedents must be respected, and what they told Adams was clear and quite rigid. Moreover, Adams made no effort to seek information that would demonstrate Greek independence from Turkey. He did not suggest that the Greeks send a delegation to Washington to explore any prospects for trade or other ties which might facilitate the opening of diplomatic negotiations. Short of a breach of etiquette and civility, Adams did virtually everything he could to distance the Monroe Administration from contact with representatives of the Greek revolt.

For reasons of domestic politics, neither Adams nor Monroe was in a position to ignore the Luriottis letter entirely. The cabinet discussions on the use of American naval ships to support the Greek cause alone provide compelling evidence of this fact. But if Adams and the Monroe Administration had wanted to explore an opening of diplomatic relations, they would have proceeded quite differently. One would have expected them to take at least some of the specific steps which preceded the extension of diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics.

In the case of Latin America, one of the first steps the United States pursued was to establish, publicly, a position of neutrality in the conflict between the peoples of Latin America and Spain. In a March 8, 1822 message to the House of Representatives, Monroe defined the conditions which he believed justified the status of what he termed neutrality.

> As soon as the movement assumed such a steady and consistent form as to make the success of the provinces probable, their rights to which they were entitled as nations, as equal parties to a civil war were extended to them. Each party was permitted to enter our ports with

> its public and private ships, and to take from them every article which was the subject of commerce with other nations.[11]

In an Instruction to Albert Gallatin in Paris dated May 19, 1818, Adams had defined the status of neutrality in these terms:

> By the usual principles of international law, the state of neutrality recognizes the cause of both parties as just . . . that is it avoids all consideration of the merits of the contest . . . that when abandoning that neutrality, a nation taking sides in a war of other parties, the first question is the justice of the cause to be assumed.[12]

What Adams suggested was that a state of neutrality mandated no exercise of the powers of the United States on the basis of a "consideration of the merits of the contest." In his Instruction Adams did not explain to Gallatin what he felt would justify becoming a party to a conflict between other nations. Still, his 1821 speech and his diplomatic correspondence made it quite clear that the justice of the cause of others, while necessary, was not in itself a sufficient reason to depart from neutrality.

In an Instruction to Hugh Nelson dated April 28, 1823, Adams expanded on what constituted appropriate behavior for a neutral power.

> Two of the principal causes of wars between the nations of Europe since that of our own Revolution has been ended [are] civil liberty and national independence. To these principles and to the cause of those who contend for them, the people of the United States can never be indifferent. A feeling of sympathy, one of partiality for those of every nation struggling to secure or defend those great interests has been and will be manifested by this Union.[13]

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[11] Message from the President, March 8, 1822, in *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 38:1238.

[12] Adams to Gallatin, May 19, 1818, in *Instructions*, Reel 3.

[13] Adams to Nelson, April 28, 1823, in *Instructions,* Reel 4.

Adams went on to say that it was a "delicate duty to indulge this feeling while maintaining the dictates of neutrality." He spoke explicitly of the danger of sentiments getting the nation involved in foreign wars. As a part of neutrality, he stipulated that the United States must "maintain peace amidst the convulsion of foreign wars and to enter the lists as parties to no cause other than our own."[14]

Adams' April comments to Nelson paralleled those he made to Luriottis in August. Both were remarkably congruent with Adams' July 4, 1821 speech. On August 16, 1823 Adams wrote Benjamin Rush in London, reaffirming his position: "The policy of the United States, with reference to foreign nations, has always been founded upon the principles of natural law, peace with all mankind."[15]

The timing of Adams' messages is significant. His Instruction to Nelson left Washington two weeks after receipt of the Luriottis letter. His Instruction to Rush bears a date just two days after his response to Luriottis and in all probability accompanied the letter to Luriottis. Should Congress or the American public ever question the administration's policy toward the Greek War of Independence, Adams had laid down clear markers of what were for him—and presumably for the Monroe Administration—the principles which should govern any relations with peoples in revolt against established authority.

In Adams' view, the duties of neutrality did not mean that the government should refrain from rhetoric in support of freedom. His 1821 speech and his Instruction to Nelson both explicitly sanctioned statements in support of the struggle for freedom. In the words of his July 4, 1821 address, "There will be her heart, her benediction and her prayers be."[16] As for Monroe, in a letter of April 20, 1820 to Albert Gallatin in Paris, he had written, "With respect to the colonies, the object has been to throw into the scale, in a moral sense, the weight of the United States, without so deep a commitment as to make us a party to its interests." Monroe went on to affirm, "All Europe must expect the citizens of the United States to support the cause of the colonies."[17] Monroe had spoken eloquently in his messages to Congress of the nation's support for the struggle for freedom in Latin America. We have seen that in 1822 he had done the same in speaking of Greece itself. American political leaders deemed partisan rhetoric quite compatible with the status of neutrality.

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Adams to Rush, August 16, 1823 Instruction, in Monroe, *Writings*, 7:361.

Looking back from the present, it is clear that—in the case of Latin America—Adams and Monroe had defined the status of neutrality in a way that took something important away from the mother country. As they defined the term, the status of neutrality meant that the United States would no longer endorse the rights of the mother country as binding upon those in rebellion. In the eyes of the United States, the two sides had become equals. Adams' 1819 Despatch to Rush in London made this point expressly:

> We have conceived the struggle between Spain and their colonies as a civil war, the essential question of which was their independence or subjugation to Spain. In this war the avowed and real policy of the United States has been to remain neutral.

Adams went on to assert that

> the parties have equal rights and are entitled to the same treatment by foreign nations . . . . As long as the contest

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[16] See p. 125.

[17] Monroe to Gallatin, May 20, 1820, in James Monroe Papers, NYPL, Reel 4.

> is maintained with reasonable prospects of success, recognition is not compatible with neutrality.[18]

In practice, neutrality, as Adams defined it, was an effective way of distancing the United States from those who had previously exercised sovereignty. It was a maneuver which created future flexibility of movement toward recognition, particularly when accompanied with rhetoric by American statesmen in support of those in rebellion. In a Despatch sent to agents of the United States in Latin America, Adams graphically outlined the advantages of neutrality to nations struggling for independence. The Despatch bore Monroe's personal endorsement. In Adams' words:

> Had we recognized them there is much reason to believe that we should have given offense to every other power, and excited in them a disposition to counteract its probable effect . . . . Had the United States recognized the independence of the Colonies and had Spain made the recognition a cause of war, other greater evils might have followed. The allies might have been drawn into it, especially against the United States and the colonies, [with] thereby the ill consequences of which need not be enumerated . . . . By the course heretofore pursued by the United States, they [the United States] have given to the colonies all the advantages of recognition, without any of its evils.[19]

In his response to Luriottis, Adams specifically stated that recognition of Greek independence by the United States threatened similar "evils." However, in the case of the Greeks and the Turks, the United States Government did not issue any declaration stating that they were "equal parties to a civil war." As a practical matter, such a declaration would have provided legal sanction to respect any blockade of Turkish ports undertaken by the Greeks. And such a blockade could conceivably have closed the port of Smyrna, depriving the United States of the opium needed to acquire tea in China. In the Greek case there is no evidence that Adams and Monroe intended to treat both sides as "equals."

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[18] Adams to Rush, January 1, 1819, in *Instructions,* Reel 3.

[19] Instructions to Latin American Agents (endorsed by Monroe), March 24, 1819, in Monroe, *Writings,* 6:93, 95, 97.

In the case of Latin America, the actions of the United States had actually been much more than those of "neutrals." They had been "partisan neutrals." By engaging in partisan rhetoric and by treating both sides in the struggle as equals, they extended both material and moral support which aided the cause of rebellion against Spain. As Adams' Instructions to Latin American agents made clear, the United States wanted credit in Latin America for the partisan nature of its neutrality. As Monroe's letter to Gallatin made clear, American statesmen felt a need to justify that the United States was extending practical, substantive support for the cause of freedom. To a certain degree Clay's public rhetoric urging manly support for freedom in the face of danger may have put the administration on the defensive. Nevertheless, in what was essentially a private letter, Monroe projected that he felt perplexed and troubled about how far to go in committing the United States to any struggle for freedom outside the nation's borders.

Adams gave no evidence of sharing concerns over the proper course the nation should pursue. In an Instruction to Nelson of April 28, 1823, Adams cautioned that the United States should "indulge our feelings [of support for the cause of freedom] so far as it may be compatible with the duties of neutrality," but only so far, because the first and paramount duty of the government was "to maintain peace amidst all the convulsions of foreign wars, and to enter the lists as parties to no cause, other than our own."[20]

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[20] Adams to Nelson, April 28, 1823 Instruction, in Adams, *Writings,* 7:351.

In an Instruction dated May 27, 1823 Adams stated:

> To a cause reposing on this basis [the basis of freedom and popular sovereignty], the people of this country could never be indifferent, and their sympathies have accordingly been in great unanimity and consistency enlisted in their favor. The sentiments of the Government of the United States have been in proper harmony with those of the people, and while forbearing, as their duties of neutrality prescribed, from every measure which could be considered hostile to Spain. So long as a contest of arms, with a rational or even remote prospect of eventual success by Spain, the United States could not recognize the independence of the colonies as existing de facto without trespassing on their duties to Spain.[21]

On the face of it, Adams was writing to justify the failure to extend earlier diplomatic recognition to the new Latin American republics. The timing of his Instructions, however, suggests that he may have had the Luriottis letter in mind as well. The principles contained in Adams' Instructions clearly supported the decision not to extend diplomatic recognition to the government that Luriottis claimed to represent. Moreover, Adams and Monroe gave no indication, whether in cabinet meetings, in official correspondence or in private letters, that they believed Turkey lacked "even a remote prospect" of reconquering Greece. Pending receipt of such evidence, neutrality was an alternative—if the United States planned to move toward an eventual recognition of the Greeks as a sovereign, independent nation. It is not an option that Adams and Monroe appear to have considered.

In the case of Latin America the major European powers had not acted to deter what the United States did, either in treating the Spanish colonies as equals in their war against Spain or in the eventual diplomatic recognition of their independence. Spain had protested, but her protests had not gone beyond words.

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[21] Adams to Anderson, May 27, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 4.

Action by the United States Government to support the rebellion in Greece, however, was apt to be a very different matter. Such action would signal that the United States was prepared to act even where its own security and commercial interests were not at risk and, more ominously, to act in ways that were either hostile or indifferent to the major European powers. In the case of Greece, "partisan neutrality" might well send a signal that the United States was a disruptive, even a threatening, member of the family of nations. To go further and actually extend diplomatic recognition almost invited hostility.[22] Adams stated just that in the letter which he wrote to Luriottis.

In late 1823, when the issue of support for Greek independence became an urgent and compelling domestic political issue, Adams did argue forcefully the need to consider the response of other nations to any actions taken by the United States. In chapters 8 and 9 we will explore in detail how Adams and Monroe responded to the domestic political challenge they then faced. But in August 1823, when the Cabinet met to decide how to respond to the Luriottis letter, there were sufficient alternative grounds on which to deny the requests Luriottis had made. Specifically, there was no compelling evidence to back up Luriottis' assertion that the people of Greece were irretrievably free of Turkish rule or that they in fact lived under a functioning independent government. In diplomatic parlance, the issue was not yet "ripe" for resolution.

What was clear at the time of the Luriottis letter was that the principles and precedents that would guide Adams in his response were already in place. First, Adams had made clear that the principles of governance in Europe should be kept separate and distinct from those of the New World. His conversations with the British minister in Washington and his diplomatic correspondence in the spring and summer of 1823 alone make made his position clear. Noninvolvement in relations between states in Europe was a necessary application of that principle. Second, as a matter of established policy, de facto sovereignty was a necessary but by no means a sufficient basis for extending diplomatic recognition by the United States. Third, as a basic matter of principle, any substantive exercise of the sovereign power of the nation must serve the security and trade interests of the nation. None of Adams' principles, none of his previous policies, lent support to United States Government involvement in the Greek War of Independence. All found expression in the essentially nonresponsive answer which Adams made to Luriottis on the 14th of August.

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[22] As we saw in chapters 5 and 6, the tsar in particular saw any revolt against established authority as a threat to the peace and security of all established rulers.

In Latin America, one further step on the road toward recognition had been to give those struggling for freedom the status of belligerents. As early as 1817 Monroe had spelled out what he felt should precede extending the status of belligerents to a people struggling to achieve their freedom from imperial rule.

> To obtain correct information on every subject in which the United States is interested, to inspire just sentiments in all persons in authority, on either side, of our friendly disposition so far as it may comport with an impartial neutrality and to secure proper respect to our commerce in every port and from every flag, it has been thought proper to send a ship of war with three distinguished citizens along the southern coast with instructions to touch at such ports as they may find expedient for their purposes. With existing authorities, with those in the possession of and exercising the sovereignty, must the communication be held; from them alone can redress for past injuries committed by persons acting under them be

> restrained; by them alone can the commission of the like in the future be prevented.[23]

Very clearly, where the United States recognized a "belligerent" status, certain practical benefits ensued. Such status legitimated the right of the United States to initiate direct diplomatic contact with those in rebellion. To judge by the tone and by the substance of the letter to Luriottis, Adams and Monroe were not open-minded on the subject. They neither took nor indicated that they were receptive to initiatives comparable to those they had taken prior to the recognition of the new Latin American republics.

Great Britain's course in Latin America is significant. It shows that in dealing with Greece Adams was not willing to go as far as Britain had gone in Latin America. As Rush reported from London, on May 5, 1822 Lord Londonderry in Parliament had stated "that whilst this government had neither formally recognized, nor entered into correspondence that would imply recognition of these new governments, it had nevertheless considered them governments de facto; had looked upon the parties at war in that quarter of the world as belligerents, had responded as such to their rights of blockade."[24] Not coincidentally, Great Britain had strong interests in promoting the independence of the new Latin American republics from Spain as a way of furthering its commercial interests.

However, Britain also had an interest in avoiding a clear break in relations with the major Continental powers. In a June 1822 Despatch Rush cautioned:

> As to any formal or perfect recognition of the independence of any of the new states of South America, I greatly doubt that this government will give in to it, except in consultation with the European

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[23] Monroe, Annual Message, December 1, 1817, in *Writings*, 6:37.

[24] Rush to Adams, May 5, 1822, in *Despatches: Great Britain,* Reel 23.

> Alliance, when the hope of preserving peace in the East will tend to bind still more closely together.[25]

The peace in the East that Rush referred to was the peace between Turkey and Russia, then threatened by the uprising of the Greek people. What Britain did in the New World could, in Rush's view at least, influence how other powers treated British interests in the eastern Mediterranean. In current diplomatic parlance, Rush pointed to what we would term "linkage" between positions taken in Latin America and positions taken at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.[26] It was a message that could apply to the United States as well. How the United States responded to the Luriottis letter could influence how Britain and the continental powers responded to American concerns about the future of Cuba.

On March 1, 1823 the British Government did in fact extend belligerent status to Greece. Greek pirates were disrupting British commerce in the eastern Mediterranean and the Turkish Government was largely unable to prevent their depredations. By recognizing Greece as a belligerent, Britain could deal with those in control of the waters around Greece and hold them accountable. George Canning, the British foreign secretary, put the British case for belligerent status in these terms: "Belligerency was not so much a principle as a fact."[27] The records consulted do not reveal that American-flagged vessels in early or mid-1823 faced the same problem in the eastern Mediterranean. Should the United States choose to pursue a course leading to recognition, however, the risk of piracy was a plausible justification for extending belligerent status and thereby beginning a dialogue with the government which claimed to represent the people of Greece.

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[25] Rush to Adams, June 10, 1822 (ibid.).

[26] Rush would subsequently tell Adams that Britain might be forced by the pressures of its commercial interests to extend diplomatic recognition, despite the pressures against recognition exerted by Russia and the continental powers. See Rush to Adams, June 24, 1822 (ibid.).

[27] Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 326.

In his December 1822 annual message to Congress, Monroe justified recognizing the status of belligerency while maintaining neutrality with these words:

> Sustaining our neutral position and allowing to each party while the war continues equal rights, it is incumbent on the United States to claim with equal rigor the faithful observance of our right according to the well known law of nations.[28]

Only by direct contact with those exercising de facto power could such respect be assured. Monroe's words, however, were aimed at Latin America, not at the situation unfolding in Greece.

At least for Adams there were two additional conditions that were important before the United States exercised its power to extend diplomatic recognition to a newly formed nation. In cabinet debates in November 1822 Adams stated, "Mine has invariably been that we ought to send none [diplomatic missions] but in return for ministers sent by them here." He urged, "The only view for the appointment of Ministers Plenipotentiary to any of these states is to establish with them commercial treaties."[29] In his letter Luriottis had not offered to send any diplomatic representative to the United States to discuss the issue of recognition of the emerging Greek state. Adams had certainly not encouraged him to do so in his reply. And there were no trade relations with the Greeks then in revolt against Turkish rule. While neither of Adams' stated conditions had become a matter of publicly acknowledged precedent in the extending of diplomatic recognition, both conditions were present in the case made for diplomatic recognition of the new Latin American republics. Agents of the Latin American republics had long solicited American support in Washington. Often overstated in political debate, trade with Latin America was nevertheless a visible reality. This was not so in the case of Greece.

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[28] Monroe, Sixth Annual Message, December 3, 1822, in *Writings*, 6:299.

[29] Adams, November 28, 1822, in *Memoirs*, 6:110.

In a letter to Monroe, James Madison summarized the need for a well-documented case before actually extending diplomatic recognition to a nation emerging from revolt against its former rulers. Writing of the Spanish minister's protest at United States diplomatic recognition of the Latin American republics, Madison stated:

> The successive steps, openly taken, manifesting our sympathy with their cause and our anticipation of its success and especially our declaration of neutrality toward the contending parties, as engaged in a civil not in an insurrectory war [showed] the world that we never concealed the purposes that governed us, nor the policy which terminated in the decision last taken . . . . Although there may be no danger of hostile consequences from the recognition act, it is desirable that our Republic should stand fair in the eyes of the world not only for its own sake, but for that of republicanism itself. Nor would perhaps a conciliatory appeal to the candor and liberality of the better part of Europe be a superfluous precaution.[30]

Madison expressed the matter quite accurately. In the case of the Latin American republics, diplomatic recognition was the natural culmination of a series of steps previously taken.

In a letter to Jefferson dated June 1, 1822, Lafayette conveyed very much the same message.

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[30] Madison to Monroe, May 6, 1822, in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong., Reel 8.

> The right of emancipation in the colonies, under constitutions which have been fully evinced in Latin America, has been profound and attested by the US in such a forcible and fundamental series of arguments and actions that their conduct with regard to other parts of America has become a matter of course.[31]

In legal terms the United States had very clearly "laid a foundation" for its recognition in Latin America. The Luriottis letter provided the opportunity to begin such a process in Greece. It did not happen. The United States could have: proclaimed a status of neutrality in the struggle between Turkey and Greece, thereby giving each party equal access to goods and services from the United States; extended to Greece the status of a "belligerent power" with certain rights of blockade; sent an official delegation to meet with the members of the Greek Government; encouraged the sending of diplomatic representatives from Greece to Washington; established some type of commercial intercourse justifying a treaty of commerce. Adams and the Monroe Administration took none of these steps. To the contrary, Adams in his letter did not even affirm any principles which he felt justified a future use of the substantive power of the United States Government to support the cause of freedom in the eastern Mediterranean. He gave Luriottis no benchmarks that would lead the United States Government to recognize a Greek republic. Adams merely affirmed that once conditions justifying diplomatic recognition were in place, the United States would exercise its "discretion" in deciding whether to recognize. Meanwhile there would be no direct contact with the United States Government in Washington, at least none initiated by Adams and the Monroe Administration. In short, Adams reaffirmed his longstanding principle of noninvolvement in the quarrels of other nations and, more specifically, of noninvolvement in quarrels between nations in Europe.

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[31] Lafayette to Jefferson, June 1, 1822, in Chinard, *Letters of Lafayette and Jefferson*, 408.

Insofar as foreign powers were concerned, Adams' letter could only build credibility for the United States. From their perspective, the United States had acted in a manner consistent with its principles of nonengagement in affairs between European states. Adams' response to Luriottis documented that the nation had in place, and had in practice followed, a coherent system of principles which it was prepared to apply in a consistent fashion. Both the consistent application of these principles and the substance of the principles were positive in building credibility and respect in relations with the major European powers.

Within the United States, the significance of the Luriottis letter was more complex. Adams' message to Luriottis was quite consistent with the principles which Adams and the Monroe Administration had articulated in deferring and then eventually extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics. As a result, the positions Adams took in his letter to Luriottis had the clear validation of prior precedent. If Adams' letter ever became public, it had the advantage of engaging support from those who had accepted the principles which had validated the administration's earlier policy of delayed recognition of the Latin American republics. Adams' and Monroe's contemporaries would expect and also respect evidence of consistency in the behavior of their political leaders. Should Adams and Monroe later face domestic political pressures to take steps toward diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic, they had strengthened their hand.

Whether their policy and principles would prevail, however, was not foreordained. Clay or those who shared his perspective could still challenge both the principles of the administration's foreign policy and the resulting policy which governed their response to the Luriottis letter. We will explore the nature of the confrontation which actually took place in chapter 8 and chapter 9.

As background it is important to note that as early as March 1822 Monroe had given a good summary of the criteria which he felt were necessary before the United States should extend diplomatic recognition. In a message to Congress Monroe stated:

> When the result of such a contest is manifestly settled, the new governments [of Latin America] have a claim to recognition by other powers which should not be resisted. To motives of interest, this government has disclaimed all pretensions, having resolved to take no part in the controversy or any other measure which should not merit the sanction of the civilized world.

Monroe then went on:

> This measure [that of diplomatic recognition] is proposed under the thorough conviction that it is in strict accord with the law of nations; that it is just and right as to the parties and that the United States owe it to their station and character in the world, as well as their essential interests [the essential interests of the United States] to adopt it [extend recognition].[32]

Monroe's criteria for the conditions that justified extending diplomatic recognition were clear and straightforward. They were also quite consistent with what Adams wrote to Luriottis in 1823. Even so, Monroe's statements went substantially beyond what Adams wrote to Luriottis in August of 1823. They implied a moral obligation to extend diplomatic recognition once the necessary criteria were met. By way of contrast, Adams in his letter to Luriottis had emphasized that the key factor was one of discretion. The focus was different from Monroe's. Going forward, this difference meant that the two were not in automatic agreement over how to handle the administration's response to unfolding events in Greece. Was de facto independence a necessary or a sufficient reason for extending diplomatic recognition? Monroe appeared ambivalent on this point, but Adams was very clear, both in his public statements and in his advice to Monroe. De facto independence was a necessary condition, generating a situation where the United States would exercise what Adams termed its "discretion."

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[32] Message From the President of the United States, *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 38:1240 (March 8, 1822).

