



The Great Seal of the United States' imagery highlights the nation's principles.

**Social Studies
Vocabulary**

blockade

embargo

isolationism

Monroe Doctrine

neutrality

1. President Washington Creates a Foreign Policy

George Washington took office as the nation's first president in 1789. At that time, the United States did not have a large military. The army that was active during the American Revolution had disbanded. It had not been replaced for two reasons. First, the government did not have the money to keep an active army. Second, some Americans feared that a standing national army could lead to tyranny. They thought that state militia troops could handle any threats the country might face.

And there were possible threats. European nations had taken Indigenous land that surrounded the new nation. To the north, the British controlled Canada. They refused to abandon their forts in the Ohio Valley. This was even though the United States now controlled this region. To the south and west, Spain controlled the area now known as Florida and Louisiana.

Events in Europe also created challenges for the new nation. In 1789, the French people rose up against their king. They fought to make France a republic. Some Americans agreed with the French Revolution. In 1793, however, France declared war against Great Britain. This presented President Washington with the problem of deciding which side the United States should take.

During its own revolution, the United States had signed a treaty of alliance with France. That was in 1778. Alliances are agreements made with other nations. They agree to aid and support each other. In that treaty, the United States had promised to aid France in time of war. That was even if it meant going to war with Great Britain again.

Washington knew that the United States was not prepared for war. He decided to ignore the treaty. Instead, he announced a policy of **neutrality**. Under this policy, the United States would do nothing to aid either France or Great Britain in their war.

Before leaving office, Washington discussed his foreign policy in a farewell address to the nation. The United States, he said, could gain nothing by becoming involved in other nations' affairs. Washington's policy of avoiding alliances with other countries became known as **isolationism**. However, the U.S. government continued its involvement in the affairs of sovereign Indigenous nations. It often negotiated treaties that were unfair. There were cases where Indigenous nations rejected a treaty. In those instances, the United States took the land by force. Isolationism would serve as the foundation for U.S. foreign policy for the next

century. But it applied only to nations that the United States did not view as within its territory.



George Washington's Farewell Address was published in newspapers in 1796. As part of his advice to the nation, he urged isolation in foreign relations.



In 1796, the United States was surrounded by land that European powers such as Great Britain and Spain had taken from Indigenous groups who remained on the land. What were the effects of these varying land claims and competition for land?

2. Adams Faces the Challenges of Neutrality

Isolationism sounded good in theory. But it is often hard to stay out of conflicts involving overseas powers. The nation's second president was John Adams. He tried to follow Washington's policy of neutrality. With France, however, it proved difficult to stay neutral.

The Jay Treaty War broke out between Great Britain and France in 1793. After it started, the British Navy began to attack U.S. merchant ships headed for France. French leaders wanted the United States to go to war against Great Britain. They hoped that these attacks, as well as Great Britain's refusal to leave the Ohio Valley, would do that. However, those hopes were dashed. Instead, Washington sent John Jay to London to settle things with the British. Jay was a chief justice of the Supreme Court. In signing the 1794 Jay Treaty, the British finally agreed to pull their troops from the Ohio Valley. They also agreed to halt attacks on U.S.

shipping. France was still at war with Great Britain. It viewed the Jay Treaty as a violation of its own 1778 treaty with the United States. More than that, it saw the Jay Treaty as an alliance between the United States and Great Britain. In July 1796, the French navy began attacking U.S. merchant ships bound for Great Britain. Over the next year, French warships seized several American ships.

The XYZ Affair President Adams sent three envoys, or representatives, to France. They went to ask the French to end the attacks. French foreign minister Talleyrand refused to speak to the Americans. Instead, they were met by secret agents. The agents were later identified only as X, Y, and Z. The agents said that no peace talks would be held unless Talleyrand received a large sum of money as a tribute. A tribute is money given to someone in exchange for that person's protection. Shocked by the request, the American envoys refused.

This became known as the XYZ Affair. It outraged Americans when the story reached home. At President Adams's request, Congress voted to recruit an army. It also voted to build new ships for the nation's tiny navy. The slogan "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute!" was heard as Americans prepared for war.

Meanwhile, Congress authorized U.S. warships and privately owned ships, called privateers, to launch a "half war" on the seas. During this undeclared war, American ships captured more than 80 French vessels.

War fever mounted. President Adams was hardly a well-loved leader. He suddenly found himself unexpectedly popular. And his Federalist Party gained support throughout the country. The question facing Adams was whether the popular thing—waging an undeclared war on France—was also the best thing for the country.