More immediately there was the issue of what Monroe referred to as "foreign criticism" for any support extended to a people struggling to determine their own political destiny. The Spanish and the Russian governments had already made their positions abundantly clear. They rejected the principles of civic freedom that Adams, Monroe and all American statesmen embraced. In his 1822 message to Congress, Monroe himself put this great difference in perspective:

> The immense space between the Powers [Europe], even those which border the Atlantic, and these provinces, makes the movement [the independence of Latin America] of less interest and excitement to them than to us. It is probable, therefore, that they have been less attentive to the progress than we have been.[33]

From Monroe's perspective extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics risked hostility from the major European powers. He rationalized that risk away. He argued that the matter was of "less interest and excitement" to the European powers than to the United States. Monroe's arguments did not encompass whether any future decision to extend diplomatic recognition might well be different where, as in Greece, the matter was of more "interest and excitement" to the European powers than to the United States. As

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[33] Ibid.

Monroe presented the matter, the United States in Latin America was asserting its moral right to extend recognition, and was doing so where there was only a limited prospect that the United States would suffer by its actions—but also where the interests of the nation were furthered by the act of recognition. Still, in his words there was a hint of anxiety.

Even where the American government perceived that de facto sovereignty was firmly established and its interests were directly involved, Monroe suggested that there was a question of whether other powers would share his perspective, and share also his assertion that it was therefore right for the United States Government to extend diplomatic recognition. Monroe projected the need to defend and to justify his positions against any potential challenge coming from Europe. He manifested a need to proceed deliberately and with caution. But he also projected a will to proceed absent evidence of a strong danger of harm to the United States.

There were, in the case of Greece, two further, major hurdles to jump. First was geography. Adams had made it quite clear that, as a matter of principle, in quarrels between European states the United States should avoid any involvement. Monroe implied, though he did not so clearly state, that the "immense space" physically separating the Old and the New World meant that the justification for action by the United States in the New World might not apply in the Old World. Presumably that "immense space" reduced the immediate and pressing need to act, just as it impaired the practical ability to act. Monroe's focus was one of practicality. As Adams expressed it, the issue was one centered on principle. For him the responsibility of the United States Government was to serve the commercial and security interests of the nation and to avoid any use of the nation's sovereign power that conflicted with these principles. As a result, any recognition of the new Greek Government would require a showing that such action was consistent with the nation's security and trade interests. Monroe had spoken of "interests," but in a nebulous and much less well-defined manner.

In terms of relations with other nations, including the government Luriottis claimed to represent, the correspondence between Adams and Luriottis ended up having virtually no impact. On December 8, 1823 Benjamin Rush wrote from London to advise Adams as follows:

> I have not been unmindful of your instructions conveyed to me in your Despatch #74 of the 18th of August, relative to the Greeks, but have not heretofore found myself in any degree able to execute upon its contents. The letter to Mr. Luriottis which it confided to my care, still remains in my hands.[34]

Rush then reported to Adams that he met with representatives of a body called the Greek Committee. He suggested to Adams that "the [English] friends of the cause here are at present well satisfied with what they have last heard of the conduct of Great Britain towards the Greeks." Despite this change, Rush again cautioned Adams that Russia would oppose any republican government in Greece.

On February 10, 1824, almost one year after Luriottis wrote to Adams, Rush reported from London, "Mr. Luriottis returned to London a short time ago, and as soon as I could command the opportunity, I had a personal interview with him for the purpose of delivering the letter which you charged me in your dispatch of the 18th of August [note delivered on the 3rd]." Rush told Adams that Luriottis was accompanied by "a distinguished Greek and lately President of the Senate of his country."[35] According to Rush, this envoy, a Mr. Orlando, "confirmed the favorable accounts, now flowing from all sources, of the continued success of the arms of their countrymen by land and by sea." Rush also advised Adams that Mr. Orlando gave assurances that charges of corruption that had been leveled against the Greek government were no longer relevant. In Mr. Orlando's view, the high character of the new head of government in Greece afforded "an encouraging guarantee of the purity of the civil administration."

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[34] Rush to Adams, December 8, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain,* Reel 25.
[35] Rush to Adams, February 10, 1824, in *Despatches: Great Britain,* Reel 26.

There was further correspondence, but it too had little practical significance. On June 10, 1824 Luriottis again wrote to Adams, a letter marked "received" at the State Department on August 18, 1824, just one year since Adams had replied to the plea for diplomatic recognition and money contained in Luriottis' original letter. In this new letter Luriottis stated, "I can assure Your Excellency that Greece will proceed with courage to the combat, and nothing can stop her progress as she is evidently protected by Divine Providence." Luriottis then dismissed reports of civil strife among the Greek patriots struggling for independence from Turkey. He renewed his plea for diplomatic recognition and, with more urgency, for a loan of money, justifying his request in these terms: "If, however, the Greeks, without arms or ammunition, without ships of war, and even without bread, have done such great prodigies, what may not be expected of them, with provisions and with all the necessaries."[36]

Luriottis gave a lengthy and graphic description of his countrymen's "heroic successes." He then went on to make comments which could not fail to attract Adams' notice.

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[36] Rush to Adams, June 18, 1824, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 26; see also Luriottis to Adams, June 10, 1824, in Orlando et Luriottis, *Les Philhellenes*, 201.

> The Greek Government would already have dispatched an envoy of some kind to your Government, had not the fear of jealousy or of giving pretext for jealousy to other governments, induced them to defer this step.

Luriottis concluded:

> I have seen with great pleasure in an English paper the motion made in one of your sittings that your government should send an agent to Greece, to take a survey of the state of affairs there. May that measure soon be adopted! Strengthened by the friendship and assistance of your people, Greece will want nothing to crown her glorious undertaking.

(The motion that Luriottis spoke of and the vigorous debate it provoked in Congress will provide a vital part of chapter 9.) Luriottis then mentioned, almost *en passant*, that he was enclosing a letter addressed to the Marquis de Lafayette who was then on a triumphal sentimental tour of the United States.

The archival sources consulted do not reveal the contents of the letter Luriottis addressed to Lafayette. When Adams received the Luriottis letter and its enclosure for Lafayette, the presidential elections were less than three months away. As a leading candidate for President, Adams was in a good position to grasp the potential domestic significance of the correspondence, although his diaries make no mention of it.

In his memoirs Rush referred to a meeting that he had with Mr. Luriottis and Mr. Orlando in London on the 3rd of March, 1825. Rush stated that he delivered to Mr. Luriottis a letter

> from Adams, Secretary of State. Adams' letter was in answer to one in which Mr. Luriottis had asked the US for "active aid in the cause of Greek emancipation." Adams puts the refusal on the ground of constitutional

> and international duty, "not on indifference to the cause of Greece, but excluding such an inference."[37]

Rush then noted that Mr. Orlando had been instructed

> to convey to me its [the Greek Government's] thanks for the interest I had shown last winter in London, in the cause of Grecian emancipation. This had merely had reference to an occasion in which I had publicly uttered expressions of good will to that cause of suffering humanity, in a classic land—a feeling common to Christian mankind. Mr. Luriottis also delivered to me, from Prince Mavrocordato, Secretary of State of the Grecian government, a letter of personal thanks.[38]

Apart from such correspondence, the record shows that, after receipt of Adams' August 1823 letter, the Greek republic that Luriottis claimed to represent did not aggressively push the United States for official support. It did not at any time send representatives to the United States to engage in dialogue with officials in Washington. American warships were active in the eastern Mediterranean in 1823 and 1824 and the government Luriottis and Orlando represented could have interacted with them. They appear not to have done so.

Luriottis and his compatriots sought money and diplomatic recognition. The money they found another way to tap. Well-organized committees of leading citizens began in late 1823 and in 1824 to provide substantial economic support for the Greek cause. The economic motive for establishing official relations was therefore reduced within a year of Adams' reply to Luriottis. Money was coming to Greece. It came, however, from private, not public, official sources. Within the United States, private efforts to support the Greek cause actually rose in intensity at the very time that efforts by the Greeks to enlist official government support began to recede.

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[37] February 3, 1825, in Rush, *Residence at the Court,* 440.

[38] Ibid.

Before fading into the background, however, the Luriottis letter and Adams' reply to it had a role to play in domestic politics. On December 19, 1823 the Annals of Congress reported that, at President Monroe's request, the secretary of state had sent papers containing "correspondence with the Greeks" to the House of Representatives.[39] These papers were now in the public domain, available for public scrutiny.

On the eve of an election year, the Luriottis letter and Adams' reply to it entered the arena of domestic politics. Early in January, Adams' reply was published in a Boston newspaper. Mrs. Edward Everett's (Lotty's) reaction was as follows: "The letter of Mr. Adams in the paper of Wednesday in answer to that of the Greek gentleman in London showed a want of feeling toward the poor Greeks."[40] Daniel Webster wrote Everett to say that Adams' letter had compromised his ability to resist extending diplomatic relations to the government Luriottis claimed to represent. In Webster's words, "As to the danger from my motion of offending the Turk, I think we can disregard that, when we see the secretary of state corresponding with a Greek agent working in London, wishing him and his nation all success and publishing his correspondence."[41]

Although not part of any official discussion, there was one further interesting question: Did Luriottis actually have the authority to write to Adams the letter he sent? On June 23, 1823 the Greek secretary of state, Prince Mavrokordatos, wrote Adams a letter officially expressing interest in exploring diplomatic relations.[42] The letter arrived after Adams had sent his reply and had no practical impact. Nevertheless, the Mavrokordatos letter is interesting and raises intriguing questions. The rhetorical flourishes of the Luriottis letter, his relationship with Lafayette, suggest the possibility of an effort to obtrude into American domestic politics. As we will see in the next two chapters, this intertwining of domestic politics and foreign relations intensified in the months after Adams replied to Luriottis.

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[39] *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:870 (December 23, 1823).

[40] Mrs. Everett to Mr. Everett, January 10, 1824, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

[41] Webster, *Papers: Correspondence*, 1:344-345.

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[42] Pappas, "United States and the Greek War," 52.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW TO RECONCILE THE NATION'S VALUES AND THE NATION'S NEEDS FOR SECURITY

On August 19, 1823, just one day after Adams dispatched his letter to Luriottis, Benjamin Rush met in London with George Canning, the British foreign secretary. Although apparently unconnected, the issues discussed at that meeting would end up having a major bearing on how the Monroe Administration handled strong and rising domestic political pressure to support the cause of Greek independence. The subject of Rush's meeting was not Greece, but rather the war then raging between France and the liberal democratic government of Spain.

Rush reported that during his meeting he acknowledged that the French army in Spain might well end up suppressing the freedom of the Spanish people to choose their own government. Despite this loss, Rush wrote that he told Canning that Britain's foreign policy inspired what Rush termed "feelings of consolation." He indicated to Canning that the source of consolation lay in Britain's policy toward Latin America. As Rush expressed it, that policy meant that "Great Britain would not allow her [France] to go further and lay her hands on the Spanish colonies, bringing them under her grasp." In his Despatch to Adams, Rush explained, "I had in mind the sentiments promulgated upon the subject in Mr. Canning's note to the British ambassador in Paris [Sir Charles Stuart] on the 31st of March." [1]

As reported by Rush, Canning's note had stated the following:

> Time and the course of events appeared to have substantially decided the question of separation of the colonies from the mother country, although their formal

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[1] Rush to Adams, August 19, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 25.

> recognition as independent states by Great Britain might be hastened or retarded by external circumstances, as well as by internal conditions within the states themselves.

In essence the British Government acknowledged that de facto the Latin American republics were free of Spanish rule, beyond the reach of any reconquest by Spain. Suggested in the note was that such de facto independence might or might not lead to the extension of diplomatic recognition. Very much as Adams had done in responding to Luriottis, Canning left that matter to be decided by circumstances, both those within the newly independent republics and those more generally affecting the course of British foreign affairs.

Beyond acknowledging de facto independence, Rush reported telling Canning that he found one further and important source of "consolation" in British policy. The British Government's note had also contained a statement that

> his Britannic majesty disclaimed all intentions of appropriating to itself the smallest portion of the late Spanish possessions in America [and] that he [Canning] was satisfied that no attempt could be made by France to keep them under her domain, either by conquest or by cession.[2]

Rush was an experienced diplomat. One must assume that he conveyed his thoughts to Canning for a purpose. Certainly Rush's comments did provide opportunity for the British foreign secretary to state that British policy toward Cuba and the Latin American republics had not changed since the March 31 date of the note to the French Government. Beyond seeking any clarification of current British policy, Rush's comments also emphasized that Great Britain and the United States shared a common policy of respecting the independence of the newly formed nations of Latin America. Both governments accepted that they were independent.

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[2] Rush to Adams, August 19, 1823 (ibid.).

Britain (like the United States) would respect their independence and wanted assurance that France would not subvert their freedom.

An Instruction from Adams to Rush dated July 29th provides perspective on a more general context for Rush's meeting. In it Adams referred to negotiations with the British Government already undertaken by Rush. "The final result looked at [from the negotiations] is a more harmonious concert of public policy, and community of purpose between our two countries than has ever existed since the period of our independence."[3] Rush's statements to Canning emphasized one important "community of purpose" linking Britain and the United States, the policy of the two governments toward Latin America. While Rush did not have Adams' Instruction at the time of his meeting with Canning, Rush's comments were in complete accord with the framework Adams set forth in his Instruction.

As we saw in chapter 5, during the spring and summer of 1823 Adams himself had actively pursued a dialogue with the British minister in Washington. What Adams wanted, the importance of which he had stated repeatedly in his correspondence with Rush, was a general rapprochement with Britain, one which would lead to a resolution of outstanding differences. What Rush had emphasized in his meeting with Canning was a key instance where a commonality of policy already appeared to exist, namely, the goal of keeping Cuba and the newly independent Latin American republics from control by any of the major European powers.

Canning's reply to Rush's comments was quite unexpected. According to Rush:

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[3] Adams to Rush, July 29, 1823, in *Instructions,* Reel 5.

> Canning asked me what I thought my government would say to going hand in hand into this [a common policy toward the Latin American republics], in the same sentiment, not as he added that any concert of action under it, could become necessary between the two countries, but that the simple fact of our being known to hold the same sentiment would, he had no doubt, by its moral effect, put down the intentions of France, admitting that she should now entertain it.[4]

Rush reported that he responded by asking Canning to comment on a number of concerns.

> Would not such a step wear the appearance of the United States implicating themselves in the political connections of Europe? Would it not be acceding in this instance, at least to the policy of one of the great European powers, in opposition to projects avowed by others of the first rank?[5]

In his comments to Canning, Rush stressed that this had been "no part" of what Rush called the diplomatic system of the United States. Rather, "the very reverse of it" had been the foundation of United States policy. As Rush articulated it to Canning, the foundation of United States policy was to preserve peace and harmony with all nations, without offending or forming entangling alliances with any.

In effect Rush told Canning quite directly that the principles and the policies of the United States Government did not appear to countenance accepting Canning's overture. Rush invited Canning's further comments. Canning replied with these words:

> Was it possible that they [the United States] could see with indifference their fate decided upon by Europe? Were they [the interests of the United States] to be canvassed and adjusted without some proper

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[4] Rush to Adams, August 19, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 25.
[5] Ibid.

> understanding between the United States and Great Britain, the two chief maritime powers of the world? He hoped not and would wish to persuade himself not.[6]

Rush reported that he then met Canning's proposal by suggesting an alternative. Rush proposed that Great Britain consider immediate diplomatic recognition of the new Latin American republics. Do this, suggested Rush, "and the cause of all Spanish America triumphs." Faced with such a *fait accompli*, the justification for intervening with the ostensible purpose of restoring Spanish suzerainty vanished, in Rush's view.

Canning did not respond to Rush's proposal. Instead, he followed up his meeting by sending an informal note to Rush which confirmed the substance of the comments he had made to Rush in their meeting. Adams received Canning's note as part of the Despatch which Rush sent describing his meeting. In that Despatch, Rush told Adams that he believed Canning's proposal reflected concern that "ambitious enterprises are meditated [i.e., planned] against the independence of the new Spanish American states, whether by France alone or in conjunction with the continental powers I cannot say with any authentic grounds."

On August 28th Rush sent Adams a further Despatch, enclosing a second note from Canning. In Rush's words:

> Mr. Canning now distinctly informed me, that he has received notice of measures being in preparation by the powers of Europe relative to the affairs of Spanish America, so soon as the French succeed in their military movements in Spain.[7]

Rush told Adams he again had urged Canning to recognize the new republics as a way of dealing with this threat. Any subsequent European congress "could meet if it chose to take so harmless a step," but the matter would, in Rush's judgment, have no practical significance. At no point did Canning indicate to Rush that he would sponsor immediate recognition absent armed intervention in Latin America by the French.

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[6] Rush, *Residence at the Court,* 392 (August 22, 1823); Rush to Adams, August 19, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 25.

[7] Rush to Adams, August 28, 1823, in *Despatches: Great Britain*, Reel 25.

From a practical standpoint, there was much to commend in Canning's offer of Britain and the United States "going hand in hand." Canning's proposal offered promise of solving a very pressing problem the United States faced, namely, the future status of Cuba. Britain would refrain from annexing Cuba and would commit to keep France and the Holy Alliance from intervening in the New World. Despite these advantages, the proposition was troubling, and troubling in ways which bear on America's future treatment of the Greek struggle for independence.

If the United States Government rationalized acceptance of Canning's proposal as an opportunity to foster the cause of human freedom in the former Spanish colonies, the political case within the United States for involvement in the Greek struggle for freedom became stronger. If acceptance of Canning's proposal created the impression that the United States would involve itself in special engagements with one of the European powers, then the domestic political case for involvement in the cause of Greek freedom was also strengthened. In his August 14th letter to Luriottis, Adams had cited the very principle of neutrality in deferring any effort to explore the merits of extending diplomatic recognition to what Luriottis had called the Greek republic.[8]

Accepting Canning's proposal appeared to undermine America's longstanding principle of neutrality and nonalignment in quarrels between

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[8] See chapter 7, pp. 247-249.

European states. And violating this principle appeared to make it harder to resist engagement in a quarrel which Americans felt deeply about, namely, the cause of Greek freedom from Turkey.

There was another option. Adams and Monroe could decline Canning's offer on the basis that the political systems of the United States and the European powers, including Britain, were incompatible, and alliances between states with incompatible political systems should be avoided. Metternich actually would have understood and accepted this principle as a valid foundation for policy. In fact, he would suggest later that year, in November 1823, that the United States should be excluded from any conference convened on Latin America because "the United States were opposed to the fundamental principles, forms of government, manners, doctrines, and civil and political regime of Europe."[9] To decline Canning's offer on this basis would avoid foreclosing the possibility of intervening where an emerging state, Greece in particular, appeared to have a political system similar to that of the United States.

At least hypothetically, there appeared to be a way of declining Canning's proposal while still leaving the flexibility of moving toward diplomatic recognition for the Greeks. However, this hypothetical option was not viable within the context of Adams' principles, and there is no evidence that the Monroe Administration actually considered it.

From a practical standpoint, an acceptance of Canning's proposal risked intensifying pressures to extend diplomatic recognition to the Greeks. Declining

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[9] Metternich to Vincent, November 26, 1823, cited in Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning,* 120.

Canning's proposal provided the opportunity to reaffirm commitment to the principle of staying out of political quarrels on the far side of the Atlantic.

Whichever way Adams and Monroe turned, one fact was abundantly clear. The outpouring of support for the Greek cause was strong and well organized. Greece was very much on their minds as they assessed how to respond to Canning. They could not ignore Greece. And they did not. As we will see later in this chapter, the Greek cause came up repeatedly in discussions within the Monroe Administration.

Of course, as they pursued their discussions they had to proceed with very incomplete factual evidence. For example, in private correspondence Canning himself would later touch on a subject he had not mentioned to Rush, for reasons that are self-evident. In December 1823 Canning wrote the British ambassador in Paris that

> I have no objection to monarchy in Mexico . . . . Monarchy in Mexico, and monarchy in Brazil would cure the evils of universal democracy, and prevent the drawing of a line of demarcation which I most dread—America vs. Europe.[10]

Canning went on to suggest, "The United States, naturally enough, aim at this division and cherishes the democracy which leads up to it." Canning wanted one world of diplomacy.[11] He wanted the United States to become part of the balance of power among European states. In their foreign policy Monroe and Adams had stressed the avoidance of alliances with other powers. They most certainly did not want to foster a balance of power in the New World, with monarchies balanced against governments founded on the principle of popular sovereignty.

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[10] Canning to Sir William à Court, December 31, 1823, in Stapleton, *George Canning,* 394-396.

[11] Canning to Granville, December 28, 1823, in Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 120.

The August Despatches from Rush are marked "received" at the State Department on October 9th. On October 17th Monroe wrote to Jefferson enclosing these Despatches and Canning's two notes to Rush. In his letter Monroe solicited Jefferson's counsel.

> Many important considerations are invoked in this proposition [Canning's proposal]. First, shall we entangle ourselves at all in European politics and wars, on the side of any power against others, presuming that a concert, by agreement, of the kind proposed, may lead to that result? Second, if a case can exist in which a sound maxim may and ought to be departed from, is not the present instance precisely the case? Third, has not an epoch arrived when Great Britain must take her stance either on the side of the monarchies of Europe, or of the United States, and in consequence, either in favor of despotism or of liberty?

Monroe went on to state:

> My own opinion is that we ought to meet the proposal of the British government and make it known that we would view an interference on the part of the European powers and especially an attack on the colonies by them, as an attack on ourselves, presuming that, if they succeeded with them, they would extend to us.[12]

Substantively, Monroe indicated that he greatly feared possible moves by the French to gain influence in the New World by restoring Spanish rule in Latin America. In the background there was also the fear that Britain would seize control of the island of Cuba. As he expressed it, the nation was threatened and Canning offered a way toward security. On the surface Monroe favored accepting

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[12] Monroe to Jefferson, October 17, 1823, in Monroe, *Writings*, 6:324-325.

Canning's proposal, but his questions also indicated concern over giving up America's longstanding principle of neutrality.

Procedurally, Monroe's letter to Jefferson is revealing in three respects. First, it provides strong evidence that Monroe felt in charge in deciding the nation's foreign policy. Second, it shows that in making foreign policy Monroe reached outside his cabinet for advice. Third, Monroe's letter to Jefferson indicates that his dialogue with the secretary of state was not completely open. Monroe did not share with Adams the reply he received until well after Jefferson's response arrived in Washington.[13] It was by no means assured that the principles or the judgments of the secretary of state would govern the administration's response to Canning—or, for that matter, the administration's ultimate response to the Greek struggle for freedom.

Jefferson's response bears a date of October 24th.

> Our first and fundamental maxim should be never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe, our second never to suffer Europe to intermeddle with Cis-Atlantic affairs. America, North and South has a set of interests distinct from those of Europe, and peculiarly her own. She should therefore have a system of her own, separate from and apart from that of Europe. While the last is laboring to become the domicile of despotism our endeavor should be to make our hemisphere that of freedom.

Surprisingly, Jefferson immediately went on to recommend that the United States accept rather than decline Canning's overture. To justify his position, Jefferson gave Monroe a set of reasons that would have made Canning smile.

> By acceding to her [Britain's] proposal, we detach her from the band of old despots, bring her mighty weight in on the scale of free government and emancipate a

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[13] May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 198.

> continent at a stroke . . . . But the war in which the present proposition might engage us, should that be its consequences, is not her war, but ours. Its object is to introduce and establish the American system, of keeping out of our land all foreign powers, of never permitting those of Europe to intermeddle with the affairs of our nation . . . . Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of any one, or all the rest, and with her on our side we need not fear the world.[14]

Jefferson cautioned Monroe that the president should not on his own authority commit the United States to Canning's proposal. "The question now proposed involves consequences so lasting, and effects so decisive of our future," that the executive should not proceed on its own authority. Congress should debate and enter its judgment. Questions of who should determine fundamental issues of foreign policy did not, in Jefferson's view, rest solely with the president.

There were inherent contradictions in Jefferson's advice to Monroe. On the one hand, Jefferson seemed to suggest getting involved with a major European power. On the other hand, his stated goal was to free the New World from the influence of the major European powers. The reason Jefferson failed to see this contradiction was of fundamental importance. Jefferson failed to place Canning's proposal in the context of Canning's own principles and prior pattern of behavior. Jefferson thought only in the context of his own goals and objectives, not those of the British foreign secretary. In his Despatches Rush had referred repeatedly to the fact that he had urged Canning to recognize the independence of the Latin American republics. Canning had consistently refused to commit to such a step, despite acknowledging a de facto independence. This in itself was a warning that support for a republican form of government was not a cause Canning would embrace. Britain and the United States merely shared a desire to thwart French and

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[14] Jefferson to Monroe, October 14, 1923, in Monroe, *Writings,* 7:391.

Holy Alliance influence in the New World. Who would subsequently exercise power and influence in the New World was not a matter on which the two nations would necessarily agree. Rush's correspondence with Monroe and Adams, statements in the press, and earlier comments by Adams all indicated a basic distrust of British motives. There was ample warning that the result of even a limited alliance with Britain ran the risk of future misunderstandings and conflict. It was a subject Jefferson ignored.

Canning had stated his own principles very clearly in a public address he delivered just before becoming foreign secretary in the summer of 1822:

> There is in some countries an open, even a tacit struggle between the principles of monarchy and democracy. God be praised that in that struggle we have not any part to take. England benefits from a compromise and intermingling of those conflicting principles.[15]

Canning's principle was one of balance of power, with the ability of Britain to exploit that balance for its own advantage. Grounding Britain's foreign policy on abstract moral principles of right and wrong was not within his ken. Canning was quite right in one respect, however. Statesmen in Europe and in the United States generally saw conflict between nations as a struggle "between the principles of monarchy and democracy." In chapter 3 we saw this in Adams' and Clay's approach to foreign policy. In chapters 5 and 6 we saw that Holy Alliance also saw political confrontation in terms of conflict in principles of governance.

In a private letter to Monroe on September 15th, Rush stressed Britain's ideological indifference to the cause of freedom.

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[15] Canning (speech, Liverpool, August 30, 1822), cited in Stapleton, *George Canning*, 368.

> We have seen her wage a war of 20 years at a cost of treasure and blood incalculable in the support of the independence of other states when that independence was threatened by a movement proceeding from the people of France. We have seen her at the close of that contest abandoning the great interests of people of other states, anxious apparently only about monarchs and thrones.[16]

Referring specifically to Canning's proposal, Rush stated, "I am bound to own some distrust of the motives of such advances to me whether directly or indirectly by this government at this juncture in the world."[17] In his judgment, Canning's proposal was "bottomed on their own calculations." Rush clearly placed that proposal in the context of British motives. Like Jefferson, though, Rush failed to link these motives to the practical consequences that might flow from accepting the British foreign secretary's proposal. Rush, like Jefferson, suggested positive consideration of Canning's overture, "whatever may be the motives, if they promise good effects."

On October 30th, six days after Jefferson's letter to Monroe, James Madison wrote his response to Monroe:

> With that cooperation [that of Britain] we have nothing to fear from the rest of Europe; and with it the best reliance of success of our just and laudable views [in support of the cause of freedom and national independence]. There ought not to be any backwardness, therefore, I think, in meeting her in the way she has proposed; keeping in mind the spirit of our constitution.[18]

Like Jefferson and Rush, Madison endorsed what he saw as the practical advantages contained in Canning's offer. Also like Jefferson, Madison reminded

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[16] Rush to Monroe, September 15, 1823, in Monroe, *Writings*, 7:375.

[17] Monroe, *Writings,* 7:377.

[18] Madison to Monroe, October 30, 1823, in Monroe, *Writings,* 7:394.

Monroe that consultation with Congress should precede any decision to go hand in hand with the British Government.

Unlike Jefferson, though, Madison very tangibly linked Canning's proposal to the specifics of how the United States could support the general cause of human freedom throughout the world. He asked:

> Will it not be honorable to our country and possibly not altogether in vain to invite the British Government to extend the avowed disapprobation of the project against the Spanish colonies to the enterprise of France against Spain, and even to join in some declaratory act in behalf of the Greeks?[19]

Madison conceded that his suggestions might lead to war but, in his judgment, "We ought to compare the good to be done, and the little injury to be apprehended to the U.S. shielded as their interest would be by the power and the fleets of Great Britain united to our own."[20]

In different terms, Jefferson and Madison both focused on the moral benefits of accepting Canning's proposal. Both felt that the proposed relationship with Britain would further the cause of freedom. From their perspective, the move was justified as an opportunity to do good in the world. Neither of the two statesmen tried very seriously to relate such benefits to the potential price to be paid for abandoning longstanding principles of neutrality and nonalignment with other powers. Neither focused on the fact that the real reason for the proposed relationship was perception of an urgent need: to keep the island of Cuba out of the hands of any major European power, France or Britain. Neither seemed to consider British values and British motives as relevant in the decision.

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[19] Ibid., 6:395.

[20] Ibid.

Looking back over time, the logic which Jefferson and Madison used appears not only flawed, it appears dangerous. They each used the promotion of American ideals to validate acceptance of Canning's proposal. In their view, the administration was justified in accepting Canning's proposal because in so doing the United States acted to support the cause of freedom outside its borders. This was the justification, but it was not the incentive. The incentive was to enhance the commercial and security interests of the United States. There would be occasions when support for the cause of freedom could actually undermine the nation's commercial and security interests. As we saw in chapter 3, Henry Clay had argued forcefully that the critical variable was the cause of freedom, even if it meant sacrifices for the nation. As we saw in chapter 5, extending diplomatic recognition to the Greek people clearly presented this very challenge. The context that Jefferson and Madison suggested would make it hard for the nation to protect its own interests if in doing so it failed to promote the cause of freedom outside its borders. There was also risk that such a frame of reference would lead the United States Government to take actions that actually compromised its security and commercial interests.

Neither Jefferson nor Madison, nor Rush for that matter, recognized the need to assess the danger of future misunderstandings. They gave no consideration to the fact that the principles, values, goals and objectives of Great Britain and the United States were quite different. Such differences would not be easy to reconcile within the framework of a relationship with joint and shared responsibilities. In responding to Monroe, Jefferson and Madison both brushed aside such practical considerations without comment.

In his just published *North American Review* article, Edward Everett used an approach very similar to the one Jefferson and Madison used. Everett's focus was also on doing what he felt was morally right.[21] He argued passionately that the United States, its citizens, and its government as well, had moral obligations to help the Greek cause. If the criterion for accepting Canning's proposal was doing good in the world, one had a precedent which just might guide decisions on whether, and if so how, to support the Greek people in their struggle for freedom. In a world where precedents and consistency were important, the response made to Canning's overture and, above all, the rationale which appeared to justify it, were highly relevant to the Greek request for support.

As they considered how to respond to Canning's proposal, Adams and Monroe had every reason to know that they could not ignore public support for the Greeks. What they could not know was just how imminent a public debate in Congress actually might be. They were not privy to a letter that Daniel Webster wrote to Everett. It is undated but appears to be from roughly the time that Jefferson and Madison were sending their letters to Monroe. In his letter Webster told Everett:

> I will rejoice in my heart that you should come to Washington. If nobody does it who can do it better, I shall say something of the Greeks.[22]

Webster was at the time a much respected member of the House of Representatives and one of the nation's most eloquent and admired orators. He went on to say:

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[21] See chapter 2, pp. 88-94.

[22] Webster to Everett, November 1, 1823, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

> The miserable affair of the Spanish Revolution makes the Greek cause look more interesting. I begin to think they have character enough to carry theirs through.

Webster concluded by saying, "Let me know when you are coming to Washington—and in the meantime let me hear from you."[23]

The Greek cause could not have found a better champion in Congress. Webster was untainted by the vitriol of Clay's prior attacks on the administration. And unlike Clay, Webster did not stand to benefit personally by any action taken to support the Greek cause. Even so, the *National Intelligencer* in October 1822 cited a report in the *Boston Evening Gazette* which indicated that Webster had "pledged himself to Mr. Calhoun for President."[24]

On October 30th Everett wrote to Adams urging the appointment of a commission to go to Greece to assess prospects for establishing diplomatic recognition.[25] It was a logical follow-up to the proposal contained in Everett's *North American Review* article. Clearly, Everett was not going to let go of the Greek cause. Independent of the Webster-Everett exchange, Adams was on notice that the issue of extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic might become an openly debated issue, with Everett a forceful advocate of the Greek cause.

In the context of American foreign relations, two press reports which appeared in October are also relevant. On October 11th *Niles* asked rhetorically, "How long will Christian Europe consent that their fellow Christians be treated thus, and the government which permits the horrid barbarities of these monsters to be acknowledged as legitimate?"[26] As we have already seen, the Monroe Administration at that very moment had a secret agent on his way to Constantinople to negotiate a trade agreement with people *Niles* described as "these monsters." The cabinet would shortly meet to consider whether to enter into an alliance with a nation long considered an enemy of the very freedoms that the United States stood for. If they were not careful, Adams and Monroe could undermine their credibility with congressional leaders and with the larger body of educated and politically active Americans.

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[23] Ibid.

[24] *Daily National Intelligencer* 10 (October 28, 1822): 3060.

[25] Everett to Adams, October, 30, 1823, in Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 368.

On October 14th the *National Intelligencer* carried a report from the *London Courier*. After describing "the great decorum of the sitting of the Greek legislature," the *Intelligencer* reported:

> An unusual degree of interest was created in the chamber yesterday by the appearance of Mr. Luriottis . . . . It would be difficult to describe the satisfaction on hearing that the Secretary of State for foreign affairs and the [British] nation generally are favorable to the independence of Greece . . . . Mr. Luriottis expressed hope that England and Greece would ere long be united by ties somewhat stronger than those of sympathy.[27]

If readers attached any credibility to this report, this too presented an awkward situation. To enter into even a limited alignment with Great Britain and then lag behind the British in fostering the Greek cause would appear at best incongruous, at worst opportunistic and self-serving (qualities which a nation of free men living under republican ideals should eschew, not support).

Jefferson and Madison had both advised that Congress needed to be involved in any acceptance of the offer to "walk hand in hand" with Great Britain.

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[26] *Niles* 25 (October 11, 1823): 83.

[27] *Daily National Intelligencer* 40 (October 14, 1823): 3358.

Like Rush, the press had made it very clear that it had a great distrust and disliking for Britain and the British.[28] The *London Courier* article notwithstanding, the press generally viewed Britain as an obstacle impeding the Greeks from winning their freedom from Turkey.[29] Congress and the public would have to know of any acceptance of Canning's proposal. Ultimately Congress would also probably exercise its right to know the position taken by the administration toward support for the cause of Greek freedom.

If the United States entered an alliance with Britain, it would send a signal that it was willing to ally itself with a power generally viewed in the United States as an enemy of the very freedoms that Americans enjoyed. If at the same time the United States failed to take positive action to support the cause of Greek independence, the result was apt to be politically unpopular within the United States. The United States would have failed to act to meet its moral duty to support the cause of freedom and thereby do good in the world. It is hard to imagine any congressional debate that would not raise these very points. Madison certainly saw the connection between Canning's proposal and the ability to support the cause of freedom outside the nation's borders. Given the nature of the American system of government, the possibility of a secret alliance was not an option. Put in the context of surrounding circumstances, any acceptance of the Canning proposal would in all probability have increased political pressures to take steps leading to diplomatic recognition of the government Luriottis claimed to represent.

The objections to accepting Canning's overture were many. Still, the pressure of events appeared to be pushing the Monroe Administration to accede to

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[28] See chapter 4, pp. 165-167.
[29] See chapter 1, pp. 55-57.

Canning's proposal. For example, on October 26th Albert Gallatin wrote to Monroe on his return to New York from France. Gallatin's news was quite disturbing.

> It appears, as was otherwise to be inferred, that the success of France against Spain would be followed by attempts of the Holy Alliance to reduce the revolutionary colonies of the latter to their former dependence.[30]

The threat of French intervention in the New World appeared increasingly likely and also increasingly imminent. Even so, Canning's proposal did violate longstanding principles of United States foreign relations, namely, neutrality and nonalignment. And the cause of Greek independence remained a relevant and important factor in deciding how to proceed.

Also important was the matter of relations with Russia. On October 16th Baron de Tuyll, the Russian minister in Washington, wrote Adams a note:

> The Emperor cannot receive near him any agent whatsoever, either of the administration in Columbia, or of any of the other governments de facto, which owe their existence to events, of which the new world has been for some years the theatre.[31]

Not too subtly de Tuyll reminded Adams that Russia retained the right to support the "legitimate" ruler in Latin America, the king of Spain. Although de Tuyll did not mention it, a Russian ukase still prohibited ships flying the flag of the United States from approaching the shores of a broad area of the Northwest. Russia's position on diplomatic recognition was clear. Also clear was the fact that, if provoked, Russia had power which it could use to damage the United States. For the moment relations seemed calm and cordial, despite United States diplomatic recognition of the Latin American republics. As we saw in chapter 5, it was important to the United States that they remain so.

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[30] Gallatin to Monroe, October 26, 1823, in Papers of James Monroe, Lib. Cong, Reel 8.

[31] Baron de Tuyll to the Secretary of State, October 16, 1823, in Monroe, *Writings,* 7:390.

On November 7th Adams recorded in his diaries the substance of a meeting he attended with Monroe and with other cabinet members. As Adams recounted it, John Calhoun was "inclined to give a discretionary power to Mr. Rush to join in a declaration against the interference of the Holy Alliance if necessary, even if it should pledge us not to take Cuba or the province of Texas." Adams recorded his own comments in these words:

> But the inhabitants of either or both may express their primitive rights and solicit a union with us. They certainly will do no such thing with Great Britain.[32]

Adams then indicated that the "President is against any course which should give the appearance of taking a position subordinate to Great Britain." Adams added, "It would be more candid, as well as more dignified, to avow our principles explicitly to Russia and France than to come as a cock-boat in the wake of the British man of war."[33] Adams stated that he read to the cabinet a draft response to the note which de Tuyll had sent to him on the tsar's policy of hostility to the recognition of any de facto government established by the forceful overthrow of existing "legitimate" authority. Adams indicated that, overall, the cabinet discussion led to no decisions. He did not record the substance of his proposed reply to de Tuyll.

Adams did record that he stayed after the meeting. He wrote in his diaries that in his private meeting he obtained a very important commitment from Monroe.

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[32] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:178 (November 7, 1823).

[33] Ibid.

They agreed that any answer given to Baron de Tuyll, the instructions to Rush on how to handle Canning's proposal, and instructions to the American minister in Russia on how to handle the issue of the Northwest boundaries and the Russian ukase "must be all parts of a combined system and adapted to each other."[34] Adams' account at this point gave no evidence that the subject of rising domestic pressure to support Greece was a matter discussed at this meeting. (The next day he would indicate in his diary entries that Greece had been in fact a subject of discussion.)

Adams' statement to Monroe about the need for a unified system of diplomacy and Adams' prior behavior both suggest that any statement of a "system" of foreign relations and any policies followed within this system would encompass how the United States Government would deal with the issue of official support for the Greek cause. If Adams had his way, logic and orderly consistency would reinforce each of the positions the American Government took. There would be no departures from principle.

How Adams chose to define the governing principles was another matter altogether. If he were successful, he would be able to serve the practical needs of the nation in ways that furthered his principles and also garnered support from educated and politically active Americans.

On November 13th Adams recorded what he termed a recent meeting with Monroe.

> [The President is] alarmed far beyond anything I could have conceived possible with the fear that the Holy Alliance are about to restore immediately all South America to Spain. Calhoun stimulates the panic, and the

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[34] Ibid.

> news that Cadiz has surrendered to the French had so affected the President that he appeared to despair of the cause of South America. He will recover in a few days: but I never saw more indecision in him.[35]

The pressures on Monroe to accept Canning's overture appeared strong.

At the same time, domestic political pressures to respond to the Greek cause were rising, although Adams and Monroe could not know how intense those pressures were about to become. On November 15th Daniel Webster wrote Edward Everett:

> I have found leisure here, and not until now to read your remarkable article on the Greeks. Since I left Boston, we have had important information about them. I feel a great inclination to say or do something in their behalf early in the future, if only I know what to say.

Webster asked Everett to direct him to "the appropriate source of information."[36]

On the very same day that Webster wrote to Everett, Adams again met with Monroe, in Adams' words, "at Monroe's request." Monroe showed Adams the letters from Jefferson and Madison. Adams suggested to Monroe that, "considering the South American nations as independent nations, they themselves and no other nation, had the right to dispose of their condition."[37] What Adams suggested was fundamental. Neither the United States nor Britain nor France nor Russia should presume to dictate the form of government for a people ostensibly sovereign. Adams' suggestion was a direct challenge to the principles which France and the Holy Alliance had used to justify intervention in Spain and earlier Austrian intervention in Naples.

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[35] Adams, *Memoirs*, 7:185 (November 13, 1823).

[36] Webster to E. Everett, November 15, 1823, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

[37] Adams, *Memoirs,* 6:185 (November 15, 1823).

In terms of the principles governing international relations, Adams was firm and decisive. He left room for no ambiguity or misunderstanding. What he did leave open was the possibility that at a later date the newly independent nations of Latin America might seek some type of affiliation with the United States. If the same principle of freedom to make alliances were applied in the Old World, the result was apt to prove troubling. It opened the possibility of arrangements between sovereign nations that might upset the balance of power put in place at the Congress of Vienna. For example, any alliance between Greece and either Russia or Great Britain would upset that balance. Applied to Greece, "the right to dispose of their condition" which Adams enunciated left open the possibility of great friction between Russia and Great Britain. Applied in the New World, Adams' principle enhanced the influence and power of the United States.

A cabinet meeting followed Adams' meeting with Monroe. Adams described the meeting in these terms:

> I soon found the source of the President's despondency with regard to Latin American affairs. Calhoun is perfectly moonstruck by the surrender of Cadiz, and says the Holy Allies, with ten thousand men will restore all Mexico and South America to Spanish dominion . . . . I see this as one of Calhoun's extravagances. He is for plunging into war to prevent that which, if his opinion is correct, we are utterly unable to prevent.[38]

Adams dismissed Calhoun as illogical, if not frivolous, in his approach to the nation's foreign policy. Adams himself did not expressly link Calhoun's comments to domestic politics. He did not need to. A man much less cynical of the motives of others and much less perceptive would have seen very clearly the practical advantages Calhoun stood to reap. Any break between Monroe and Adams over foreign policy could only weaken Adams' candidacy.

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[38] Ibid., 6:186.

On November 17th Baron de Tuyll met with Adams and presented a circular which the tsar directed his representatives to read to governments maintaining diplomatic relations with Russia. Adams described the paper as "the io triomphe circular." In it the tsar registered his determination to oppose recognition of any democratic or republican government formed by revolution. The circular expounded on the ultimate triumph of rule by those ordained by God, namely, the "legitimate" sovereigns who had long exercised power.

On November 21st the cabinet met once more. Monroe read a draft of his upcoming annual message to Congress. According to Adams, the draft contained language "intimating that the country is menaced by imminent and formidable dangers, such as would probably soon call for their most vigorous energies and closest union." It included a "most pointed reprobation of the late invasion of Spain by France, and of the principles in which it was undertaken by the open avowal of the King of France." The draft also reportedly "contained a broad acknowledgment of the Greeks as an independent nation, and a recommendation to Congress to make an appropriation for sending a minister to them."[39] Adams stated that both Monroe and Calhoun had expressed the "need to meet a direct attack on the principle of popular sovereignty."[40]

One must assume that Calhoun had had a private meeting with Monroe, with the practical purpose of trying to undermine Adams' official position as the key cabinet officer responsible for relations with other nations. Adams himself made no such accusation in his diary entry. It is significant, however, that Monroe did not advise Adams before the cabinet meeting of the nature of the draft Monroe planned to present. Perhaps inadvertently, Monroe put Adams in a potentially difficult position. He created a situation where Adams might face the choice of either having to compromise his principles or end up failing to support the president. This lapse on Monroe's part is further evidence that Adams was far from being the final arbiter of the nation's foreign policy. Adams went on:

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[39] Ibid., 6:189ff. (November 21, 1823).

[40] Ibid., 6:196 (November 21, 1823).

> Of all this Mr. Calhoun declared his approbation. I expressed as freely my wish the President would reconsider the whole subject before he should determine to take that course. I said the tone of the introduction would take the nation by surprise and greatly alarm them. It would come upon them like a clap of thunder.

In short, as Adams saw it, "This message would be a summons to arms—to act against all Europe and for objects of policy exclusively European—Greece and Spain."[41]

Adams' statements indicated very clearly his belief that political matters affecting Greece and Spain were not threatening to the United States. Such matters were, in his words, "exclusively European." Absent either tangible threat or benefit to the United States, Adams suggested that what happened should not entangle the United States. His comments squared very effectively with the position he emphasized in his July 4, 1821 address on the steps of the nation's capital. As we saw in chapter 3, he believed that the United States "goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy."[42] This frame of reference was very different from the idealism that Monroe and Calhoun expressed at the cabinet meeting. It was also very different from the idealism that Jefferson and Madison had used to validate their advice to Monroe. As we saw in chapter 3, Henry Clay used a frame of reference very similar to that of Jefferson and Madison, Monroe and Calhoun.

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Adams, July 21, 1821 Oration, in *Niles* 20:231.

Unlike most American political leaders of his time, Adams' stated principles were hard—on the surface at least—to reconcile with the civic virtue which we explored in chapter 2. In the context of American culture and politics of the time, Adams' rationale justifying a hands-off attitude toward the cause of freedom in the Old World could easily appear awkward, if not cowardly, and therefore unworthy of a man who wanted to be a political leader of free, Christian men. Calhoun's behavior did not make Adams' position any easier. If he were not careful, Adams could easily find himself painted into a lonely corner.

There was, however, the power of logic and consistency in Adams' approach. Adams embraced and also articulated one clear and overriding principle by which to judge the course of the nation's foreign policy: any commitment of the power of the nation should further the well-being of the nation. Given this focus, Adams could as a matter of principle concentrate on the practical consequences of a particular course of conduct. Adams' frame of reference fused matters of principle with pragmatism. He measured what was right in terms of the consequences to the nation, and he did so as a matter of principle.