At President John Adams's request, Congress approved the construction of warships in response to the XYZ Affair, including the *Philadelphia*, shown here under construction in 1800.



3. Pursuing Peace with France

President John Adams knew that no matter how good war might be for the Federalist Party, it would not be good for the country. In February 1799, he announced that he was sending a group of men to France. They were going there to work for peace. This likely upset Federalist leaders. Some accounts suggest they pleaded with the president to change his mind. But Adams would not budge. Abigail Adams was John Adams's closest adviser and wife. Even she disagreed with his decision. She did not think he should negotiate peace with France.

By the time the peace mission reached France, a French military leader named Napoleon Bonaparte had taken over the French government. Napoleon wanted to make peace with both Great Britain and the United States. He ordered the navy to stop seizing American ships. He also ordered it to release captured American sailors.

The Convention of 1800 was a treaty between France and the United States. Napoleon agreed to end France's 1778 alliance with the United States. In exchange, the Americans agreed not to ask France to pay for all the ships it had seized. This meant that the U.S. government would have to pay American ship owners for their lost property. To Adams, this seemed a small price to pay for peace with France.

Choosing the olive branch cost Adams political popularity. His pursuit of peace with France created strong disagreements within the Federalist Party. In the end, he and his party lost votes in the 1800 elections. Thomas Jefferson defeated Adams in the presidential election. The Federalist Party lost much of its support. Over the next few years, Adams would watch his Federalist Party slowly fade away.

Still, Adams had no regrets. He wrote,

I will defend my Missions to France, as long as I have an Eye to direct my hand or a finger to hold my pen ... I desire No other Inscription over my Grave Stone than "Here lies John Adams who took upon himself the Responsibility of the Peace with France in the Year 1800."

4. Jefferson Deals with Conflicts at Sea

Unfortunately, the peace with France achieved under Adams did not last long. In 1803, France and Great Britain were again at war. The conflict heated up. Both nations began seizing American ships that were trading with their enemy. President Thomas Jefferson had taken office in 1801. He would have to deal with the growing conflict between England and France. Still, Jefferson behaved like Washington and Adams before him. He tried to follow a policy of neutrality.

Impressment It was hard enough to stay neutral when ships were being seized. It became even harder when Great Britain began impressing American sailors. This means they kidnapped American sailors and forced them to serve in the British navy. The British claimed that the men they impressed were British deserters. This may have been true in some cases. Some sailors may well have fled the terrible conditions on British ships. But thousands of Americans were also impressed.

American anger over impressment peaked in 1807. This was after a British warship called the *Leopard* stopped a U.S. warship called the *Chesapeake*. The ship was stopped to search for deserters. The *Chesapeake's* captain refused to allow a search. So, the *Leopard* opened fire. Twenty-one American sailors were killed or wounded in the attack. This triggered calls by some Americans for war against Great Britain.

Piracy American ships faced another threat as well. That was piracy, or robbery at sea. American ships had been targeted by European privateers in the Atlantic. But the Barbary States of North Africa posed a threat in the Mediterranean. For years, pirates had attacked merchant ships entering the Mediterranean Sea. The pirates came from Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. They seized the merchant ships. Then they held the crews for ransom.

Presidents Washington and Adams both had paid tribute to Barbary State rulers. They did this in exchange for the safety of American ships. So, Americans were shouting "millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute" during the XYZ Affair. Meanwhile, the United States was quietly sending money to the Barbary States.

By the time Jefferson became president, the United States had paid the Barbary States almost \$2 million. The ruler of Tripoli, however, demanded still more tribute. To show that he was serious, he declared war on the United States. The United States had to decide what to do. Would it continue paying tribute? Or, would it go to war with the Barbary States?

The Barbary Coast



In the late 1700s and early 1800s, pirates from the Barbary Coast captured U.S. merchant ships in the Mediterranean Sea. The United States paid tribute to leaders of the Barbary States to end these attacks.

5. Protecting American Interests at Sea

In 1801, Jefferson sent a small fleet of warships to the Mediterranean. They went to protect American shipping interests. The war with Tripoli plodded along until 1804. That was when American ships began hitting Tripoli with their cannons.

During this time, one of the ships, the *Philadelphia*, ran aground on a hidden reef in the harbor. The captain and crew were captured. They were held for ransom. Rather than let pirates have the *Philadelphia*, a young naval officer named Stephen Decatur led a raiding party. The party traveled into the heavily guarded Tripoli harbor. It set the ship afire.