Put in the context of Adams' principles, the course proposed by Calhoun and Monroe was wrong because it threatened harm to the nation. In Adams' own words, Monroe's draft "would be an open defiance to all Europe, and I should not be surprised if the first answer from Spain, and France, and even Russia, should be the break in diplomatic intercourse with us, and the opinion of the world."[43] As Adams saw it, Monroe's proposed course of action would open up the United States to reprisals from two, possibly three, of the European powers. Although he did not explicitly say so, he was also telling Monroe that the very risks of intervention in the New World which had prompted consideration of the Canning overture would be magnified.

Adams advised the president that

> the aspect of things was portentous; but if we must come to an issue with Europe, let us keep it off as long as possible. Let us use all possible means to carry the opinion of the nation with us, and the opinion of the world.[44]

What Adams suggested was a foreign policy that adhered to what he felt should be the established principles of American foreign relations, was capable of winning popular support at home, and in the process also minimized the potential for conflict both at home and abroad.

Very subtly, Adams proceeded to show Monroe and the cabinet how to achieve such a foreign policy. He proposed that he have a personal meeting with de Tuyll in which he would state that it was the intention of the United States

> to disclaim all interference with the political affairs of European powers and to declare our expectation and hope that the European powers will equally abstain from the attempt to spread their principles in the American hemisphere, or to subjugate by force any part of these continents to their will.[45]

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[43] Adams, *Memoirs,* 6:195 (November 21, 1823).

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 6:191 (November 21, 1823).

On the surface Adams' proposed declaration to de Tuyll was highly provocative. The tsar had just issued his io triomphe circular expressing his determination to oppose any government founded on the principle of revolt against established "legitimate" authority. What did Adams hope to accomplish by his statements? After all, it was Britain and France that posed the more proximate danger of intervention in the New World. Certainly there was no purpose in provoking the Russian government.

As Adams saw it, though, his statements to de Tuyll ran very little risk of doing harm. In his diary Adams recorded that de Tuyll, after delivering the io triomphe circular, had spoken "with great kindness towards us."[46] In Adams' words, "It [the io triomphe circular] appears to guard very anxiously against any suspicion that he [the tsar] intended any hostile movement toward the United States." Certainly the prior behavior of the Russian government underscored a longstanding commitment to supportive relations with the United States.[47]

On the other hand, making the proposed statements to de Tuyll did serve two very practical, positive purposes. First, it gave the administration the opportunity to state for the record that the United States would react with more than words if any of the major European powers intervened in the New World. De Tuyll provided a benign environment within which to make this statement. A similar statement to the French minister would in all probability have created hostility and invited a response that acerbated relations between the two countries. Second, an official statement to de Tuyll enabled Adams to make an independent declaration that covered much the same ground as Canning's proposal. With his declaration to de Tuyll, Adams could begin a process that avoided the potential political embarrassment of going "hand in hand" with the British Government. Also, in terms of domestic politics, Adams' action could only build respect for defying what most felt was the most powerful nation on earth.

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[46] Ibid.

[47] See discussion in chapter 5, pp. 183-84. Note also the outstanding issue of the nation's northwest boundaries and the recent Russian ukase prohibiting shipping within a 200 mile radius of shores Russia claimed as her own.

Was Adams' proposal a change in the principles he had pursued up to this point? A careful reading of his prior statements suggests not. In his diplomatic correspondence during the spring and summer of 1823, he had consistently urged separation based on differences in principles of governance.[48] Also, the struggles of the Greeks for freedom, the oppression of freedom by the French in Spain—these were matters which, as he saw it, did not affect the United States. They were "exclusively European." This being the case, Adams cautioned against active involvement by the United States Government. The New World was different. What happened in Cuba was of "transcendent importance." In his July 4, 1821 speech he had also stressed separation.[49] The United States was prepared to exercise its power to defend the cause of freedom in the New World, but it was prepared to do so for a well-defined reason. The nation had a vital interest in the integrity of political freedom in the New World as a way of resisting incursions by any of the major European powers—France, Russia and Great Britain most particularly. Such incursions threatened the nation's vital security and commercial interests. Given these circumstances, Adams believed that the United States had both a right and a duty to act in the New World.

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[48] See chapter 3, pp. 124 and 131.

[49] See p. 130.

If Monroe adopted Adams' proposal, there was an important practical consequence. The United States was prepared to accept that freedom had a geographic boundary. Greece was clearly outside the stipulated boundary. And because it was outside that boundary, the United States was not justified in supporting and defending the cause of Greek freedom by actions over and above words of encouragement.

In chapter 3 we saw that Henry Clay in the spring of 1823 had suggested that freedom in the Old World was in all probability doomed.[50] Clay's pessimistic statements might make it harder for him to challenge Adams' geographic boundaries. Nevertheless, press reports in late 1823 suggested quite strongly that the Greek people were well on their way to achieving independence from Turkey, and might actually have already become an independent people. And Clay had long framed his position in terms of seeking opportunity to foster the cause of freedom. Adams had grounded his position very differently, on what served the security and commercial interests of the nation. To judge by his suggestions to Monroe and the cabinet, his frame of reference remained solid and unchanged.

Adams' earlier position on whether to extend diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics provides an important reference point. The interests of the United States were not at risk if Spain succeeded in reimposing its control over its former colonies. Spain was not a major European power and did not have the ability to threaten the United States. Given these conditions, Adams had urged watching and waiting until the newly formed governments were firmly in place. There were no practical compelling reasons to justify a rush to recognize.

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[50] See chapter 3, pp. 135-36.

(Although Adams did not say so publicly, he also had waited until the Spanish Government ratified its treaty ceding Florida to the United States.) Measured by his principles, Adams' prior actions were quite consistent with what he proposed to Monroe and to the cabinet in November 1823.

What was new in Adams' proposal was a judgment that the nation's own security in late 1823 required that it defend both the status quo of republican government in Latin America and the continued rule of Cuba by Spain. If Britain, France or Russia became involved in the governance of Latin America, American security and commercial interests were put at risk. Each of these states was a major European power. Each had the ability to threaten the United States. This meant that the United States Government not only had a right to act, it had a duty to act to protect the nation's own commercial and security interests. The principles which led him to propose that policy were longstanding and unchanged. These very principles, however, were a powerful deterrent from taking action to support freedom in the Old World.

In Adams' recommendations to Monroe there was a further, a subtler message, one which was quite important from the standpoint of domestic politics. Adams' suggested course provided clear evidence that he and the nation under Monroe's leadership possessed bravery and manly virtue. The United States would stand up to the nations of Europe. The nation would risk armed conflict. It would act vigorously and forcefully to defend the cause of popular sovereignty and democracy. In chapter 3 we saw how Clay had repeatedly taunted the administration for its lack of manly valor because it refrained from an early diplomatic recognition of the independence of the Latin American republics. In the present instance, Adams was proposing that he meet face-to-face with the representative of what his contemporaries felt was the most powerful nation on earth. Under such circumstances it would be hard to accuse Adams of running away from danger. However, the display of courage was for a well-defined and delimited, not a universal, purpose: the well-being of the nation.

From a practical, political standpoint, courage displayed in the defense of freedom in Latin America also lessened any urgency to display bravery and self-sacrifice by supporting freedom at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Whether Adams' proposed course was necessary in terms of relations with other nations is debatable. It was clearly in his political interest. He projected the image of a brave and decisive leader.

Having made his proposal, Adams then turned to an assessment of Monroe's draft of the president's annual message: "It would be seen as new, too, as it would be surprising." In essence, Adams suggested that the policy of entanglement in European affairs would be a departure from established principle and that the circumstances leading to that departure would startle. As Adams explained his position:

> For more than thirty years, Europe had been rent with convulsions, every nation of which it is comprised alternatively invading and invaded. Empires, kingdoms, principalities, had been overthrown, revolutionized, counter-revolutionized, and we had looked on in our safe distance beyond the intervening ocean, and avowing a total forbearance to interference in any of the combinations of European politics.[51]

In Adams' judgment, Monroe had taken into consideration none of the precedents that had guided the nation's foreign policy up to that point. Equally, Monroe had not addressed the major dangers to the nation engendered by his proposed course of action. Perhaps by chance, Adams' statements to the cabinet contain virtually the same words that he used in his August letter to Luriottis to justify the decision not to initiate steps leading to diplomatic recognition.[52]

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[51] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:195 (November 21, 1823).

Adams did not say explicitly that the major European powers would suppress any government in the Old World founded on the overthrow of established authority and rule based on the principle of popular sovereignty. He did not need to do so. The French invasion of Spain in the spring of 1823 was in itself strong evidence that this was the case. Also, the recent meetings with de Tuyll must have suggested very forcibly to him that this was apt to be the case going forward. It was one thing to accept the United States position to support republican government in the New World, where the nation's own interests were visibly at stake. It was quite another to assume that the tsar would countenance interference by the United States in the domestic affairs of a state like Turkey, which bordered his own.

Looking back from the present, one can see practical dangers when policy makers use ideology to justify and support their foreign policy decisions. They run the risk of making decisions which in practice threaten damaging consequences. Jefferson's and Madison's advice to Monroe is an apt illustration of that danger. Nevertheless, in a nation founded on popular sovereignty, there is also danger that decisions that appear to compromise the nation's values and principles run the risk of losing the political credibility and support necessary for the policies to succeed. Henry Clay's powerful attacks on the policy of delaying recognition of the newly independent republics of Latin America illustrate this opposite danger. In that instance, Clay's ideologically-based attacks could well have undermined the political support necessary for Adams' and Monroe's policies to succeed. If Adams' policy recommendations to Monroe and the cabinet were to prove effective, they would have to be shown to protect the nation's interests, but also to appeal to the nation's values.

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[52] See chapter 7, pp. 247 and 251 for confirmation of this perspective.

On the surface at least, Adams' proposals to Monroe and the cabinet did not appear to meet these twin criteria. In terms of relations with Great Britain, Adams' proposed course rebuffed Great Britain. Publicly and openly the United States embraced the two separate spheres that Canning had greatly feared. The United States would stay out of what Jefferson had defined as the "broils of Europe"—but as a quid pro quo expected the major European powers (including Great Britain) to refrain from exerting efforts to influence or control political events in the New World. Second, in the context of domestic American politics, Adams' proposals moved the nation away from the type of ideological commitments to do good in the world that Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and Clay had all championed. In the sphere of domestic politics, Adams' proposed course was outside the consensus. He was not going along to get along. He was sticking to his principles, principles which were very different in focus from those of most of his contemporaries. It was a course that could only be termed lonely, and perhaps even brave.

In terms of the actual policy he recommended, Adams' reference to "our safe distance beyond the intervening sea" has particular significance. If Adams could get acceptance in Europe for this frame of reference, he would eliminate the threat of Russian, French or British involvement in the internal affairs of the nations of the New World where, from a practical standpoint, he perceived the nation's vital interests were at risk. The quid pro quo would be for the United

States to pursue a hands-off attitude on the far side of the Atlantic. That quid pro quo, however, appeared to be nothing more than the realistic recognition of a *fait accompli.* France and Russia in 1823 had indicated very forcibly that they would not countenance a political system on their borders founded on the principle that people had the right to overthrow their "legitimate" rulers and establish a government based on popular sovereignty.

As we saw in chapters 5 and 6, nations of the time related to each other very much in terms of their form of government. Metternich exemplified this frame of reference. We have already seen how he justified his position that the United States should be kept out of any conference dealing with the future of Latin America. As we saw repeatedly in chapter 7, Adams had used this same reasoning to stay outside the European state system. As we have also seen repeatedly, American statesmen from Madison to Monroe to Clay to Adams himself all stated as fact that the form of government went a long way in determining whether a government would be friendly or hostile to the well-being of the United States. The fact that Russia, the most autocratic of the major powers, was the most supportive of the United States did not alter this feeling. From the standpoint of all the leading American statesmen of the time, republican governments in the New World offered the prospect of deterring the exercise of power by the major European powers. Such governments appeared to offer the promise of enhancing the nation's physical security and its freedom of commerce.

On November 22nd Adams again visited with Monroe, in Adams' words, "Gallatin just leaving." In his meeting with the president, Adams reported in his diaries, "I spoke to him again urging him to abstain from everything in his message which the Holy Alliance would make a pretext for construing into aggression upon them." Adams urged that the "Administration might be delivered into the hands of his successors, whoever they might be, at peace and in amity with the world." He urged this policy upon Monroe as a way of securing the president's place in history.[53] Adams' appeal to these virtues had great force, even more than would be the case in today's world. He lived in an age when commanding the respect of others, of projecting a public image of honor, were central values and motivators of action. The capacity to exercise control by establishing harmony and order were markers of sound leadership that greatly appealed to a statesman of early 19th century America. To embroil the nation actively in the Greek cause, as Calhoun had suggested in an earlier cabinet meeting, was certainly not the way to go, as far as Adams was concerned.

In a manner highly consistent with his stated principles, Adams also urged Monroe to recognize the important reality that the United States was in the end a nation of very limited physical power. "If the Holy Alliance really intended to restore by force the colonies of Spain to her dominion, it is questionable to me [i.e., Adams] whether we had not, after all, been over-hasty in acknowledging the South American independence."[54] To pursue a course of action without the power to back it up just might lead to humiliation. The recent War of 1812 and the burning of Washington were readily available reminders of this risk.

Faced with practical limitations on the nation's power and with perceptions of the danger of intervention in this hemisphere by the major European powers, Adams urged upon Monroe the folly of intervening in Europe.

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[53] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:197 (November 22, 1823).
[54] Ibid.

> If the Holy Allies intend to interpose by force [in this hemisphere], we shall have as much as we can do to prevent them, without going bid them defiance in the heart of Europe.[55]

The defiance that Adams referred to was support for the cause of Greek independence. In his next diary comment, Adams stated:

> Something had been said yesterday, that if the President did not recommend recognition of Greece, it could be pressed in the House of Representatives. What could be Mr. Clay's response in this case I could not foresee.[56]

Adams went on to say, "When Mr. Clay so urgently pushed for South American independence, his main object was popularity for himself and to embarrass the administration."[57]

As it turned out, Adams had practical reasons to justify his concerns, but Clay was not the immediate source of danger. At that very time, Webster was corresponding with Everett to get information on the Greek cause. Webster had already indicated to Everett that he planned "to speak out" and urge that the United States Government take steps leading to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic. Another thing Adams could not know is that Calhoun would later divulge to Webster the substance of confidential cabinet meetings. For example, on November 28 Webster wrote to Everett a letter "to your eyes only" indicating that the president's upcoming message to Congress would contain a "strong expression of sympathy for the Greeks."[58] Adams was quite accurate in sensing congressional opposition to his policy recommendations. He does not appear to have known that support for the Greek cause would coalesce around Webster.

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Webster to Everett, November 28, 1823, cited in Cline, *American Attitude*, 151.

Adams very much needed a policy similar to the one he proposed to stave off any future efforts that pushed the administration toward diplomatic recognition. Press reports at the time suggested that the Greeks were on the threshold of achieving their freedom. On November 15th *Niles* published the following:

> Our accounts from Greece are interesting and consolatory. The freedom of the country seems no more doubtful. It is amply confirmed that the late, powerful and apparently last and desperate effort of the Turks has entirely failed . . . . A hope is now entertained that some of the Christian powers will now intervene to end this destructive war, and determine the fate of Greece.[59]

To judge by the *Niles* report, the necessary conditions for considering United States diplomatic recognition were falling into place. Such reports could only heighten the risk of political debate in Congress. Edward Everett in his *North Atlantic Review* article and in a private letter to Adams had already suggested sending an official delegation to verify any question of whether the Greeks had de facto achieved their independence from Turkey. As we saw in chapter 7, Adams in his August letter to Luriottis had stated:

> Precluded by their neutral position from interfering in questions of right, the United States have recognized the fact of foreign sovereignty only when it was undisputed, or disputed without any rational prospects of success.[60]

To judge by the then available information, Greece appeared to be coming close to the state which Adams had termed "undisputed" in its sovereign independence from Turkey.

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[59] *Niles* 25 (November 15, 1823): 172.

[60] Adams to Rush, August 14, 1823, in *Instructions,* Reel 5.

Adams' proposal to Monroe on how to answer de Tuyll sidestepped the problem. It created alternative grounds for not moving to establish diplomatic recognition. If Adams received Monroe's blessing to move forward, the United States would enter an informal understanding with Russia; the United States would not become involved in the political affairs of Europe. Such an engagement would presumably include refraining from a political act that both Russia and France, and possibly Britain, would find offensive.

In his response to Luriottis, Adams had stated that establishing diplomatic relations required "the exercise of the application of principles in which every nation must exercise some latitude of discretion." If Monroe authorized Adams to proceed with the proposed response to de Tuyll, Adams would have laid down a clear marker that would have made it indiscreet at the least to proceed with establishing diplomatic relations with the Greek people. Russia was in a position to argue that diplomatic recognition by the United States meant that the nation had acted in bad faith in its disclaimer of involvement in European political affairs. Russia would have grounds to allege that the United States had failed to live up to its principles and its stated policy.

One must actually wonder whether Adams used Monroe's fears of French military intervention in the New World as a way of fostering a hands-off policy toward Greece. His comments about prior recognition of the Latin American republics being a mistake if the European powers intended to restore Spanish rule are revealing. Adams seemed to be reminding Monroe that within the last eighteen months the administration had calibrated the consequences of recognizing the newly independent republics and had apparently found the risks to the nation acceptable. (Monroe's message to Congress certainly left that impression.)[61] Adams also appeared to suggest that, on the one hand, Monroe's fears were overdrawn, obviating the need to accept Canning's proposal. On the other hand, concern over aggressiveness by the French and Holy Alliance in the New World mandated a policy of refraining from involvement in European political conflicts. Was Adams attempting to manipulate Monroe into a position that would have deterred either acceptance of Canning's proposal or substantive support for the Greek cause?

The evidence that has come down to us does not indicate exactly on what basis Adams felt he needed to create a record that would have discouraged, if not prevented, any substantive action by the government to support freedom in the Old World. In the absence of that record, we are forced to make inferences based on the facts that we know. One of those key facts is the following: Adams could have contented himself by proposing to Monroe a statement that the United States would resist any efforts of European powers to intervene in the New World. He did not. The logical reason for proffering his quid pro quo was Greece. At the time Greece was the only instance where there was serious discussion within the United States about whether the Government should intervene in political conflict on the far side of the Atlantic. There appears to have been no bargaining over a quid pro quo to deter European involvement in the New World. Adams' diary entries suggest that the tsar had gone out of his way to assure the United States that Russia wanted the friendship of the United States. There is no evidence that any of the European powers asked, or even suggested, that the United States proffer the commitment Adams wanted to make, despite Adams' statement to Monroe that such a quid pro quo was necessary.

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[61] Monroe to the Senate and House of Representatives, March 8, 1822, in Monroe, *Writings*, 6:208. However, in a letter to Jefferson dated March 14, 1822, Monroe acknowledged that his decision to extend diplomatic recognition did contain dangers, but that the action "comported with the liberal and magnanimous spirit of our own country." Monroe to Jefferson in Monroe, *Writings*, 6:214.

In his diary comment about his November 22nd meeting with Monroe, Adams urged that "it was infinitely better that the impulse [for the recognition of Greece] should come from Congress than that it should go from the executive. Foreign powers are less apt to take notice of them [than the actions of the executive]."[62] Rather than a commitment to the Greek cause, Adams recommended that the president's annual message to Congress follow the pattern of the 1822 message. He described this suggestion as one of support "by its general terms and pledging nothing, but I would be especially careful to avoid anything which may be construed as hostile to the Allies." Adams did suggest that Monroe make "earnest remonstrance against interference of the European powers by force with South America, but to disclaim all interference on our part with Europe, to make an American cause and to stick inflexibly to that."[63]

Adams' statement to Monroe to let the "impulse" for diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic come from Congress is puzzling. Adams seemed to countenance a congressional debate on the very matter of recognition that his statements to the Russian minister seemed to make impolitic. Congress did have the power to do more than speak about the cause of Greek freedom. It had the power to pass a resolution favoring steps leading to diplomatic recognition. Given strong popular support for the Greek cause, Adams' proposal was risky. Congress could, for example, appropriate money for an official mission to be sent to Greece. Clay had tried to do just this in earlier debates over whether to extend diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics. Everett had urged it in his influential article in the *North American Review* and had also written to Adams encouraging the Monroe Administration to take this step. Even if Monroe were successful in deflecting congressional support for the Greek cause, any confrontation risked injuring his reputation and that of his secretary of state. Moreover, if Monroe gave in to any such resolution, Monroe left Adams in a situation that could easily damage Adams politically. Adams' suggestion was risky.

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[62] Adams, *Memoirs,* 6:197 (November 22, 1823).
[63] Ibid.

To understand why Adams would make such a suggestion, one needs to place his remark in context. In the very diary entry which described his proposal to Monroe, Adams noted that, just as he was going into Monroe's office, he saw "Gallatin just leaving." Two days later Adams "called at the President's and [again] found Mr. Gallatin with him. He [Gallatin] still adhered to his idea of sending a naval force and a loan of money to the Greeks."[64] In a February 28th Despatch to Adams from Paris, Gallatin had suggested that "two or three ships of the line or even large frigates would be sufficient to annihilate their navy and to secure the independence of the archipelago and probably the Morea and Greece proper."[65] Adams confided in his diary:

> I look for the motives of this strange proposal, and find them not very deeply laid. Mr. Gallatin still builds castles in the air of popularity . . . . Tis the part of Mr. Clay toward South America all over again.[66]

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[64] Ibid., 6:198 (November 24, 1823).

[65] Gallatin to Adams, February 28, 1823, in *Despatches: France,* Reel 24.

[66] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:198-99.

Monroe at this point apparently had not yet decided on what he would say or do in support of the Greek cause. Put in this context, Adams may well have viewed a congressional debate as a necessary palliative, one designed to deter Monroe from more aggressive action. It is possible, but also unlikely, that Adams made his proposal as a way of shifting responsibility to Congress for any decision to extend diplomatic recognition to the Greeks. (The evidence of his behavior in cabinet meetings suggests strongly that he wanted to take charge, and to control the substance of the nation's foreign policy.)

Certainly the matter of support for the Greek cause was very much on Adams' mind and very much on the minds of Monroe and his advisors during their policy discussions of November 1823. Two separate encounters with Gallatin at Monroe's office, diary entries describing the November 21st cabinet meeting, discussion in a separate meeting between Adams and Monroe—all provide evidence of this. Statements of Adams' concern that the Greek cause might erupt into a congressional debate possibly led by Clay are also present in the record now available to us.

Given Adams' insistence and Monroe's stated acceptance that matters of foreign policy should be handled within what he termed a unified system, one is drawn to the conclusion that Adams incorporated his policy toward the Greek struggle for independence within the context of the principles and policies that he wished the administration to employ in its relations with the major European powers. As a practical matter, the ability of the administration to control what the United States did or refrained from doing was strengthened by making any response to the Greek cause a logical and credible application of a preexisting system of foreign policy. Nevertheless, Adams faced a very difficult task. The general outpouring of support for Greece and the specific pressure to initiate steps leading to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic were strong. To be successful, Adams had to run a complex course. He had to persuade Monroe to proceed with caution. In this task he faced opposition. Calhoun and Gallatin each gave evidence of opposing Adams' position and thereby effectively encouraging a rift between Adams and Monroe.

There was a further dimension. It was vital to reconcile Congress and politically active Americans to his proposed policy, at the very least in terms of a willingness to accept it, if not actively to support it. On the eve of an election year, Adams could not ignore or sidestep these challenges. He had to face them. On this basis, a congressional debate may well have been of interest to him, provided he had evidence that the outcome would leave him and leave Monroe in a position to control the future course of the nation's foreign policy. If nothing else, the debate would provide evidence that the people of the United States, through their representatives in Congress, had assessed the proper course for the nation to follow in its foreign relations.

There are ambiguities in the dialogue that Adams maintained with Monroe. Suggesting congressional involvement in the nation's foreign affairs is only one dimension of this. Adams also appears to have taken ambivalent positions on the threat posed by France and the Holy Alliance. There was no serious threat that needed to be countered (hence there was no need to accept Canning's proposal); there was a serious threat (hence the need to make a commitment to the Russian minister). The two positions do not appear to reflect a single reading of the facts. When the issue was whether to extend diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic, there was great danger of Russian and French intervention in the New World.

When the issue was whether to accept Canning's overture, the danger seemed to recede. It appears that Adams "bent" his emphasis.

There is very little evidence that in relations with foreign powers Adams needed to proffer a commitment to remain detached from political quarrels on the far side of the Atlantic. He did tell Monroe that a commitment to remain neutral in affairs on the far side of the Atlantic was necessary to keep Russia from taking hostile moves in the New World. He did not claim that the Russian minister himself had suggested the need for such a quid pro quo. In fact, the substance of Adams' diary notes indicates quite the contrary. According to those notes, de Tuyll went out of his way to reassure Adams of Russia's good will and friendship.

In his book on the Monroe Doctrine, Ernest May picked up on this very point. It led him to the following conclusion: "In retrospect, it seems evident that the American government could decide whether it wished a partnership with Britain and whether it wished to encourage the Greeks without fear that its actions would affect the fate of Latin America or affect more than marginally its own relations with any of the cisatlantic powers. And this state of affairs should have been evident to the men deciding American policy."[67]

What May suggests is a reasoned interpretation and conclusion based on the facts as they would appear to us—in the context of our own way of interpreting factual information. However, the evidence presented in this paper suggests that there is a very different perspective, namely, the significance of the facts in the context of the culture of the time and the place wherein the events took place.

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[67] May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 129.

Would Russia have acted differently in applying its ukase in the Pacific Northwest? Russia's incentive in befriending the United States appears to have been to encourage a counterpoise to British merchant marine dominance. Also, to judge by reports reaching the United States (reports which we reviewed in chapter 6), the tsar felt that the Greek insurgents were part of an international conspiracy, a conspiracy aimed at the overthrow of all legitimate governments. How would Russia, France or Britain react to a unilateral move by the United States to intervene in an affair that deeply concerned each of them? If United States action carried with it the message that the United States was prepared to support subversion of existing governments, the reaction short and long term might well have been severe, particularly on American commercial interests in the Mediterranean.

Rush in his meeting with Canning gave an excellent example of what most American statesmen of the time would have seen as the real significance of Canning's proposal. Like Rush they would have related Canning's statements to the principles that they felt guided their own foreign relations. Rush made it very clear that moving into an alliance with Britain appeared to violate the principles on which the United States had based its foreign policy. In his meetings with the British minister in Washington over the summer of 1823, Adams had likewise made it clear that the United States should not get involved in disputes over how European states organized themselves or how they structured their relations with each other.

To have moved forward with either Canning's proposal or recognition of a Greek republic would have sent a powerful signal that the United States was a nation driven by expediency, not by principle, in the conduct of it foreign affairs.

Such a nation was apt to appear as untrustworthy and unworthy of respect. More ominously, such a state was apt to generate the impression that it acted in an unstable, disorderly manner, thereby violating the key values which statesmen like the tsar in particular believed were central to the governance of relations between states. Assessed in terms of the context of values and thoughts of the people of the time, this in itself might well have led to serious practical consequences if the Monroe Administration had proceeded. May's perspective is quite reasonable, if one assumes that statesmen of the time thought and acted as they do in today's world. The evidence before us suggests that theirs was a mentality very different from our own. What is reasonable within our frame of reference was not necessarily reasonable within theirs.

In his comments May also suggests that Adams, Monroe and other American statesmen would also have assessed the domestic political consequences of any action the United States took, or failed to take. He is quite correct. One can easily imagine, for example, how Clay or others would have ridiculed Adams for supine Anglophilia had Adams endorsed Canning's proposal.

May's statement that America's political leaders overstated their fears of armed intervention in Latin America by the Great Powers needs qualification. Adams in particular did appear to discount the risk. Whether Calhoun was genuine in projecting his fears is debatable. However, statements in Adams' diary indicate that Monroe was genuinely apprehensive. This put Adams in a position to manipulate Monroe's fears in ways that discouraged Monroe from acting aggressively in support of the Greek cause. The evidence cited suggests that Adams did engage in just such a manipulation.

On November 24th, after Gallatin left, Adams and Monroe met to review parts of the president's upcoming annual message to Congress. Monroe read the paragraphs that dealt with Greece, Spain, Portugal and Latin America. Adams' diary entry stated, "I thought them quite unexceptionable, and drawn up altogether in the spirit that I had so urgently pressed on Friday and Saturday."[68] Monroe had apparently backed away from urging any tangible actions to support freedom in far-off Greece. He appeared to have eschewed the suggestions of Calhoun and Gallatin. Adams' policy recommendations on Greece appeared to have won an important victory—but one which was for the moment *preliminary*, not final.

In a cabinet meeting the next day Adams followed up. He read to the cabinet his proposed reply to de Tuyll which, he suggested, should be "in the form of a verbal note." Adams urged that the note was "meant also to be eventually an expression of the principles of this government, and a brief development of its political system as henceforth to be maintained." Adams characterized that political system as

> essentially republican—maintaining its own independence and respecting that of others; essentially pacific—studiously avoiding all involvement in the combinations of European politics, cultivating peace and friendship with the most absolute monarchies—not with indifference to any forceful interposition which was designed to introduce monarchical principles into those countries [the newly formed Latin American republics] or the transfer to another power of any Spanish dominion.[69]

In speaking of transfer to another power, Adams was referring most immediately to the future of the island of Cuba.

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[68] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:199 (November 25, 1823).
[69] Ibid., 6:199.

Adams told the cabinet that in his proposed reply to de Tuyll, "It was time to tender to them [the Great Powers] an issue. In the last resort this was a cause to be pleaded before the world of mankind." In making what appeared to be a confrontational statement, Adams went on to reassure Monroe and the cabinet that he believed Tsar Alexander did not mean to include the United States "in his invective against revolution."[70] Under these conditions a meeting with de Tuyll provided Adams the opportunity to show that he was a leader who stood up for freedom, and to do so with very limited risk. This time it was Adams who favored decisive action.

According to Adams, Calhoun objected to the proposed verbal note, "but was overruled." (Adams did not indicate whether this was by a majority vote of the cabinet or was Monroe's personal decision.) Adams did tell the cabinet that the president's upcoming message to Congress could not serve as a substitute for a diplomatic reply to de Tuyll. "Foreign powers might not feel themselves bound to notice what was said" in a message meant for Congress and the American people. As Adams recounted it, the danger from abroad "was brought to our own doors, and I thought therefore we could not too soon take our stand to repel it." Adams expressed to the cabinet his fear that the Great Powers would partition the former Spanish colonies "between France, Russia and Great Britain . . . . My opinion was, therefore, we must act promptly and decisively."[71]

Adams' stated premise in proposing his verbal note was a practical one. He judged that foreign powers would not pay attention to words by themselves, but would pay close attention to words that could lead to action. Couched in diplomatic language, Adams' proposed declaration to de Tuyll contained just such a threat. It was a threat that Adams apparently did not feel free to convey directly to France, the country most immediately involved in Spain, and also reportedly in efforts to use force to restore Spanish rule over her former colonies.[72] However, if the note was later published as part of a disclosure to Congress, Adams had put in place evidence that he had the courage to stand tall for freedom. Without confronting the French minister, Adams would have put him on notice that the United States was prepared to act to deter French moves in the New World.

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[70] Ibid., 6:199-201.
[71] Ibid., 6:200.

As for the cabinet meeting, Adams indicated that the overt concern discussed was whether Great Britain would take action in the New World. He reported that Monroe told the cabinet that Britain was torn between "their anti-jacobean policy, the dread of internal reformers which makes their sympathy with the Holy Allies, and the necessities of commerce and revenue." Adams stated that, in his judgment, "none of the Holy Allies stood to benefit, or was committed to restoring Spain's colonies . . . . My reliance upon the cooperation of Great Britain rested not upon her principles but her interests." Adams argued that his proposal "came into conflict with no paper she would dare to maintain" and concluded by saying that in his proposed verbal note "we disavowed all interference in European affairs."[73] The disavowal served two important practical purposes. First, it committed Monroe to the policy of noninvolvement in European affairs that Adams wanted to follow. Second, it demonstrated that an alliance with Britain was not necessary. The United States was capable of asserting on its own the substance of the policy that Canning wanted to assert jointly.

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[72] For further discussion on this point, see Dexter Perkins, *Monroe Doctrine*, 90.

[73] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:203 (November 25, 1823).

In another cabinet meeting, held the following day, November 26th, Adams reiterated his position. He urged that "if an issue must be made up between us and the Holy Allies, it ought to be upon grounds exclusively American; that we should separate it from all European concerns, disclaim all intentions of interfering with them, and make the stand altogether an American cause."[74] Adams went on to assert that the disclaimer of interference in European affairs "was most essential" in order for Russia to maintain supportive relations with the United States. "The paper acknowledged that we are aware of the fact that the monarchical principle of government was different from ours, but that we saw no reason why they should not be at peace with one another, and that we earnestly desired that peace."[75] For the Greek cause, Adams' words were very important. He stressed the need for a geographic separation in order to maintain peace between nations that embraced different principles of governance. To meet this need, Adams stated that it was necessary to make a firm commitment: The United States would not intervene in the Old World to undermine the "monarchical principle."

Adams provided no evidence to support why such a commitment was necessary in the conduct of relations with other nations. Nevertheless, his repeated references to staying out of European affairs suggests that he feared the United States might well take steps that would draw it into a conflict far from its borders. There was only one such conflict under active debate at the time, the struggle of the Greek people to free themselves from Turkish rule. One should assume that

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[74] Ibid., 6:204 (November 26, 1823).
[75] Ibid., 6:209 (November 26, 1823).

Adams had Greece in mind when he stressed the need for a commitment to maintain what he would define as neutrality.

Adams gave every evidence of wanting to turn his statement into an expression of American patriotism and courage. He would stand up to the great European powers, bravely and decisively. Such patriotism was not relevant in the context of diplomatic relations; it was, needless to say, extremely relevant in the context of the domestic political situation Adams had good reason to assume he would soon be facing.

On November 27th Adams met privately with Monroe and reviewed a revised version of his proposed verbal note. In his proposal Adams argued that the words "Liberty, Independence, and Peace" needed articulation.[76] He urged that the note serve as "a manifesto to the world." Judging by such statements, Adams was looking beyond his meeting with de Tuyll. It is strong evidence that he was looking toward public disclosure of his statements. Given the rivalry with Calhoun in previous cabinet meetings, domestic political concerns clearly obtruded into his wording. Once more he tried to position himself as a decisive and courageous leader.

In an entry of November 28th Adams reported on his meeting with de Tuyll. "The Baron said that he was so perfectly sure of the Emperor's friendly disposition to the United States that . . . upon the mere expression of doubt concerning [the tsar's feelings]," de Tuyll's government might suppose that "he had not done justice to their sentiments in this respect."[77] Adams had judged well. He was able to make his statement, avoiding the pitfall of Canning's overture, and still make clear, both domestically and abroad, that the United States would not sit on the sidelines if the major European powers tried to intervene in the New World. At the same time, his assessment of Great Britain's motives convinced him he did not need any formal agreement with Great Britain to prevent French or Holy Alliance intervention in the New World. As Adams himself said, it was not in Britain's interest to countenance incursions by France and the Holy Alliance in the New World. Not coincidentally, his verbal note to de Tuyll also effectively foreclosed any initiative by the Monroe Administration to pursue an opening of diplomatic relations with Greece.

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[76] Ibid., 6:207 (November 27, 1823).

[77] Ibid., 6:222 (November 28, 1823).

In terms of relations with Russia, Adams had avoided taking actions that the tsar might well have found deeply offensive. In his book on the Monroe Doctrine, May aptly summarized what Adams had avoided. "The Tsar would have been shocked by an Anglo-American alliance and doubly shocked if there followed US recognition of the independence of Greece."[78] "The Tsar would have seen this as a wedge between the continental powers and Britain, a contribution to the promotion of chaos and a betrayal of his friendship."[79]

There remained one issue. Would Great Britain attempt to acquire Cuba as one more of its island bastions? This is not a matter directly addressed in the record of meetings held up to this point. Still, Canning's reluctance to recognize the independence of the new republics from Spain did suggest an unwillingness to abrogate the territorial integrity of arrangements made at the Congress of Vienna. Besides, Adams' verbal note to de Tuyll made it quite clear that any of the European powers that attempted to upset the status quo in the New World would face conflict with the United States. Estranged from the Holy Alliance, Britain was not in a good position to provoke conflict with the United States. Adams had good evidence that he could have his cake and also consume it. As he had very clearly stated, the United States and Great Britain would pursue a common policy because it was in the interests of the two nations to do so, not because they bound themselves by any sort of joint agreement.

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[78] May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 73.
[79] Ibid., 74.

On November 29th Adams wrote an Instruction to Rush in London. He told Rush to advise Canning that "to achieve the jointly desired object . . . each nation should act separately."[80] Adams did not tell Rush about his verbal note to de Tuyll. On November 30th Adams again wrote to Rush, instructing him to tell Canning that

> all questions of policy relating to them (i.e., the nations of the New World) have a bearing so direct upon the rights and interests of the United States themselves, that they cannot be left to the disposal of the European powers, animated and directed exclusively by European principles and interests.[81]

From the standpoint of communications with foreign powers, Adams had, by the end of November, put in place a set of well-integrated policies, policies that had consistently applied the principles which he believed should govern the nation's foreign relations. In the process Adams had made diplomatic recognition of an independent Greek nation very awkward and difficult, if not virtually impossible.

In his book, May suggests a very different perspective, namely, that "the Greek question and the British alliance question were not directly linked."[82] This chapter has emphasized something quite different, namely, that what happened in answering Canning's proposal and what happened in Greece were closely linked—but linked in a specific way.

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[80] Adams to Rush, November 29, 1823, in *Instructions*, Reel 5.

[81] Adams to Rush, November 30, 1823 (ibid.).

[82] May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 10.

In the 1820s, actions taken in the sphere of foreign relations needed to project the imprint of a consistent application of what Adams defined as stable and enduring moral principles. We saw this quite explicitly in Adams' urging that Monroe handle all foreign relations matters within the framework of what Adams called a unified system. As we saw earlier, Adams had summarized this very same approach in the letter he wrote to Robert Walsh after his July 4th 1821 speech.[83] Throughout chapters 3 and 6 we saw further evidence of a focus on principles in the way statesmen as diverse as Tsar Alexander and Clay approached the foreign policy issues they faced.

In Adams' case, using the power of the United States only where the commercial and security interests of the nation and its citizens were at stake was the key principle. For Clay, the basic principle appeared to be fostering the cause of human freedom. For Tsar Alexander it was the promotion of the principle of "legitimate" rule. Amidst this disparity of fundamentals there was a common element. The way Adams and his contemporaries approached issues of foreign policy did in fact link issues in ways very different from the norm which prevails at the present day. Their *weltanschauung* attached much greater importance to actions being (or at the very least appearing to be) consistent with underlying principles. In addition, they tended to interpret the significance of facts in terms of underlying principles. Looked at in this context, how the Monroe Administration responded to Canning was related to how it would respond to the Greeks.

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[83] See chapter 3, p. 128.

From Adams' perspective, noninvolvement in European political affairs was the vital policy which was necessary to protect the commercial and security interests of the nation. Within Adams' defined unified system, it was necessary to refrain from acting either on the Canning overture or on popular pressure to move toward diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic. In this sense, the two issues were very closely linked.

However, pending the president's message, and also pending congressional response to the message, the United States Government's response to the Greek struggle for freedom was still not a settled matter. It was not yet certain that Adams' policies and principles would prevail.

CHAPTER NINE

THE PRESIDENT'S 1823 ANNUAL MESSAGE AND CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSE: THE FUSION OF FOREIGN POLICY WITH DOMESTIC POLITICS

On December 2nd Monroe submitted the president's annual message to Congress. As was the custom at the time, he did not deliver it in person. The members of Congress assembled; a clerk read the message. For the record the Annals of Congress preserved its contents.

What the president had to say about Greece appeared innocent and straightforward. It was not. In the context of prior cabinet discussions and also in the context of strong support for the Greek cause among educated and politically active Americans, Monroe's statements were quite ambiguous. He seemed to come down on all sides of the issue of extending tangible support for the Greek people.

This is what he had to say on the subject of Greek freedom from Turkish rule:

> A strong hope has long been entertained, founded on the heroic struggle of the Greeks, that they would succeed in their contest, and resume their equal station among the nations of the earth . . . . Their cause and their name have protected them from dangers, which ere this, might have overwhelmed any other people.[1]

Contained in Monroe's opening words of respect for the Greek cause was the general rhetoric of support for the cause of freedom which all statesmen of the day, from Adams to Clay, had long embraced. By themselves these general words of encouragement appeared consistent with longstanding practice. Nevertheless, there were problems with the words Monroe used.

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[1] President's Message, December 2, 1823, in *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:22.

Monroe coupled his general support for freedom with the more specific ethnocentric appeal generated by the Greek cause. What the Greeks seemed to have accomplished was very different from what "any other people" might be expected to achieve. Both their ancestry and Divine Providence seemed to support their heroic efforts to achieve freedom from oppressive rule.

Monroe had every reason to know that his statement could only build pressure to support the Greek cause. For example, Greek exceptionalism had figured prominently in Everett's *North American Review* article, which we reviewed in chapter 2. It had also stood out in the eloquent plea for diplomatic recognition contained in the December 1823 petition to Congress from the Philadelphia Committee. Did Monroe mean to suggest that this exceptionalism had earned the Greek people the right to expect tangible support from the people of the United States and, above all, from their government? Both Everett and the Philadelphia Committee had joined the two propositions.

The ambiguity only increased as Monroe continued.

> From the facts which have come to our knowledge there is good cause to believe that their enemy [Turkey] has lost forever all dominion over them; that Greece will again become an independent nation. That she may attain that rank is the object of our most ardent wishes.[2]

Monroe's words indicated that Greece had, or was very close to having, de facto independence. In the past this status had been used to justify opening diplomatic recognition with the governments of the newly formed Latin American republics, governments like that of the Greeks, founded on popular sovereignty and republicanism. The criteria that the United States had used to justify extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics provided a ready (and well-known) point of reference. Given this context, what did Monroe consider the appropriate response by the United States Government to the issue of extending diplomatic recognition to the Greeks? In his message Monroe did not provide an answer to this question, nor did he indicate how to go about finding an answer. However, to judge by the Everett article and the resolution of the Philadelphia committee resolution, the question was very much on the minds of his audience.

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[2] *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:22.

Still, Monroe did seem to be setting the stage for some action by the government. In calibrated fashion he had moved from words of general support, to the exceptional case presented by the Greek struggle, to the key criteria which in the past had justified and supported the case for extending diplomatic recognition.[3] As Monroe clearly stated it, Turkey had lost its sovereignty over Greece. Quite possibly what might be missing for a state of true independence was satisfactory evidence that the Greeks had actually established a functioning government, one which in fact was exercising the powers of a sovereign state. This may signify what he meant by "independence," since the Turks allegedly had "lost all dominion over them." Whatever the case, Monroe did not follow through.

In his recently published *North American Review* article, Everett had been very explicit. He had urged that a fact-finding mission be sent to Greece to deal with any doubts about whether Greece was functioning de facto as a free and independent nation.[4] Would Monroe favor sending such a mission to Greece, or at the least not oppose congressional initiatives to fund such a mission? His message to the Congress, and through the Congress to the American people, seemed to leave room for such an option.

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[3] See chapter 7.
[4] See chapter 2, pp. 92ff.

In the past Monroe had expressed interest in finding ways to support the cause of freedom.[5] And he cannot have forgotten that the status of de facto independence had figured prominently in Clay's earlier arguments that the nation had a moral duty to extend diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics. It is in this context that one needs to recall Monroe's June 1823 letter to Jefferson and Monroe's remarks in the November 1823 cabinet meetings. Both provide strong indications that Monroe wanted to find a way to use the power of the United States Government to support—tangibly, with more than words—the cause of freedom. In addition, as we saw in the last chapter, Adams himself had suggested to Monroe that it would be better if any initiative to support the Greek cause came from Congress, not the executive. Was Monroe following up on this suggestion by actually setting the stage for congressional debate without overtly sponsoring it? His message provided no clear answer to this question.

In terms of the Old World, the nature of any support that Monroe envisaged was clear. It would not include initiating the use of physical force.

> Of events in that quarter of the globe, with which we have so much intercourse, and from which we derive our origin, we have always remained interested spectators. The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments most friendly, in favor of the happiness of their fellow men on that side of the Atlantic. In wars with the European powers, in matters relating to themselves, we have never taken part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded, or seriously menaced, that we resist injuries, or make

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[5] Jefferson to Monroe, June 11, 1823, in Jefferson, *Writings,* 15:435.

> preparation for our defense. With movements in this hemisphere we are more immediately concerned.[6]

In speaking of the New World, Monroe stipulated, "We should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere, as dangerous to our peace and safety."[7] On this point Monroe was quite explicit. Where the rights and interests of the United States were involved, as he feels they were on the "American continents," the United States was prepared to fight. Further efforts at colonization by the European powers would be deemed "an unfriendly act," which, put more bluntly, meant a cause for war. In dealing with the New World, Monroe's statements were crystal clear. "It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness."[8]

From Monroe's perspective, what happened on the far side of the Atlantic was altogether different. In the Old World, what happened in arrangements between states and within states did not affect the rights and interests of the nation. As a result, on the far side of the Atlantic the United States would remain what he called "interested spectators."

> Our policy toward Europe remains the same, which is not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers, to consider the Government de facto as the legitimate government for us, to cultivate friendly relations with it by a frank and manly policy.[9]

In essence, in the Old World the United States would not exert force to support the cause of freedom. It would support the cause of freedom with words of approbation and encouragement. Whether Monroe also meant to state that the

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[6] *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:22.

[7] Ibid.

[8] *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:23.

[9] Ibid.

United States would automatically initiate official diplomatic recognition to a de facto government in the Old World is doubtful. Nevertheless his audience could easily put this interpretation on his words.