Tripoli signed a peace treaty with the United States in 1805. This was after a year of U.S. attacks and a **blockade**. Tripoli agreed to stop demanding tribute payments. In return, the United States paid a \$60,000 ransom for the crew of the

Philadelphia. This was a bargain compared to the \$3 million first demanded.

Pirates from other Barbary States, however, continued to raid ships in the Mediterranean. By the mid-1800s, piracy in the Barbary States finally ended.

Meanwhile, Jefferson tried desperately to convince both France and Great Britain to leave American ships alone. Unfortunately, all of his diplomatic efforts failed. Between 1803 and 1807, Great Britain seized at least a thousand American ships. France captured about half that many.

Diplomacy failed. So, Jefferson proposed an **embargo**. That is a complete halt in trade with other nations. Under the Embargo Act passed by Congress in 1807, no foreign ships could enter U.S. ports. No American ships could leave, except to trade at other U.S. ports. The embargo had little effect on the international trade of enslaved people. It went into effect less than two weeks before this trade ended. Jefferson hoped that stopping trade would prove so painful to France and Great Britain that they would agree to leave American ships alone.

The embargo, however, proved far more painful to Americans than to anyone in Europe. Some 55,000 American sailors lost their jobs. In New England, newspapers pointed out that *embargo* spelled backward reads "O grab me." This made sense to all who were feeling its pinch.

Congress repealed the unpopular Embargo Act in 1809. American ships returned to the seas. And French and British warships continued to attack them.

6. Madison Tries to Protect Sailors and Settlers

President James Madison took office in 1809. He tried a new approach to protecting Americans at sea. He offered France and Great Britain a deal. If they agreed to **cease** their attacks on American ships, the United States would stop trading with their enemy.

Napoleon agreed to Madison's offer. However, the French navy continued seizing American ships headed for British ports. Madison desperately wanted to believe Napoleon's false promise. He cut off all trade with Great Britain. Meanwhile, the British continued seizing ships and impressing American sailors. Madison began to think about abandoning George Washington's policy of isolationism. He considered going to war with Great Britain.

New Englanders and Federalists generally were against going to war. Merchants in New England knew that war would unfortunately mean a blockade of their ports by the British navy. Many people in the South and to the west, however,

supported going to war. They were angry about Great Britain's policy of impressing U.S. sailors. They also disliked its support for Indigenous groups fighting White settlement in the states and territories to the northwest.

White settlers moved into the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. As they did so, they came into conflict with Indigenous tribes as they pushed them off their land. These included the Shawnee. A Shawnee chief named Tecumseh and his brother, Tenskwatawa, known as "the Prophet," fought back. They united Indigenous groups along the Mississippi River into one great confederacy. Indiana governor William Henry Harrison became uneasy about the strength of this confederacy. On November 7, 1811, he led a militia force toward Prophetstown. That was a large Shawnee village near Tippecanoe River. It served as the confederacy's headquarters. Outside the village, he agreed to a brief truce with the Prophet. But he was later ambushed. Harrison's army defeated the Indigenous forces. After the battle, Harrison's men discovered that the confederacy had been armed with British guns.

Many Americans were outraged by Britain's actions. Several young congressmen from the South and West were so eager for war with Great Britain that they were nicknamed "War Hawks." These men included Henry Clay of Kentucky and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. They argued that the United States needed to drive the British out of Canada. It was necessary to make the northwestern frontier safe for White settlers. They believed that once that was done, Canada could be added to the United States.

Several factors contributed to the push for war. There were losses at sea. There was national pride. And there was a desire to make the frontier safe for White settlers. But still, Madison hesitated. Should the nation launch the arrows of war? Or, or should it hold tightly to the olive branch of peace?



Indiana governor William Henry Harrison, on the far left, is shown fighting with members of the Shawnee tribe and their confederacy. After the battle, Harrison's troops destroyed Prophetstown. How does the portrayal of the American militia differ from the portrayal of the Indigenous fighters in this 1889 painting?

7. The War of 1812

James Madison chose to abandon isolationism. At his request, Congress declared war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812. This was a bold step for a nation with an army of 7,000 poorly trained men and a navy of only 16 ships.

Battles on Land and Sea War Hawks were overjoyed when the War of 1812 began. They thought that conquering Canada was "a mere matter of marching." They were wrong. Between 1812 and 1814, U.S. forces crossed into Canada repeatedly. But each time, British forces drove them back.

The British, too, found the going much rougher than expected. On September 10, 1813, a U.S. naval force captured a British fleet of six ships on Lake Erie. The U.S. naval force was under the command of Oliver Hazard Perry. Perry's victory allowed William Henry Harrison to push into Upper Canada. There, he defeated the British in a major battle. During this battle, Chief Tecumseh was killed. Tecumseh had fought on the British side with his followers. However, in December, the British drove the Americans back across the border.