Moreover, Monroe did not spell out whether any moves to extend diplomatic recognition were consistent with Adams' principles of neutrality and Monroe's own view of the role of the United States Government as an interested spectator. Monroe clearly stated that the Greek people had freed themselves from Turkish rule and that the government de facto was the government de jure. This would seem to countenance, perhaps even to mandate, steps leading to diplomatic recognition. There were no qualifiers. Did Monroe mean to eliminate the element of discretion in extending diplomatic recognition which Adams had emphasized in his August letter to Luriottis?

In the case of the Latin American republics, Clay had argued with passion that extending diplomatic recognition to an established de facto government was consistent with neutrality. He had argued with equal passion that the failure to extend diplomatic recognition because of fear of other nations was to abrogate the nation's own freedom. For Clay, the extension of diplomatic recognition to a de facto independent nation was an assertion of America's own freedom, not an interference in the internal affairs of other states.[10] As such it was not a violation of United States neutrality toward other nations. Was Monroe prepared to accept a similar frame of reference? Was he prepared to risk war to assert an American right? There is no explicit evidence that this was the case. Nevertheless, prior debates over recognition of the Latin American republics, prior cabinet discussions, and Monroe's own prior interest in striking a blow for freedom all point in this direction.

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[10] See chapter 3.

At the very least Monroe seemed to have chosen words that would reopen a debate over the extension of diplomatic recognition, this time in support of the Greek cause. He seemed to embrace the principle of de facto legitimacy for the Old as well as the New World. His statement mentioned no geographic boundary.

Amidst this ambiguity, one fact is clear. Monroe had not come down firmly and decisively in support of Adams' principles and policy of neutrality. The fact that he did not do so is significant. In the context of strong and well-organized popular feeling for the Greek cause, his failure to do so could only encourage supporters of the Greek cause to push for steps leading to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic. After all, Monroe had explicitly stated that Greece had achieved de facto independence. By raising this point and then not addressing whether he would favor or oppose steps leading to diplomatic recognition, he seemed to leave open a departure from the position Adams had long articulated and supported. Monroe's only qualifier was merely that in the Old World the nation would not initiate using armed force to support the cause of freedom. He was Delphic on how far the nation should go short of war in supporting the cause of freedom. Would remaining a spectator be consistent with exercising the nation's own freedom to extend diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic? Everett certainly hoped so, as did Calhoun and Webster. Adams, on the other hand, had argued forcefully that the United States should extend diplomatic recognition only to enhance the nation's own well-being.

Why Monroe would proceed in this fashion is not clear. Certainly by not explicitly endorsing Adams' position, Monroe avoided any statement that might prove politically contentious or unpopular. Monroe's statements merely suggested a general frame of reference his audience could accept and support. There are missing links—and they had consequences.

By not leading his audience toward what he saw as the proper course of action, Monroe created room for others not only to debate his meaning; he also left room for them to decide without his guidance on the proper course of action. Adams would not have approved. Adams' own frame of reference let one predict with assurance what the nation should do and refrain from doing in responding to the Greek struggle for freedom from Turkey. As we have already seen repeatedly, Adams had long urged exercising the power of the United States Government for one reason, and one reason only: the well-being of the nation itself, defined as the nation's commercial and security interests. Adams' frame of reference placed a clear burden of proof on the shoulders of those who wished to extend diplomatic recognition to the Greek people. As we saw in chapter 3, that burden of proof in the case of Greece was virtually impossible to make. Moreover, as we saw in chapter 8, Adams' meeting with de Tuyll indicated that the United States would take no partisan actions in the Old World. From a European perspective, extending diplomatic recognition to a government founded by revolt against an established ruler, before that ruler had relinquished authority, was a partisan, not a neutral act. Monroe's message also stated the following: "The people being with us exclusively sovereign, it is indispensable that full information be laid before them on all subjects, to enable them to exercise that high power to complete effect."[11] Taking this into account, was Monroe fulfilling his duties as president by providing the information necessary for the people or their chosen representatives in Congress to exercise the sovereign power of the United States? If so, for Monroe effective presidential leadership was not in charting the course, but rather in enabling the people of the United States to chart the course they wanted to follow. Certainly prior experience with Clay in the matter of diplomatic recognition should have discouraged Monroe's desire for such a collaborative approach. Nevertheless, his words do appear to invite some involvement by Congress. Also, Madison and Jefferson had both suggested to Monroe that in managing the nation's relations with other states, the president needed to consult with Congress before acting on matters of fundamental importance.

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[11] Monroe, *Writings*, 7:325 (December 2, 1823).

Monroe made no explicit mention of Canning's proposal to "walk hand in hand" with Great Britain. Rather, he stated independently the substance of what Canning had wanted to say in a joint note. The vital interests of the United States were involved in Latin America, and the United States would consider it as hostile to these interests if any of the major European powers intervened to subvert the independence of the new republics. This is precisely what Adams wanted Monroe to say. The administration stood tall in its defense of its own interests and demonstrated bravery in the face of danger. In so doing, the administration gave persuasive evidence that it was qualified to lead the nation. Adams could only benefit from such positive impressions.

From Monroe's perspective, at the time of his message to Congress the danger of intervention in the New World was real and imminent. Adams had a very different point of view. For Adams, the risk of intervention in the New World by either Great Britain or the continental powers was extremely remote. For example, on December 4th, two days after the president's message to Congress, Adams noted:

> I went to the President's and found Gali, the half-editor of the *National Intelligencer* there. He said the message [the President's annual message] was called a war message; and spoke of newspaper paragraphs from Europe announcing that an army of twelve thousand Spaniards was to embark immediately to subdue South America.[12]

Adams went on to state, "I had told him there was absurdity on the face of these paragraphs, as the same newspapers announced with more authority the disbanding of the Spanish army." Adams concluded, "The President himself is greatly disturbed with these rumors of invasion by the Holy Alliance."[13]

Why the two statesmen had not settled on a common perception of the practical danger of moves by Spain and the Holy Alliance to reimpose Spanish control over the newly formed Latin American republics is one further element contributing to the ambiguity surrounding Monroe's annual message. As we saw in chapter 8, Adams had made it very clear that he believed the United States must disclaim all involvement in European political affairs if the nation wanted to deter moves by the Holy Alliance in the New World. Then on December 4th Adams told Monroe that there was not any real danger. Adams cited recent press reports on the "disbanding" of the Spanish army. He well knew, however, that press reports were not an accurate source for factual information and in the instant case reported both the dismantling and the virtual embarkment of the Spanish army for the New World. If accurate, Gali's press reports would in fact have heralded danger for the United States. Not stated, but understood, was the fact that the transport would take place in ships of the French navy, and would most probably have involved material support from Russia.

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[12] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:226 (December 4, 1823).

[13] Ibid.

Despite Monroe's comments in his meeting with Adams and Gali on the 4th, the tone and substance of the president's statements in his annual message two days earlier had suggested a much more benign situation. In that message Monroe stated that the United States had agreed to Russia's request for a minister to negotiate the "respective rights of the two nations in the northwest coast of this continent."[14] Judging by such evidence, there was the good will to negotiate differences. Adams' meetings with de Tuyll offered strong evidence that this was the case. The leader of the Holy Alliance, the Russian tsar, appeared quite friendly to the United States.

On the surface at least, Adams appeared to have been successful in guiding the foreign policy principles Monroe stated in his annual message. Monroe appeared to have committed to a policy of detachment from disputes that divided the European powers. He avoided the many pitfalls of going "hand in hand" with Britain in an alliance to keep France and the Holy Alliance out of Latin America. In essence, Monroe seemed to endorse the principle of staying removed from what Jefferson had called "the broils of Europe."[15] Adams was in complete agreement with these positions. According to his cabinet meeting comments, which we reviewed in the previous chapter, he also endorsed Monroe's strong statement on America's intended action should any of the major European powers intervene in the New World, either directly or through Spain. Years earlier, in his July 4, 1821 speech, Adams had explicitly stated that the United States would be the

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[14] *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:13 (December 2, 1823).

[15] Jefferson to Monroe, September 11, 1823, in Jefferson, *Writings*, 15:477.

"vindicator" of her own freedom. In a meeting with Monroe on the 27th of November, Adams had spoken of the need for a "manifesto to the world."[16] In a cabinet meeting two days before, Adams had urged that "it was time to tender them an issue."[17] Monroe had done just that. He had sent a clear warning to the major European powers not to intervene in the New World.

Still, there remained a basic ambiguity. It was not clear whether the extension of diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic violated the principle of neutrality and noninvolvement. In chapter 7 we saw that the United States might well feel that the recognition of such a government was consistent with maintaining neutrality; other states might consider it a *casus belli*. Monroe posited that Greece either was, or showed clear prospects of becoming, a sovereign independent nation. He neither stated nor implied what actions, if any, the United States Government should take under these circumstances. In fact, the issue of diplomatic recognition for the Greeks does not appear at all in his message. It was clear, however, that there was strong public support for sending an official delegation to Greece for the very purpose of initiating official United States recognition of what Monroe had alleged was a de facto government of the Greek people. The resolution of the Philadelphia committee discussed in chapter 1 and Everett's *North American Review* article discussed in chapter 2 are two concrete examples of this fact.

Was Monroe by his silence encouraging Congress to chart the nation's course? Certainly Madison and Jefferson had both urged him to recognize the role of Congress in determining fundamental issues of foreign policy. According to historian Robert Remini, in the opening decades of the 19th century "it was an important article of republicanism that . . . the legislative was the legitimate centerpiece of government."[18] Was Monroe responding to this perspective and, in the context of his own time, exercising sound presidential stewardship?

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[16] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:21 (November 27, 1823).
[17] Ibid., 6:199 (November 25, 1823).

Such questions beg yet one more. Was Adams himself the source of Monroe's policy? A careful review of Jefferson's correspondence reveals that he consistently urged Monroe to keep away from European political conflict. For example, in response to Monroe's question of what the United States Government should do to support the cause of freedom, Jefferson in June 1823 advised as follows: "I have ever deemed it fundamental for the United States never to take an active part in the quarrels of Europe. Their political interests are entirely distinct from ours."[19] In essence Jefferson had urged Monroe to speak out in favor of freedom, but to stay out of any direct involvement in the struggles for freedom in the Old World. Such restraint, according to Jefferson, would enhance the ability of the nation to strengthen its own freedom and thereby put itself in a better position to support the cause of freedom in the New World. In Jefferson's words, "Indeed, for the sake of the world, we ought not to increase the jealousies or draw upon ourselves the power of this formidable conspiracy."[20] Adams could not have agreed more.

Just one day before Monroe delivered his annual message to Congress, Jefferson wrote the Greek nationalist Coray in these terms:

> No people sympathize more feelingly than ours with the sufferings of your countrymen, none offer more sincere and ardent prayers to heaven for their success. And nothing indeed but the fundamental principles of our

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[18] Remini, *Henry Clay*, 132.
[19] Jefferson to Monroe, June 11, 1823, in Jefferson, *Writings*, 15:435.
[20] Ibid., 435-436.

> government, never to entangle us with the broils of Europe, could ever restrain our generous youth from taking part in your holy cause.

Jefferson went on:

> Possessing ourselves of the combined blessings of liberty and order, we wish the same to other countries, and to none more than yours, which, the first of civilized nations, presented examples of what man should be.[21]

Adams himself could not have stated the position for neutrality more effectively. These were eloquent and moving words. At the same time the words stated very clearly that the United States would extend no practical physical support. Monroe was in complete agreement with Jefferson's position when it came to any physical support for struggles for freedom taking place outside this hemisphere, and his annual message was quite clear on this point.

The public issue preoccupying the nation was not, however, one of armed battle in support of the cause of freedom outside the nation's borders. It was whether an extension of diplomatic recognition was consistent with neutrality, and whether such action would lead other nations to retaliate against the United States.

On the evening of December 2nd, "after dinner," Adams paid Clay a visit. According to Adams, Clay told him, "The best part of the message was foreign affairs." Adams did not indicate why Clay had such a positive reaction. Clay's long expressed desire to assert aggressively the power of the United States in the cause of freedom in Latin America suggests that what particularly attracted Clay was Monroe's warning to the European powers to make no further efforts to colonize the New World.

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[21] Jefferson to Coray, December 1, 1823, in Jefferson, *Writings,* 15:481.

According to Adams, the two statesmen did discuss in the abstract the issue of diplomatic recognition. Adams recorded that Clay "thought the Government had weakened itself and the tone of the country by withholding so long an acknowledgment of the S. American independence." In response, Adams reminded Clay that earlier recognition might have led to war and all the divisiveness that could produce within the United States. Adams suggested that the delay came about in order to preserve harmony among different parts of the country, to avoid placing "different portions of the Union in conflict with each other and thereby endangering the Union itself."[22] Adams' comments were a not very subtle reminder that the War of 1812 had almost torn the nation apart and that Clay had been a primary instigator of that war. Clay responded that there would be no divisions where there was "a successful war." According to Adams, Clay ended up conceding, "But a successful war, to be sure, created a military influence and power, which he considered the greatest danger of war."[23]

In the nuanced exchanges of the day, the meeting was significant in three respects. First, Adams left having good reason to believe that Clay was not actively organizing an overt attack on the administration's foreign policy. It would have been somewhat underhanded to have complimented the speech and then attacked its substance. Gentlemen were not supposed to be caught doing such things. Second, Adams was on notice that he and Clay continued to have different perspectives on when and on what principle to exercise the nation's sovereign power to extend diplomatic recognition to another state. In any upcoming congressional response to the president's message, Adams had reason to expect

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[22] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:224 (December 4, 1823).
[23] Ibid.

Clay to speak out in favor of an aggressive use of that power. Third, the allusion to military influence is significant in a different way. In the arena of domestic politics, both statesmen faced the challenge of a great military hero in the upcoming election. Andrew Jackson would run against both of them. They seemed to share a concern over the exercise of military power. Overall the meeting was surprisingly cordial considering the divisiveness of their prior struggles to control the nation's foreign policy.

What Adams could not have known was that two days before his meeting with Clay, Daniel Webster wrote to Edward Everett a letter that would have greatly interested both of them. Webster told Everett, "As to the Greek subject, the Resolution [which Webster planned to introduce in the House] will be taken up tomorrow fortnight." Webster stated that he had "a pretty strong conviction of its ultimate success." The success Webster referred to was that, in Webster's words, of "being the first government among all the civilized nations, who publicly rejoice in the emancipation of Greece."[24]

On December 4th Adams called on Joel Poinsett, a key member of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. Adams stated that they conversed "upon Mr. Webster's resolution respecting the Greeks." (Webster had not yet submitted his resolution but would do so on December 8th.) Adams recorded that Poinsett indicated Webster would be satisfied if the Government would appoint Edward Everett as a commissioner to go to Greece. Adams responded, "I told him there was a person probably in Constantinople upon an errand which might suffer by the movements in Congress." Such an appointment

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[24] Webster to Everett, December 2, 1823, in Webster, *Papers: Correspondence,* 1:342.

"would destroy all possibility of our doing anything at Constantinople and that Everett was already too much a partisan." Adams recorded without comment that Poinsett "said Clay was threatening to come out on the affairs of the Greeks, and probably would suffer in public estimation by the course he would take on it."[25] Subsequent events would prove Poinsett was not accurately informed. Clay did not initiate any debate on the subject of extending diplomatic recognition to the Greek people. He did speak, and speak eloquently, in favor of Webster's resolution. Nevertheless, Clay did not plot or maneuver to subvert Monroe's control over the nation's foreign policy. Clay's behavior was very different from what it was at the time of debates over whether to recognize the Latin American republics.

On December 5th Webster again wrote to Everett. "The great object which I wish to bring about is the appointment of a Commission to go to Greece."[26] The purpose of such a commission was ostensibly to assess whether the conditions were ripe for the United States to extend diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic. Webster went on to thank Everett for his "two manuscripts" and for a draft of an article in support of the Greek cause which was to appear in the January 1824 *North American Review.* Webster said he favored an early congressional debate, but "I wish you would tell me frankly how far I can use" the material in the article before its publication. Webster indicated to Everett that he planned to talk to Clay and "perhaps" to the president and "hear their views on the matter." Interestingly, the secretary of state was not on the list. Interesting also is evidence of cordial relations between Calhoun and both Webster and Everett. In his December 2nd letter Webster wrote Everett, "Mr. J. Calhoun is greatly obliged to you for your map."[27]

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[25] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:227 (December 4, 1823).

[26] Webster to Everett, December 5, 1823, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

To judge by such evidence, one had in place the ingredients for a first-class political confrontation. Essentially the confrontation would revolve around whether the United States should initiate actions that risked friction with the European powers unless such actions were necessary to protect the interests and promote the welfare of the nation. If Congress answered no to this question, they would find it very hard to find a satisfactory justification for sending a commission to Greece to assess the prospect for diplomatic recognition. As we saw in chapter 6, Greece was a matter of great importance to the major European powers. And Russia and France in particular were greatly concerned over what they perceived as the poisonous and destructive virus of revolts against established authority.

There remained in theory some "wiggle room." Monroe himself had said in his annual message that the United States deemed the government de facto the legitimate government. Under these conditions, other states would seem to have no proper grounds to object to the behavior of the United States. As we saw in chapter 3, Clay had focused on this very point in debates over diplomatic recognition of the newly independent Latin American republics. He had argued vigorously that the United States must extend diplomatic recognition, and failure to do so was to permit other nations to infringe and compromise the very freedom and sovereignty of the United States. At the time Clay had failed to sway Congress. But supporters of the Greek cause held much stronger cards than those who spoke out for extending diplomatic recognition in Latin America. The Greek cause enjoyed powerful, well-organized popular support, replete with rallies in all the major cities of the nation and a powerful outpouring in the press. By the time of the debate in mid-January, Congress was being inundated with petitions urging that the United States Government extend diplomatic recognition.[28] Also, the issue was coming up on the eve of a presidential campaign. There was a practical incentive to best one's opponents and for one's followers to do the same.

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[27] Webster to Everett, December 2, 1823, in Webster, *Papers: Correspondence*, 1:342.

The way to do just that appeared to be championing the cause of freedom—above all, the cause of freedom for a people who stood as proxies for what Americans perceived as their own exceptional character. As we saw in chapter 2, the Greeks were uniquely such a people—or, more accurately, they were certainly portrayed and frequently accepted as such, both in 1823 and in 1824. Under these conditions, support for the Greek people was a form of proxy for supporting the cause of freedom of the American people themselves. It let a political leader and his public bond in a common pledge of allegiance to a cause all believed in, the cause of freedom. For an aspiring politician, the process could only be a tempting exercise.

On December 5th the *National Intelligencer* provided a muted but still excellent example of how the bonding process worked in practice. It reported that a military ball would be given in New York "on the 8th of January, the surplus proceeds of which are to be added to the fund to be raised in New York in aid of the cause of the Greeks. The anniversary of the battle of New Orleans will be selected for this Fete for Freedom."[29] At the time the anniversary of the battle of New Orleans was a national holiday. It was a time to reaffirm the bravery Americans had demonstrated in their own struggles for freedom. Similar balls in support of the Greek cause would be held in other cities. There is no record that Andrew Jackson attended any of the balls, but quite obviously the occasion could only recall his own valor and leadership.

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[28] See *inter alia* resolutions introduced by Mr. Hayne of South Carolina, Mr. Morgan of New York and Mr. Webster of Massachusetts, all on January 2, 1824 in *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:880, 889 and 931 (January 2, 1824) and further resolutions introduced on January 19th (ibid., 1083-1099).

On January 3rd *Niles* reprinted an article from a New York paper entitled "Greek Fire." The article stated that a portrait of General Jackson was "to be placed in the dancing room on the eighth of January, when the profits of the ball are to be given to the 'Greek' fund."[30] The symbolism of support for the freedom of the Greeks and an affirmation of America's own freedom in the War of 1812 was not only hard to ignore; symbolically, heroic defense of freedom in Greece and heroic defense of freedom in America had become fused. The potential for political benefit to General Jackson is manifest.

In his diaries Adams did not explore whether he felt that the Greek cause would have major political significance within the United States. Others were more articulate. On December 6th Webster wrote Everett, "There was, I believe, a meeting of the members of the administration yesterday—on the affairs of Greece." Webster told Everett that the president was "afraid, I believe, of the appearance of interference in concerns of the other continent." For Webster, such concerns "may not weigh greatly with me. I think we have as much community with the Greeks as with the inhabitants of the Andes and those on the borders of the Vermillion Sea." Webster ended by telling Everett that "Calhoun is as much in favor of Greece as EE is."[31] One must ponder how Monroe and Adams would have felt if they had proof that a member of the cabinet had repeatedly divulged the substance of their private discussions to a leader of Congress. In his letter Webster also told Everett, "I have spoken to several gentlemen on the subject of a motion respecting Greece, all of them approve of it." To judge by Webster's remarks, the momentum of support for extending diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic was strong, broad-based and apt to carry the day.

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[29] *Daily National Intelligencer* 40 (December 5, 1823): 3398.
[30] *Niles* 25 (January 3, 1824): 275.

Webster submitted his resolution on the floor of the House on December 8th. It read as follows:

> Resolved: That provision ought to be made by law, for defraying the expense incident to appointment of an agent, or commissioner to Greece, whenever the President shall deem it important to make such appointment.[32]

In his explanatory remarks, Webster claimed he was responding to the president's message of December 2nd "in reference to the sacrifices and sufferings of that heroic people, sacrificing which ought to excite the sympathy of every liberal minded man in Europe as well as in this country." Webster's next comments are ambiguous, but also reconcilable with Monroe's statements in the annual message: "We ought not to be restrained from expressing ourselves, with freedom, what are our views in relation to the Greek cause, so far as it may be done without committing ourselves to the contest." Webster then stated his hope that there was "at least one government which does entertain a proper view of that barbarous despotism which under the eyes of Europe had been permitted by a system of the foulest authority, to attempt to crush an interesting nation." Webster asked that the resolution "lie on the table for deliberate consideration of the House." Procedurally, this left open when and whether the motion would be called up for debate.[33] It would, in fact, be debated at great length the following month. Meanwhile, political leaders had time to sort out what they would say either to support or to oppose the resolution. More specifically, they had the time to ponder whether they accepted Webster's proposal that the United States Government should express "with freedom" its support for the Greek people by more than words. Webster had used the words "with freedom" in the context of moving toward the act of diplomatic recognition for a sovereign and independent Greek state.

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[31] Webster to E. Everett, December 6, 1823, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

[32] *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:806 (December 8, 1823).

Monroe and Adams now had no choice but to decide whether to actively oppose Webster's move or let it move forward toward what Webster, at least, felt was approval. If the motion passed, it threatened the carefully constructed system of foreign relations Monroe and Adams had crafted over the preceding month. In the eyes of European statesmen, Adams' statements to de Tuyll and Monroe's statements to the Congress about being "interested spectators" to political struggles in Europe were apt to appear, in Europe at least, as disingenuous, if not misleading. From a European standpoint, extending diplomatic recognition to a government created by revolt against established authority was not the act of a neutral state.

Adams and Monroe were not in a comfortable position. It was not clear at the outset that they would resist with equal commitment the substantive proposal that the United States send an official fact-finding mission to Greece. To judge by the evidence we have reviewed, there was a real possibility that the two might disagree on how to respond to calls for a congressional debate on the Greek question. After all, Monroe had actually proposed such a mission in a draft of his message to Congress.

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[33] For discussion on this procedure, see Remini, *Henry Clay*, 151.

In terms of political standing, both knew that there was widespread interest in Everett's October *North American Review* article. As a result, to oppose Webster publicly was to court unpopularity from many educated and politically articulate fellow Americans. There was a more promising alternative, if Monroe and Adams could agree. They could register objections on the procedural grounds that such a resolution invaded the jurisdiction of the presidency. Such a course, however, could prove quite contentious. As we saw in Jefferson's and Madison's letters to Monroe, and also in Remini's comments on the importance of deference to the wishes of the people, many statesmen accepted that Congress had the right to participate actively in deciding major, fundamental issues of foreign policy.

There was a dangerous further alternative. Monroe could allege that the act of extending diplomatic recognition to a de facto free nation was consistent with his principle of neutrality, and was therefore consistent with the principles and policies he had enunciated in his address. As we saw in chapter 7, it was not an argument that international law of the day would clearly support, Monroe's statement in his annual message notwithstanding. But it was an argument that Webster seemed to countenance, as Clay had in the earlier debates over recognition of the newly formed Latin American republics.

There were challenges in any course that Monroe and his secretary of state took. Not least was the possibility that the two would end up with different points of view. In his annual message, Monroe had supported the basic principles of neutrality he and Adams had agreed upon. Still, Monroe's statements on the de facto independence of Greece seemed almost to encourage the very situation that was now unfolding. There was no certainty that the two would define "neutrality" in the same way. Also, there was an important gap between the principle of acting only where the interests of the nation would benefit (Adams' frame of reference) and Monroe's apparent preference of acting to support the cause of freedom unless and until such a course risked demonstrable harm to the nation.

The Monroe archives contain a copy of a lengthy Instruction Adams wrote to Benjamin Rush in London on December 14th. The stated purpose of the Instruction was to respond to Canning's August proposal. The occasion afforded Adams the opportunity to define the nation's policies toward European involvement in the New World. This he did crisply and clearly, in ways that were fully consistent with the president's annual message. There was, however, another dimension to the Instruction. Adams also stated clearly and unequivocally the bedrock principles which served to validate these policies. If Monroe fully accepted the principles contained in the Instruction, there could be little to no justification for taking steps to extend diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic.

This is how Adams explained to Rush why there could be no alliance with Great Britain, even though the two nations shared a common desire to keep the Holy Alliance, and France in particular, out of the New World.

> So that Great Britain, negotiating at once with the European Alliance and with us, concerning them, without being bound by any permanent community of principle with us would still be free to accommodate her policy to any of those distributions of power, and partitions of territory which for the last half century have

> been the ultima ratio of all European political arrangements.[34]

Applied to the issue of diplomatic recognition of Greece, Adams' principles acted as a double deterrent. First, the application of New World principles of popular sovereignty in the Old World violated the principles of "distribution of power" which governed relations among European states. As a result, intervention to promote New World principles in the Old World was an invitation to conflict. Second, such intervention also violated the very principle of separation that Adams used to keep the European powers from extending their power into this hemisphere.

In January 1824 the conservative French newspaper *L'Etoile* put the need for separation more directly. Speaking of the dangers of recognizing de facto rule, it stated, "Such a maxim would shake the political system of all Europe, and might expose those favoring it to terrible consequences." Rhetorically, and perhaps presciently as well, *L'Etoile* went on to ask, "What principle could Congress then evoke to protest against usurpation and dismemberment [of the United States itself]?" Under such circumstances, *L'Etoile* argued, "Your former states have ceased to belong to you."[35]

What Adams communicated to Rush was a matter of diplomatic correspondence. In tone and in substance it was far removed from the rhetoric of those who were publicly supporting the Greek cause. For example, on December 16th the *New York American* printed a memorial "praying Congress to recognize the independence of the Greek nation, then engaged in a revolt against the power of the Ottoman Empire." The article wrote explicitly of "the enterprising, free and commercial character of the Greeks" as a justification for support.[36] In chapter 2 we saw the still more moving appeals made by Edward Everett in his December 19th speech in Boston. On December 20th *Niles* printed the resolution of the "very large meeting of the citizens of Philadelphia" which we also saw in chapter 2. It specifically asked that the government of the United States "consider the expediency of recognizing the independence of the Greeks."[37] On the same day *Niles* informed its readers, "Certain resolutions have been introduced into the house of delegates as expressions of the feelings of the legislators of Maryland as to the Greek cause."[38]

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[34] Adams to Rush, December 14, 1823 Instruction, in Monroe, *Writings*, 7:411.

[35] See Robertson, "Monroe Doctrine Abroad," *American Political Science Review* 6 (November 1912): 553.

As the year drew to a close, the momentum of public support for the Greek cause, and the related pressure to extend diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic, was very strong. Moreover, the news from Greece was positive. The Greeks were winning. On December 15th the *National Intelligencer* reprinted an article from the *New York Commercial Advertiser* entitled "Latest from the Greeks": "The affairs of the Greeks go on well."[39] The evidence seemed to support Monroe's statement of a de facto independence.

Press reports also reminded readers of the horrific atrocities committed against the Greek people. On December 20th *Niles Register* published what it called a "report from the Scio customhouse." According to *Niles*, it documented that 41,200 women and children had been sold as slaves. "The fathers, brothers and husbands of these women and children met with a more enviable fate and were butchered."[40]

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[36] Cline, *American Attitude,* 54 (December 16, 1823).
[37] *Niles* 25 (December 20, 1823): 244; see also p. 33.
[38] *Niles* 25 (December 20, 1823): 247.
[39] *Daily National Intelligencer* 34 (December 15, 1823): 8407.

On December 19th Webster called upon the House to consider his motion on sending an official mission of inquiry to Greece.[41] On the same date, the Annals of Congress reported that the president had caused the secretary of state to send to the House papers dealing with his correspondence with the Greeks.[42] The letter that Adams wrote to Luriottis in August 1823 was about to become a matter of public record. In chapter 7 we saw that it was, in fact, published in early January in a Boston newspaper and prompted Edward Everett's wife to say that Adams was cold and unfeeling.[43] *Niles Register* published the letter on January 10th. Significantly, the published document indicated that Adams addressed Luriottis as "Envoy of the Provisional Government of Greece."[44]

On December 29th Webster wrote to Everett positive words of encouragement. "My resolution was evidently well received by the House." Webster indicates he would "call it up in about a week."[45] Webster also asked to be promptly informed if there was any negative news from Greece.

In an undated letter of roughly this time, Joel Poinsett wrote Webster to advise him of the president's position on the upcoming debate on Webster's motion.

> I saw the President and showed him the modification you proposed. He still objects on the ground, that such

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[40] Niles 25 (December 20, 1823): 244.

[41] *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:847 (December 23, 1823).

[42] Ibid.

[43] See chapter 7, p. 272.

[44] *Niles* 25 (January 10, 1824): 299-300.

[45] Webster to Everett, December 29, 1823, in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

> matters ought to originate with the Executive, and your resolution goes further than he wishes. He intended only to express his wishes for the success of the Greeks.[46]

To judge by Poinsett's statement, Monroe had taken a firm position. The legislature was not the fulcrum for initiating the course the nation should pursue in the conduct of its foreign affairs, at least not in the case of extending diplomatic recognition to a new state.

Poinsett then proceeded to say that he (Poinsett) "will propose a substitute for your amendment." Webster was on notice that Monroe might well act to deflect and defeat Webster's resolution. Webster was also on notice that Monroe had found a champion to speak for him in the House. Webster was not deterred. On January 2nd he wrote Everett, "I send you the answer to the call for information respecting the Greeks. If I mistake not, it will, with the country, very much raise the Greek stock."[47] Webster went on to allay concerns over "objections of the Secretary of State" to the upcoming congressional debate.

> I think we can disregard that when we see the Secretary of State's correspondence with a Greek agent working in London, wishing him and his nation all success and publishing his correspondence.

Webster concluded by assuring Everett, "We shall have the nation." If Monroe does not go along, Webster told Everett, "He will soon be obliged to do so."[48]

The parallels with earlier debates over whether to extend diplomatic recognition to the new Latin American republics are striking. There was the matter of principle. Was the United States Government to impose on the nation sacrifices for the cause of freedom outside its borders? There was the matter of power. Did the Constitution give the power to make the determination of extending diplomatic recognition to the executive, or did it intend the Legislature to lead the executive in the exercise of this power? There was also the matter of political interest. What advantages accrued to a particular statesman from taking a position either in favor of or against the extension of diplomatic recognition?

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[46] Poinsett to Webster, not dated, in Webster, *Papers: Correspondence*, 1:344.

[47] Webster to Everett, January 2, 1824 (ibid., 1:344-45); also in Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

[48] Ibid.

To judge by appearances at the beginning of 1824, the crucible within which these determinations would be made was the upcoming debate in the House of Representatives. There was, of course, a court of appeal. The year 1824 was an election year. As the year began, it was quite reasonable to assume that the issue of support for the Greek cause would become prominent in that upcoming political contest. The intensity of organized public interest in the cause, the attention to the issue by the leading statesmen of the day—both attest to this prospect. More concretely, the jockeying for political position in Webster's letter is palpable.

Looking back, it is intriguing to speculate who would have won and who would have lost politically if Webster's motion had been approved by the House. In his book on the Monroe Doctrine, May offered the following comment:

> The recognition of Greece would not only deprive Clay of a talking point, but would create a dilemma for Adams, for Adams would either have to decide to support Edward Everett, which would have outraged republicans, or alienate himself from his friends, pushing New England Federalists into John Calhoun's camp.[49]

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[49] May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 215.

Yes, Calhoun would have been the major political beneficiary of any endorsement of Webster's motion, for such endorsement would have weakened two of his presidential opponents. However, a defeat of Webster's motion would create a different situation altogether. Here Adams would have clearly demonstrated that he had the political power to lead (and control) the Congress. Moreover, his and Monroe's sponsorship of vigorous support for the cause of freedom in the New World could validate that Adams and Monroe both had the courage to stand up and face danger in support of the noble cause of freedom.

Proceedings in the House of January 2nd further underscored the political significance of the issue, also John Calhoun's hand in the upcoming debate. The record for the day shows that

> Mr. Hayne communicated the following resolutions passed by the Senate and the House of the State of South Carolina . . . . Resolved: That the state of South Carolina regards with deep interest the noble and patriotic struggle of the modern Greeks to resume from the foot of the infidel and the barbarian the hallowed land of Leonidas and Socrates, and would hail with pleasure the recognition by the American Government of the independence of Greece.[50]

South Carolina was John Calhoun's state. At the same sitting, Mr. Webster lay on the table a memorial from the citizens of Massachusetts urging similar support for the Greek cause.

Although it is outside the scope of this dissertation, one must pause and marvel at the political and organizational skills that were necessary to orchestrate the concentrated outpouring of support for the Greek cause that occurred in late 1823 and early 1824. Synchronized mass meetings in widely separated cities, engagement of political leaders in the various states to enact petitions to Congress, widespread newspaper support for the Greek cause did not just happen. To manage such an enterprise successfully bespeaks a high level of competence. To manage such an enterprise in an age of slow and inadequate communications and strong regional tensions is all the more noteworthy.[51]

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[50] *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:80 (January 2, 1824).

Given this outpouring and the organized structure which lay behind it, and given also Webster's statement to Everett that he had wide support for his resolution in the House, Webster appeared to have good reason to believe that he and the partisans of Greece would, in Webster's words, "have the nation." If they succeeded, the course of the nation's foreign policy was apt to end up being very different. The stated principle of being "interested spectators" to political struggles in the Old World ran a serious risk of being swept aside. However unjustified in the minds of American statesmen, the European powers attached great importance to the act of extending diplomatic recognition. In itself Canning's conduct in refraining from extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics was strong evidence that this was so.[52] The publicly stated principles of the Holy Alliance and the tsar's io triomphe circular likewise provided compelling evidence to support this conclusion. Recognition of a Greek republic just might make the behavior of the United States "unacceptable" to one or more of the European powers. Adams had suggested as much in earlier cabinet discussions. Such action could only encourage Britain and other powers to seize opportunities in the New World, specifically Britain or France in Cuba and Russia in the Northwest. As we saw in chapter 8, it was these very concerns that had made Canning's proposal so attractive to Monroe, Madison and Jefferson.

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[51] For a brief summary of these activities, see Pappas, "United States and the Greek War," 33-42 and citations contained therein.

[52] See chapter 8, pp. 278-79.

On January 9th Adams recorded that Poinsett met again with Monroe. This time Adams was in attendance. According to Adams, Poinsett was "making some inquiries for the Committee of Foreign Relations of which he is a member." Poinsett wanted to know "whether it might be stated in debate that the Executive is adverse to the measure" of an appropriation for sending a Commissioner to Greece.[53] On January 10th Adams recorded that in a cabinet meeting Calhoun and Southard (the Secretary of the Navy) both stated that "the views of the Executive ought not to be communicated in that way." Adams went on to assert, "I know that Webster had consulted Calhoun and Southard before he offered his resolution and had been told by them that the Executive had no objection to it."[54] At great length Adams proceeded to record Calhoun's maneuvering for political advantage in an election year. What Adams failed to tell us, however, was also significant. Did Monroe authorize either Calhoun or Southard to state publicly that the president would not oppose Webster's motion? If Monroe had not done so, Calhoun and Southard had misrepresented Monroe in ways which might have been deeply embarrassing to both cabinet officers.

Although unclear, Monroe's position was far from a matter of indifference to Congress, Webster's comments to Everett notwithstanding. Poinsett's visit is evidence of this fact. Adams in his diary for January 17th gives further evidence to support this conclusion: "Mr. Fuller of the House, called this morning; afterwards at the office, and again at my house." According to Adams, Fuller proposed an amendment to Webster's resolution, to leave the appointment of the commissioner entirely to the executive. In reply Adams stated:

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[53] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:229 (January 9, 1824).
[54] Ibid., 6:230 (January 10, 1824).

> I told Fuller the objection to it [Webster's motion], under whatever format it might take would be the same. It was intermeddling of the Legislature with the duties of the Executive. It was the adoption of Clay's South American system, seizing upon popular feelings of the moment to perplex and embarrass the Administration.[55]

With a slight touch of paranoia, Adams went on to state that he "told Fuller that I knew something of the mines and countermines of Crawford and Calhoun for the Presidency." He further noted, "As to Webster's course, I should reserve my opinion upon its motives for more conclusive evidence." As Adams saw it, Webster's conduct was "equivocal and somewhat suspicious."[56]

On January 19th the House met to consider Webster's resolution. It received and then tabled a number of memorials in support of the Greek cause and then moved into a Committee of the Whole. This procedure meant that the House was not required to vote on Webster's resolution but could debate it at length.

Webster opened the debate. What was apt to be persuasive to his audience will sometimes seem bombastic and vacuous to a reader in the early 21st century. It is beyond our power to duplicate the immediacy and intensity which Webster was able to evoke both in his audience in Congress and in the educated and politically active people who would later read his speech. In his biography on Daniel Webster, C. M. Fuss indicated why this was so.

> It is impossible for us today to reproduce the voice and manner of the orator. The mellifluous cadence, the shifts in emphasis, the variety of gestures have vanished like a summer cloud. Only in imagination can we

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[55] Ibid., 6:233 (January 17, 1824).
[56] Ibid.

> visualize his [Webster's] burning glance and the proud poise of the head.[57]

Writing of one of Webster's orations, an admirer used these words. "It seemed to me that [Webster] was like the mount that might not be touched, and that burnt with fire."[58] For Webster's contemporaries, effective rhetoric also projected "a humanitas committed to the public good" by one whose very rhetoric projected social authority and the legitimate right to lead.[59]

Keeping these admonitions in mind, what follows can only provide an echo of what Webster's contemporaries heard and understood. The cultural context in which he spoke was what made his rhetoric powerful in the arena of domestic politics. There is no way to effectively relive that culture.

The sentences Webster constructed were carefully cadenced. They were designed to lead to a powerful emotional commitment to the cause he sponsored. Throughout his remarks he took pains to show that reason justified the emotions he tried to generate. The activator for commitment, however, was emotion, not reason.

The first emotion that Webster appealed to was the now familiar one of moral obligation. "We must leave this Hall, before we can turn away from the memorials of ancient Greece." Webster spoke of America's own capital building in these terms: "This magnificent edifice, these columns with their stately proportion . . . what are they but so many witnesses of what Greece was, and what she ought to be."[60] In essence, Webster asserted that to fail to support the Greeks was to betray the very foundations of the building symbolizing the nation's own freedom. (In point of fact, the model for the nation's capital can be traced back to the Pantheon in Rome, not the Parthenon in Athens.)

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[57] Fuess, *Daniel Webster*, 1:289.

[58] Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence*, 23.

[59] Ibid., 14-15.

[60] *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:1084-1085 (January 19, 1824).

The second emotion that Webster appealed to was the fear of shame from the adverse opinions of others. "We are," says Webster, "bound to bring [in the aid of freedom] that moral force which must forever reside in the opinions of a free and intelligent nation."[61] "Ours is now the great Republic of the earth—its growth and strength compel it, willing or unwilling to stand forth to the contemplation of the world."[62] From Webster's standpoint, what Congress did or didn't do to support the Greek cause would bring praise or opprobrium to the nation. Put differently, the nation needed to act honorably, and for Webster that meant supporting his motion.

Webster took pains early in his oration to relate his position to that of the president. He did this in two ways. "The President has said there is reason to hope that the Greeks would be successful in the present struggle with their oppressors and the power that had so long crushed them had lost its dominion over them forever." Webster was suggesting that he was supporting the president's own position. As a separate proposition, Webster also asserted, "Time, peace, industry and the arts are raising this government by a certain and irresistible progress . . . . We are to attain this greatness by internal development." Webster stated that to achieve this end he favored a "liberal" as well as a "pacific" policy in the nation's relations with other states.[63]

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[61] Ibid., 41:1087.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 41:1086.

On the face of it, Webster, like Monroe, wanted a policy of peace with other nations. By implication he posited that his motion was consistent with the principles of a liberal and pacific foreign policy. Unlike Monroe, however, Webster then stated as a general proposition: "We have an interest in the struggle for freedom,"[64] an interest which presumably he felt lent support to a decision to extend diplomatic recognition to the Greeks. One must wonder what vestiges of Monroe's and Adams' principles would have remained if Webster meant that, as a general proposition, the nation must be prepared to take actions to help others achieve freedom. (Adams' Instruction to Rush of December 19th clearly had sounded a very different principle. So too had his letter to Luriottis. For Adams, the way to security was neutrality, not partisan involvement in the quarrels of others.)

Webster buttressed his position by going on to build a strong case for animosity against the Holy Alliance. As he presented it, the Holy Alliance was "a union of physical force against the rights of people in all countries." The result of the Alliance was that it was "criminal for the people to combine, or resist the will of their sovereigns . . . . If a Greek attempted to resist the Turkish scimitar, he too offended against the Emperor of Russia." Webster explicitly cited from the Verona circular. Such a man, as Webster reported the words of the Holy Alliance, "'throws a firebrand into the middle of the Turkish Empire.'" Rhetorically Webster asked, "If a man may not resist either the Spanish Inquisition or the Turkish scimitar, then what in God's name can he resist? Stronger cases can never arise."[65] Not coincidentally, both the Spanish Inquisition and the barbarism of the Turks reflected acts of people who allegedly suppressed freedom of religion.

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[64] Ibid., 41:1087.

[65] Ibid., 41:1090-1091.

Moral obligation toward others, national interest, fear of shame, moral repugnance over the hostility to freedom embedded in the principles of the Holy Alliance, condemnation of those who oppressed the freedom of religion—these were the building blocks of Webster's rhetorical presentation. As he superimposed each of these building blocks one on top of the other, the case for support for the Greek cause rose in intensity. The arguments were not seriatim, they were cumulative. Therein lay an important part of their power for Webster's generation.

Webster left no doubt as to where his eloquence was leading. Rhetorically he asked, "Is it not time to step forth, and at least declare that we condemn and deny such monstrous opinions?"[66] For Webster, the answer to this question was self-evident. His purpose, however, was not to gain endorsement for a condemnation of Turkish barbarism and of what he felt was the cruel and reprehensible character of the Holy Alliance. Stepping forth and speaking out meant sponsoring actions designed to commit the United States to act in favor of freedom, and to do so by taking steps leading to official recognition of an independent Greek republic. "What do we not as a people owe to the principle of lawful resistance? To the principle that a society shall govern itself?" From Webster's vantage point, and presumably from the vantage point of his audience, the answer to these questions was self-evident.

Webster then posited on the basis of the answer to his questions that the same principles "that would lead us to protest in the case of the whole South

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[66] Ibid., 1091.

American Continent, bind us to protest in the case of the smallest republic of Italy."[67] The case for Greece, however, was for Webster *a fortiori*. "This people, a people of intelligence, ingenuity, refinement, spirit and enterprise, have been for centuries under the most atrocious, unparalleled Tartarian barbarism that ever oppressed the human race."[68] For Webster, "In the whole world no such oppression is felt as that which crushed down the wretched Greeks."[69] In essence, the Greeks were uniquely qualified by ethnocentric heritage to enjoy the fruits of freedom; their plight surpassed that of other peoples. Very adroitly, Webster walked through the door Monroe had opened in his message to Congress. The Greek people had an exceptional call upon the nation for support.

Webster went on to emphasize this point by comparing the oppression of the Greeks to the oppression in India by the British.

> The oppressed natives are themselves as barbarous as their oppressors, but here [in Greece] have been millions of civilized, enlightened, Christian men, trampled to earth, century after century, by a barbarous, pillaging relentless soldiery.[70]

According to Webster, support for the cause of freedom should vary in intensity depending upon the ethnocentric, religious background of those who struggled for it. Those whom Webster identified as essentially the same as Americans themselves—namely, those who were civilized, enlightened, and Christian—had a special call upon Americans. Everett in his October 1823 *North American Review* article had made the exact same point. What was different was that Webster spoke from the floor of the House of Representatives. He spoke as a respected political leader.

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[67] Ibid., 1093.
[68] Ibid., 1094.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

Perhaps unwittingly, Webster moved support for the cause of human freedom far from the enlightenment ideal embedded in the Declaration of Independence. He made no pretense that all men are created with equal human right to expect active support by Americans and their government. In the context of his time, Webster's statement served a very practical purpose. Those who supported slavery and those who were beginning to find it morally repugnant could unite in supporting freedom for a people like themselves. They could bond in a common cause, and do so very soon after the tensions which led to the Missouri Compromise. We saw one instance of this reality in the strong support of the *Charleston Courier* for the cause of freedom for the Greeks, all the while supporting chattel slavery in the United States.[71]

Having laid in place the building blocks of his appeal, Webster then posed a provocative question: "What is the soul, the informing spirit of our institutions, of our entire system of government?"[72] Webster's answer was "public opinion." From his perspective, the will of the people and (by implication) not that of the president appeared to be the authority that should determine the fundamental course of the nation's foreign policy.