By 1814, Napoleon had been defeated in Europe. Great Britain was able to send thousands of troops across the Atlantic. American plans to conquer Canada came to an end.

Meanwhile, in August 1814, another British army invaded Washington, D.C. The British burned several public buildings. This included the Capitol and the White House. President Madison had to flee for his life.

Next, the British attacked the port city of Baltimore, Maryland. On September 13, the British bombarded Fort McHenry. The fort guarded the city's harbor. The bombardment went on all night. However, at dawn, the American flag still waved over the fort. The flag proved that the fort had not been captured.

The Battle of New Orleans In Great Britain, there was news of the defeat in Baltimore. There was also news of another defeat in New York state. This would greatly weaken the desire to continue the war. However, the news took time to travel. In the meantime, British commanders in the United States launched another invasion. This time, their target was New Orleans.

New Orleans was defended by General Andrew Jackson. He commanded an army of 7,000 militia that included Black and Indigenous soldiers. On January 8, 1815, more than 7,500 British troops marched into battle. They were met with deadly fire. Around 2,000 British soldiers and 70 Americans were killed or wounded.

The Battle of New Orleans was the greatest U.S. victory of the War of 1812. It was also unnecessary. Two weeks earlier, American and British diplomats had met in Ghent, Belgium. They had signed a peace treaty ending the war. The news did not reach New Orleans until after the battle.

Results of the War The Treaty of Ghent settled none of the issues that had led to the fighting. Neither side really won the war. The problems of impressment and ship seizures faded away as peace settled over Europe. Still, the war had several important effects.

In the Treaty of Ghent, the British had tried to negotiate for Indigenous groups to keep their boundaries. But they backed down. U.S. leaders saw little need for alliances with western Indigenous groups. These groups took different approaches to relations with the United States. Some signed treaties. Others resisted, until they were forced to sign in the end. Eventually, most of the Indigenous people who had fought with Tecumseh were forced out of the Ohio Valley and west of the Mississippi River.

As a result of the war, national pride in the United States surged. Many Americans felt that standing up to the British made the United States a truly sovereign nation.

The war also had political effects. The Federalists were damaged by their

opposition to the war. Their party never recovered. Two men who had fought in the war would later come to be elected president. These men were William Henry Harrison and Andrew Jackson.



The Shawnee leader Tecumseh united Indigenous groups of the Great Lakes region in an attempt to halt the advance of White settlers onto Indigenous lands.



This map shows American and British offensives, or attacks, during the War of 1812. Despite victories on both sides, neither country really won the war. Still, the war had important effects in the United States.

8. A New Foreign Policy Challenge in the Americas

James Monroe became president in 1817. After the War of 1812, he was happy to return the nation to its policy of isolationism. Americans began to turn their attention away from Europe. Instead, they directed it toward events in Latin America. Latin Americans were rising up in resistance against Spain. This was happening from Mexico to the tip of South America.

Latin America's Revolutions In Mexico, the revolt against Spanish rule was inspired by a Catholic priest. His name was Miguel Hidalgo (me-GHELL heh-DAHL-goh). On September 16, 1810, Hidalgo spoke to a crowd of Indigenous Mexicans in the town of Dolores. "My children," Hidalgo said, "will you make an effort to recover from the hated Spaniards the lands stolen from your forefathers three hundred years ago? Death to bad government!" Hidalgo's speech is remembered today as the "Cry of Dolores." It inspired a revolution that lasted ten

years. In 1821, Mexico finally won its independence from Spain.

Two other leaders **liberated** South America. In 1810, a Venezuelan named Simón Bolívar (see-MOHN buh-LEE-var) launched a revolution in the north. He cried: "Spaniards, you will receive death at our hands! Americans, you will receive life!" José de San Martín (ho-ZAY de SAN mar-TEEN) was a revolutionary from Argentina. He led the struggle for independence in the south. By the end of 1826, the last Spanish troops had been driven out of South America.

New Latin American Nations Many Americans were excited by independence movements in Latin America. The British also supported the revolutions. They did so for their own reasons. Spain had not allowed other nations to trade with its colonies. Once freed from Spanish rule, the new Latin American nations were able to open their doors to foreign trade. This included trade with Great Britain.

Other European leaders were not so pleased. They feared that revolutions threatened their rule. They felt this was true even on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Some even began to talk of helping Spain recover its lost colonies. In 1823, Great Britain asked the United States to join it in sending a message to these leaders to leave Latin America alone.