Clearly and indisputably, political leaders accepted that the people were sovereign in the United States. Monroe himself in his annual message had stated that keeping the nation fully informed was essential to assure that "local prejudices and jealousies are surmounted, and that a national policy, extending its fostering care and protection to all the great interests of our union, is formed and adhered to."[73] As we have already seen, it was not clear at the time whether the House was the ultimate repository of public opinion and the will of the people, or whether in setting the nation's foreign policy the administration was the repository of that will. Monroe's statement to Congress on the sovereignty of the people, however, almost invited a participatory process with Congress. At the very least, his statement suggested the need to reassure the nation that he was responsive to the popular will. In the case of Greece, that popular will in early 1824 was speaking with great clarity and force. Looked at in this context, Webster's question left the impression that to oppose his resolution was to oppose the sovereign popular will which should govern the nation. To underscore this very point he asked, rhetorically, "Does not the land ring from side to side with one common sentiment of sympathy for Greece, and indignation towards her oppressors?"[74]

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[71] See chapter 2, pp. 82-84.

[72] *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:1093.

As he drew toward the end of his oration, Webster repeated in a much higher key a number of his key arguments. He did so in terms which indicated he was confident that the audience had agreed with him up to this point.

> We are not, surely, yet prepared to purchase their smiles [those of the Holy Alliance] by a sacrifice of every manly principle . . . . Does any Christian Prince even ask us not to sympathize with a Christian nation struggling against Tartar tyranny? . . . The Greeks, contending with ruthless oppressors, turn their eyes to us, and invoke by their slaughtered wives and children and by their blood . . . . They implore of us some cheering sound, some look of sympathy, some token of compassionate regard.[75]

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[73] President's Message, December 2, 1823 (ibid., 41:13).

[74] *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:1098.

[75] Ibid., 41:1097, 1099.

Webster then concluded by urging, "You would give them at least the cheering of one friendly voice . . . . They ask us by our common faith."[76] Again, the theme of shame if one does not speak out and support the Greek people (by supporting Webster's motion) reappears. Reappearing also was the effort to evoke feelings of both Christian solidarity and Christian compassion.

Everett had coached Webster well. His oration embodied the key messages contained in the Kalamata appeal and in Luriottis' letter to Adams, as well as in Everett's *North American Review* article of October and Boston speech of December 29th. What Webster did, however, was much more than project a moving synthesis of what had gone before. He articulated a powerful definition of American nationalism. He did this by summarizing from a position of authority the duties and responsibilities that he felt united his fellow citizens with their government. Given both his eloquence and the forum from which he spoke, he provided the opportunity for his audience to share in what gave them a common national identity. We saw earlier that Webster was deeply concerned that the nation lacked what he called a "national interest."[77] In pledging allegiance to the Greek cause, Webster had found what promised to be, in a spiritual or ideological sense, that national interest.

On the surface Henry Clay's earlier orations in favor of extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics were very similar to Webster's plea to support the cause of Greek freedom. Each statesman urged the nation to show that it was composed of men who possessed manly valor, a nation of men who had the courage to stand up in the face of danger to support a noble cause. Webster and Clay both deplored the barbarism of the enemies of freedom. Both argued that failure to extend diplomatic recognition compromised America's own freedom.

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[76] Ibid., 1099

[77] Webster to Joseph Story, April 12, 1823, in Webster, *Papers: Correspondence*, 1:327-28.

There were, however, key differences. Americans were (or at least Webster portrayed them as being) brothers of the Greeks, in terms of a shared Christian, non-Catholic religion, a kinship that imposed more forceful and urgent duties and responsibilities. Americans shared (or were alleged to share) a common political culture with the Greeks, who were struggling for their freedom. Again there was kinship. Spiritually, both Americans and the Greeks of the early 19th century were supposedly the descendants of the ancient Greeks. Americans claimed in their own Revolution to have shown a civic virtue which they felt was characteristic of the ancients. Americans and the Greeks both allegedly had demonstrated great heroism and self-sacrifice for the noble cause of freedom. Despite Clay's allusions to bravery, the case for heroism by those in Latin America was less clear, at least as portrayed in press reports and in articles in the *North American Review.*[78]

Webster led his audience to see in Greece a model of people who were uniquely worthy of support by Americans and by the government that represented them. Clay could not buttress his arguments in a similar fashion. As a result, the emotional appeal of the Greek cause had power that was lacking in the case of Latin America. In the practical sphere, there was another key difference. When Webster spoke, his audience in Congress and in the nation had already been exposed to ardent and repeated messages containing the substance of what Webster molded into his oration. Clay had not spoken to an audience that was similarly conditioned. This too meant that Webster's remarks were apt to have a readier acceptance and a much greater potential to influence events.

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[78] "South America," *North American Review* 31:432-43.

In later years Webster would look back with pride on the words he spoke in favor of Greek freedom. As he expressed it, he was "more fond of this child than any of the family." It was his favorite oration, one which he "could never part without departing from self."[79]

On January 20th Joel Poinsett responded to Webster. He began with a very similar paean of praise for the Greek people, a people "to whom we owe our arts, our sciences, and, except our religion, every thing that gives a charm to life." Like Webster, Poinsett stressed the heroism of the Greeks of his own day. They were rivals to the virtues of their ancestors, exhibiting a persevering courage and a contempt for danger.[80] From Poinsett's perspective, the Greek people deserved respect and sympathy.

Whether they should have the benefit of actions undertaken by the United States Government was another manner. "As Representatives of the people, we have no right to indulge our sympathies, however noble, or to give way to our feelings, however generous." To the contrary, suggested Poinsett, "We ought to go slow to adopt any measure which might involve us in a war, except where these great interests [the honor and safety] of the nation are involved."

Adams had found a champion. Poinsett had expressed the very foundation on which Adams believed the nation's foreign policy should rest. It was a very different principle from the one Webster had embraced in his oration. Poinsett then proceeded more specifically to engage Webster's motion.

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[79] Webster, *Letters of Daniel Webster*, 104.
[80] *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:1105 (January 20, 1824).

> Unless we wish or expect him [the President] to act upon our recommendation, we ought not to throw upon him, alone, the responsibility of resisting the strong public opinion, which has been excited on this subject.[81]

Adroitly, Poinsett asked what supporters of the resolution hoped to accomplish. He suggested that they might well put pressure on the president without assuming any responsibility for the consequences of what the president eventually did. Adams certainly documented in his diaries his feelings that any congressional debate on Greece threatened to become a replay of the political harassment he felt was contained in Clay's maneuverings to extend diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics.[82] Poinsett provided an echo to these concerns. He also suggested that it was the duty of a political leader to do what was right, even if it meant resisting the pressures of popular opinion. Adams would have agreed with such a position.[83] In his oration Webster had suggested a very different criterion.

Like Webster before him, Poinsett presented his version of the relevant facts. Not surprisingly, his version was quite different from Webster's.

> It appears to me that in our consideration of this question we have been misled by comparing this revolution to that of Spanish America .... When we adopted the first measure [of actually extending diplomatic recognition] Buenos Ayres had been independent, de facto, for more than eight years and Spain had not made the slightest effort to recover the country.[84]

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[81] Ibid.

[82] See *inter alia* Adams, *Memoirs* 6:197-98 (November 24 and 25, 1823).

[83] See discussion in chapter 3 and in particular Adams' letter to Walsh of July 21, 1821 in Adams, *Writings*, 7:113-118.

[84] *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:1105 (January 20, 1824).

In the case of Latin America, asserted Poinsett, "The tide could not be rolled back." For him, Latin America was not a precedent for extending diplomatic recognition to the Greeks. Poinsett implied that in Greece the tide might well be rolled back. Unlike Webster, he was unwilling to vote for sending a mission to Greece to assess whether conditions of independence justified proceeding to a formal recognition of a Greek republic.

Poinsett emphasized the importance of adhering to precedent and to principle. He did this by raising a provocative question:

> Is there a country on earth in whose fate we feel a deeper interest than Ireland? . . . A braver and more generous nation does not exist. Her exiled patriots have taken refuge here, and are among our most useful and distinguished citizens. They are identified with us and the land which gave them birth must always inspire us with the warmest interest.[85]

Poinsett did not attack directly Webster's position that the Greeks are a special case because their oppression was unique in its severity. Poinsett did ask where support for the Greek cause would ultimately lead if warmth of interest was the criterion for acting.

Poinsett quoted at length from the August 1823 letter Adams sent to Luriottis. He emphasized particularly Adams' assertion that the act of extending diplomatic recognition risked bringing the nation into war. He then went on to state:

> Every power in Europe balances between its terror of revolutionary principles and its dread of augmenting the power of Russia. The independence of Greece alarms their fears on both counts . . . . And have no doubt that the establishment of free institutions in Greece would

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[85] Ibid., 41:1106.

> have a powerful influence on the minds of enthusiastic Italians and Germans.[86]

Unlike Webster, Poinsett bore down hard on the practical consequences of the course of action Webster advocated. Poinsett then concluded by urging that the United States stay out of matters "which do not even remotely affect our interests." To do otherwise in the case at hand was to threaten the interests of the Great Powers in Europe and invite a retribution which put the nation in grave danger. "Let us not go forth to seek enemies . . . . If they approach our shores with hostile intent, we may arise in the collected struggle of a great nation, and hurl destruction on the foes of freedom and of America."[87]

On a short-term basis, the evidence of where the public stood was strongly in favor of Webster's motion. However, those who voted for a course that might destabilize relations with the major European powers, or even provoke war, just might have cause to fear the consequences of their actions. As Poinsett indicated, they could not know for certain what would be the reaction of Russia, of Great Britain or of France if the United States ended up taking steps leading to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic. As a result, in January 1824 political leaders could not know for sure what action would maintain the people's confidence over a longer period of time.

There were other complicating factors. Political leaders of the time appeared to hold principles that they actually cared about deeply. One of these principles was an almost passionate belief in freedom. From diaries to letters to speeches, the record resonates with a commitment to this principle. It would be very difficult for them not to support actions that they felt furthered this commitment. A second principle, which political leaders discussed less, was the principle of order, and of harmony based on order. Divisive struggles for power, or what people of the time would call factions, were disparaged to the point of opprobrium. In voting on Webster's motion, it would very definitely pay not to appear partisan or self-serving or what in current times we would call political.

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[86] Ibid., 41:1107.
[87] Ibid., 41:1111.

Debate on Webster's motion continued at great length in the House until January 26th. On motion duly made, the House then rose. There was no motion on the resolution itself, since the rules called for none in a Committee of the Whole. More significantly, the motion to reconvene was *sine die*. There was no date set for any follow-up, and there was no further congressional debate or action on Webster's motion. Congress authorized no mission to assess the state of Greek freedom. Overall, the government of the United States did not respond to Webster's motion by initiating action to support the Greek cause, beyond that of eloquent rhetoric. Webster had not achieved his stated objective.

By not voting at all on Webster's motion, Congress had failed to exert its leadership or control over an important area of the nation's foreign policy. This left the president much more firmly in control of the nation's relations with other states. Going forward, the president would have much greater authority than would have been the case if the House had approved Webster's motion. Even so, the fundamental significance of the debate over Webster's resolution actually lies elsewhere.

The debate took place in terms of the ideology of rigidly defined standards of right and wrong. Both advocates and opponents of Webster's motion framed their appeals in terms of moral conduct. They tried to leave their audience with the impression that those who opposed them were in some sense morally deficient.

The precedent was one that was to become increasingly embedded in the articulation of United States foreign policy throughout the nineteenth century, starting with Manifest Destiny in the 1840s.[88]

There was, and is, a danger in this ideological approach. Such a focus can make it hard to assess either the motivations or the goals of others. Moreover, such a focus can make it hard to see the practical consequences of a given course of action. Most dangerous of all, moral imperatives can easily become the driver rather than the justifier for the nation's conduct. The debate over Webster's resolution illustrates this. Speaking in favor of the resolution, Clay urged:

> Let us show them [the people of the United States] that we are prepared to live or to die as freemen . . . . Let us remember that we are placed over a nation capable of doing and suffering all things for its safety . . . . Are we so humbled, so low, so despicable, that, per adventure we might offend some one or more of their imperial and royal majesties? . . . My legs have not yet learned the sycophantic language of a depraved slave.[89]

At a later point Clay asserted:

> A miserable invoice of figs and opium has been presented to us to repress our sensibilities, and to eradicate our humanity . . . . What shall it serve a nation to save the whole of its wretched commerce and lose its liberties?[90]

In essence, Clay urged his audience to equate opposition to Webster's position with a denial of the manly virtue that qualified an individual for leadership of the American people. Such a person lacked bravery, lacked the willingness to sacrifice for the common good, and betrayed the Christian religion.[91] Although Clay did not say so, his words also implied that failure to support Webster's motion was to betray the ideals of the United States in ways that were the equivalent of Judas' betrayal of Christ. The one was for silver, the other was for figs and opium.

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[88] For general discussion on this point, see Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* and Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny and the Empire of Right.*

[89] *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:1174 (January 22, 1824).

[90] Ibid., 41:1175.

For Clay the honorable course to follow was clear.

> Pass this resolution, and what sir, do you do? You exercise an act of independent sovereignty . . . . It is principally and mainly for the credit and character of our common country, that I hope to see this resolution pass.[92]

To base the conduct of the United States Government on such premises would, sooner or later, generate risks of separating decisions from their probable consequences on the nation's welfare.

Arguments both for and against Webster's resolution contained a strong element of ethnocentric racism. The appeal of such arguments in the 1820s was very strong. Unfortunately, then as now such a focus threatened to lead to conduct that could prove quite damaging. For example, one proponent of Webster's motion argued that there was little danger of any Turkish reprisal since "they were an indolent people; preferring to occupy their time in smoking opium in their camps."[93] An opponent of Webster's motion couched his objections in these terms:

> But the Greeks have been slaves. The moment the external pressure of the common enemy is removed, scenes of anarchy and horror will be witnessed that may, if possible, exceed those already exhibited.[94]

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[91] As we saw in chapter 3, Clay had made the same argument when speaking in favor of extending diplomatic recognition to the Latin American republics.

[92] *Annals of Congress,* 18th Cong., 1st sess., 41:1175 (January 22, 1824).

[93] Ibid, 41:1142.

[94] Ibid, 41:1153.

Implicitly some people qualified for freedom, some did not. Americans could define themselves as different from other peoples, unlike the people of India or Turkey, for example. Americans could also define themselves in terms of what they felt they were, namely, the inheritors of ancient Greece and the true Christian religion. They could do this whether they ended up supporting or opposing Webster's motion for diplomatic recognition. It was only a short step from such a perspective to one which posited that those who are free from such deficiencies were not only different, they were entitled by their nature to have certain privileges that were different from those enjoyed by others.

Looking back from the present, Webster's oration and the ensuing debate are also significant because they illustrated and reinforced two powerful precedents. First, to be persuasive, the motivator of the nation's foreign policy must appear grounded on the bedrock of doing what was morally right. Presumably this would guide the nation in terms both of what it should do and refrain from doing. Second is an assumption that judgments can be properly grounded on an assessment of the ethnocentric character of those with whom one is dealing. In this context, others might be slaves or dissolute or, like the Holy Alliance, evil and cruel. Presumably such judgments were appropriate in guiding the nation's decisions of what it was justified in doing and refraining from doing. It was a dangerous framework. It tended to draw attention away from an objective analysis of the facts. It discouraged what Adams had felt was vitally important: to focus on the practical consequences of whatever position the nation took in the conduct of its foreign affairs.

In another sense, the Webster debate reinforced what risked becoming an unsettling precedent. In 1824 leading political leaders tended to take positions on the issue of Greek independence that coincided with their domestic political interests. John Calhoun and Henry Clay were two examples of this. And certainly Webster's eloquence could only add to his stature as a leading proponent of American nationalism. None of them had to live with the practical consequences of any moves to extend diplomatic recognition to a Greek republic.

Webster, like Clay before him, appeared to bend the definition of neutrality to include diplomatic recognition of a de facto independent nation as an automatic act, not a discretionary one. In the nation's future there would remain a temptation to exploit and bend definitions to serve the interests of expediency. The need to garner popular support in order to exercise political power on occasion risked making the temptation irresistible.

In his annual message Monroe carefully avoided taking positions that were controversial. He rose above the fray of political groups vying for power and control. He presided, but he did not lead. In the case of diplomatic recognition for the Greeks, this seeming passivity did risk danger to the nation. Webster's motion just might have passed. If it had, damaging consequences to the nation just might have taken place. Monroe appeared unwilling to expend significant political capital to lead the nation in determining whether to support steps leading to diplomatic recognition of a Greek republic. In the case of Greece itself, this led to intensified political conflict over the proper course to follow in the conduct of the nation's foreign affairs. Where followed in the future, Monroe's approach to presidential leadership could also generate danger to the nation. (The lack of firm presidential leadership in the years leading up to the Civil War is a case in point.)

Political or personal interest and the welfare of the nation are not always mutually supportive. Adams in his struggle with Clay over Latin American foreign policy and Adams' opposition to Webster's resolution are examples of the courage it can take to serve one's perception of the nation's interests when one's position courts public disfavor. True, Adams' opposition to any engagement in Europe was, from a longer-term point of view, quite consistent with his own domestic political interests. He minimized the danger of a foreign policy crisis at the time he was running for president. True also, Adams would have risked ridicule if he had acted in ways that appeared to contradict his principles of staying out of struggles for power on the far side of the Atlantic. However, Adams also risked public opprobrium by maintaining a course that appeared very much out of line with popular sentiment, and doing so under conditions where Monroe's support was at best ambiguous. He ran these risks in the very year he planned to run for the presidency.

As it turned out, Adams' course proved to be the correct one, politically as well as in terms of his own basic principles. By participating in the debate, many of the leading statesmen of the day brought closure to their positions on the Greek cause. They said what they had to say, and did so well before the presidential election of 1824. This tended to diffuse the role that the Greek cause would play in the election itself—it was not to become an important issue in the upcoming campaign. What Webster and Clay said on the matter, what Calhoun and Gallatin said more privately, had little apparent impact on their political fortunes.

Much more important, the debate itself turned out to be a unifying, not a divisive, issue. The statesmen who spoke for and against the resolution used a common frame of reference to support their positions. What constituted the substance of manly virtue, what constituted an affirmation of a shared religion, and the unquestioned acceptance that citizenship was founded on moral duty rather than self-interest were all principles that they shared. The fact that people who supported and those who opposed official United States involvement in the Greek cause all expressed allegiance to what they said was a common Christian religion reinforced feelings of national identity. Ethnocentric racism appeared in arguments both to support and to oppose recognition of the Greeks as a sovereign nation. Differences there were on the actions necessary to take and to refrain from taking. Beneath these differences there was a remarkable unity in the fundamental principles within which the debate actually take place. In this sense, the Webster debate did provide a forum to articulate and to define one's allegiance to the nation, regardless of the position any individual statesman actually took. Given these shared principles, Webster had effectively served the cause of American exceptionalism he espoused. He had promoted the cause of national unity, which was at the center of his public life. It would be for history to judge whether the way he defined the cause would come to exert positive or negative influences in the future.

There was, of course, at least one issue that history and the interpretation of events by future historians most certainly will not resolve. This is the background.

On November 28th Daniel Webster wrote to Edward Everett, "I cannot say how much I am obligated to you for your recent attention to my request [for information on Greece] and your offer of future aid." Webster went on to speak of "some sort of agency to Greece." Webster indicated to Everett, "You may be offered this. The subject has been under consideration by the president, and also your name has been mentioned to him as the fittest person for such a service." In his letter Webster specifically stated that "J. Calhoun has urged the President" to make the appointment."[95]

On January 27th Adams noted in his diary:

> I had a long conversation and some explanation with Mr. Webster upon his Greek resolution, which was left undisposed yesterday by the committee of the whole rising without taking any question of it. I told Webster that when the resolution was finally acted upon, I should be glad to converse with him upon it. He expressed a disposition to have the conversation now, and I told him of the reasons why I had been adverse to his resolution. . . . He said Southard and Calhoun had both encouraged him to offer it, and the President himself had told him he had no objection to it being made.[96]

Put in the context of the president's annual message to Congress, a mystery surfaces. Did Monroe favor efforts in Congress to sanction an official mission to Greece? To judge by Adams' diary entry detailing his conversation with Mr. Fuller, the answer to this question is no. To judge by Webster's comments, the answer is yes. To judge by the wording Monroe used in his annual message, the answer is maybe. And to judge by what Monroe allegedly told Poinsett, the answer is no.

It is unlikely that new facts will surface from the available archives to dispel the mystery. Our access to knowledge of how America responded to what Everett in his October 1823 *North American Review* article had termed the struggle of the Crescent against the Cross is good. It is by no means complete.

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[95] Webster to Everett, November 28, 1823, in Webster, *Papers: Correspondence,* 1:336; see also Papers of Edward Everett, Reel 2.

[96] Adams, *Memoirs*, 6:240 (January 20, 1824).

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The available material documents very well the basic principles that guided Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and President James Monroe in their conduct of the nation's foreign policy. The archives provide good evidence regarding what America's political leaders felt were the central concerns of American foreign policy over the period. We have available the information necessary to understand why the principles that Adams and Monroe followed in guiding the nation's foreign policy led to intense conflict in the sphere of domestic politics. Moreover, the archives contain much of the news about the Greek revolt that was available to the nation's political leaders and, more broadly, to the larger body of educated and politically active Americans. Even more important, the evidence is available that lets us visualize how the press and politically active Americans interpreted unfolding events. We are also in a good position to gauge how Adams and Monroe placed their response to the Greek War of Independence within the intertwined context of their general foreign policy concerns and domestic politics.

In the footnotes there are two terms which deserve special mention. They appear in citations from the archives of the State Department. Correspondence from Washington to America's diplomatic representatives stationed in Europe bears the label *Instructions*. Correspondence to Washington from America's diplomatic representatives abroad is labeled *Despatches*. It is a system that John Quincy Adams put in place and it remained unchanged until 1915.[1] The terms themselves are significant and reflect a basic principle. Control and direction over the nation's foreign policy would come from Washington. The job of American ministers stationed in the major European capitals was one of dispatching information designed to keep Washington informed. The division was crisp, if not always accurate. American ministers at the time did exercise substantial autonomy in the conduct of their duties.

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[1] Weeks, *John Quincy Adams*, 59.

The available record is not complete. For example, cabinet meetings of the period took place without any official record or any informal notes being kept of the proceedings. Diaries of the key members of the administration, with the exception of Adams, are largely silent on what took place in the meetings that dealt with the subject of Greece. As a result, we do not have a balanced or complete account of what actually may have been discussed at these meetings. Also, with the passage of time we have lost the ability to recapture many of the conversations and private letters that American leaders most probably exchanged on the subject of Greek independence—not to mention the private and informal conversations on the specific subject of Greece that may have taken place in Washington with diplomatic representatives of the major European powers.[2] Still, the available evidence does give us the tools that enable us to make informed and hopefully reasonable judgments

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[2] A review of the archives of the British Foreign Office in London and the Russian Foreign Ministry in St. Petersburg may well provide evidence which is helpful in understanding how and why American political leaders proceeded as they did. It is outside the scope of sources consulted.

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