President James Monroe asked former presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison for advice. Should the United States do something to support the new Latin American nations? If so, what?

9. The Monroe Doctrine

Both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison liked the idea of joining with Great Britain to send a warning to the nations of Europe. Jefferson wrote to James Monroe. He said, "Our first and fundamental maxim [principle] should be, never entangle ourselves in the broils [fights] of Europe; our second, never to suffer Europe to intermeddle [interfere] in ... America, North and South."

President Monroe's secretary of state was John Quincy Adams. He agreed with Jefferson. But Adams insisted that "it would be more candid [honest] as well as more dignified" for the United States to speak boldly for itself. President Monroe agreed.

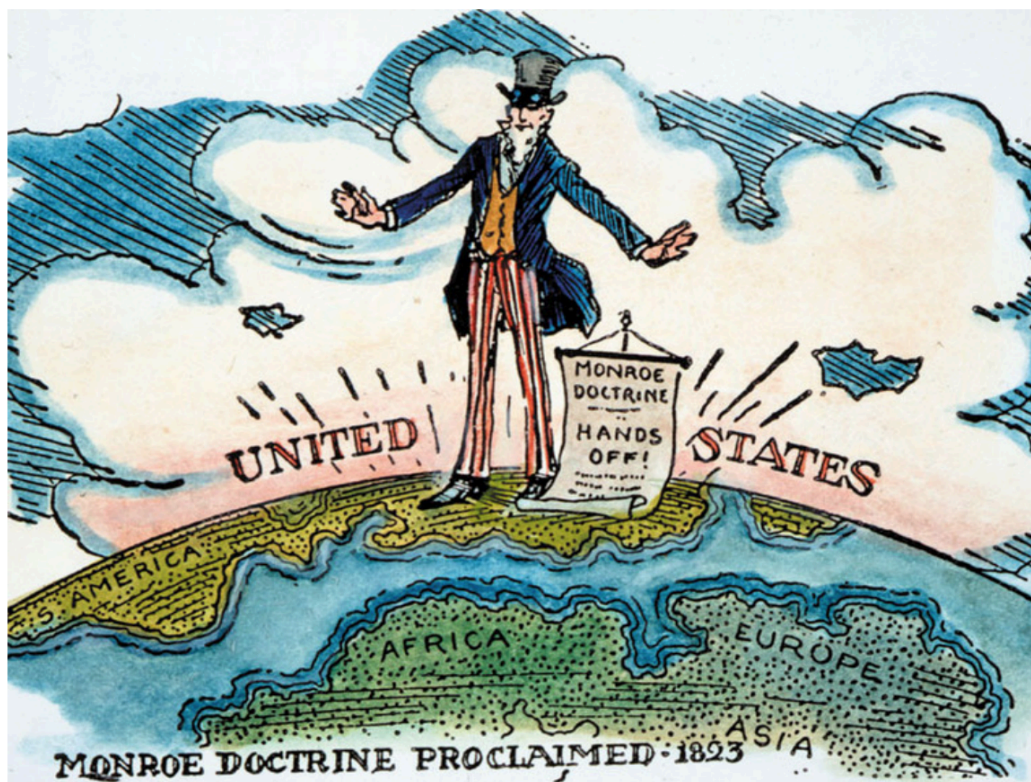
In 1823, Monroe made an announcement in his annual message to Congress. He announced a policy that became known as the **Monroe Doctrine**. Monroe stated

that the nations of North and South America were "free and independent." They were "not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers." The United States, he said, would view efforts by Europeans to take over "any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." Despite Monroe's stance, he continued to support White settlers moving onto Indigenous land.

Some Americans cheered Monroe's policy. They viewed it as an act against European interference in the Western Hemisphere.

On the other hand, Europeans called Monroe's message about colonization arrogant. By what right, asked a French newspaper, did the United States presume to tell the other nations of the world what they could do in North and South America?

In the years ahead, the Monroe Doctrine joined isolationism as a basic principle of U.S. foreign policy. It declared that the United States would not accept European interference in the affairs of the Americas. It also had another, hidden message. By its very boldness, the Monroe Doctrine told the world that the United States was no longer a weak collection of quarreling states. It was becoming a strong and confident nation.



With the Monroe Doctrine by his side, Uncle Sam warns foreign powers to keep their "hands off" the Americas. Even though the Monroe Doctrine is around 200 years old, it continues to affect U.S. foreign policy decisions, particularly regarding Latin America.