

20-02 Henry Cabot Lodge, *The Business World vs. the Politicians* (1895)

Opponents of American expansion overseas in the late nineteenth century partially based their arguments on traditional American foreign policy that stressed neutrality and noninterference of Europe in the Americas. Supporters of imperial expansion, such as Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge dismissed such arguments claiming Washington's counsel on neutrality and the Monroe Doctrine has nothing to do with United States' expansion.

If the Democratic party has had one cardinal principle beyond all others, it has been that of pushing forward the boundaries of the United States. Under this Administration, governed as it is by free-trade influences, this great principle of the Democratic party during nearly a century of existence has been utterly abandoned. Thomas Jefferson, admitting that he violated the Constitution while he did it, effected the Louisiana purchase, but Mr. Cleveland has labored to overthrow American interests and American control in Hawaii. Andrew Jackson fought for Florida, but Mr. Cleveland is eager to abandon Samoa. . . . It is the melancholy outcome of the doctrine that there is no higher aim or purpose for men or for nations than to buy and sell, to trade jack-knives and make everything cheap. No one underrates the importance of the tariffs or the still greater importance of a sound currency. But of late years we have been so absorbed in these economic questions that we have grown unmindful of others. We have had something too much of these disciples of the Manchester school, who think the price of calico more important than a nation's honor, the duties on pig iron of more moment than the advance of a race.

It is time to recall what we have been tending to forget: that we have always had and that we have now a foreign policy which is of great importance to our national well-being. The foundation of that policy was Washington's doctrine of neutrality. To him and to Hamilton we owe the principle that it was not the business of the United States to meddle in the affairs of Europe. When this policy was declared, it fell with a shock upon the Americans of that day, for we were still colonists in habits of thought and could not realize that the struggles of Europe did not concern us. Yet the establishment of the neutrality policy was one of the greatest services which Washington and Hamilton rendered to the cause of American nationality. The corollary of Washington's policy was the Monroe doctrine, the work of John Quincy Adams, a much greater man than the President whose name it bears. Washington declared that it was not the business of the United States to meddle in the affairs of Europe, and John Quincy Adams added that Europe must not meddle in the Western hemisphere. As I have seen it solemnly stated recently that the annexation of Hawaii would be a violation of the Monroe doctrine, it is perhaps not out of place to say that the Monroe doctrine has no bearing on the extension of the United States, but simply holds that no European power shall establish itself in the Americas or interfere with American governments.

The neutrality policy and the Monroe doctrine are the two great principles established at the outset by far-seeing statesmen in regard to the foreign relations of the United States. But it would be a fatal mistake to suppose that our foreign policy stopped there, or that these fundamental propositions in any way fettered the march of the American people. Washington withdrew us from the affairs of Europe, but at the same time he pointed out that our true line of advance was to the West. He never for an instant thought that we were to remain stationary and cease to move forward. He saw, with prophetic vision, as did no other man of his time,

the true course for the American people. He could not himself enter into the promised land, but he showed it to his people, stretching from the Blue Ridge to the Pacific Ocean. We have followed the teachings of Washington. We have taken the great valley of the Mississippi and pressed on beyond the Sierras. We have a record of conquest, colonization, and territorial expansion unequalled by any people in the nineteenth century. We are not to be curbed now by the doctrines of the Manchester school which have never been observed in England, and which as an importation are even more absurdly out of place here than in their native land. It is not the policy of the United States to enter, as England has done, upon the general acquisition of distant possession in all parts of the world. Our government is not adapted to such a policy, and we have no need of it, for we have an ample field at home; but at the same time it must be remembered that while in the United States themselves we hold the citadel of our power and greatness as a nation, there are outworks essential to the defence of that citadel which must neither be neglected nor abandoned.

There is a very definite policy for American statesmen to pursue in this respect if they would prove themselves worthy inheritors of the principles of Washington and Adams. We desire no extension to the south, for neither the population nor the lands of Central or South America would be desirable additions to the United States. But from the Rio Grande to the Arctic Ocean there should be but one flag and one country. Neither race nor climate forbids this extension, and every consideration of national growth and national welfare demands it. In the interests of our commerce and of our fullest development we should build the Nicaragua canal, and for the protection of that canal and for the sake of our commercial supremacy in the Pacific we should control the Hawaiian Islands and maintain our influence in Samoa. England has studded the West Indies with strong places which are a standing menace to our Atlantic seaboard. We should have among those islands at least one strong naval station, and when the Nicaragua canal is built, the island of Cuba, still sparsely settled and of almost unbounded fertility, will become to us a necessity. Commerce follows the flag, and we should build up a navy strong enough to give protection to Americans in every quarter of the globe and sufficiently powerful to put our coasts beyond the possibility of successful attack.

The tendency of modern times is toward consolidation. It is apparent in capital and labor alike, and it is also true of nations. Small States are of the past and have no future. The modern movement is all toward the concentration of people and territory into great nations and large dominions. The great nations are rapidly absorbing for their future expansion and their present defence all the waste places of the earth. It is a movement which makes for civilization and the advancement of the race. As one of the great nations of the world, the United States must not fall out of the line of march.

For more than thirty years we have been so much absorbed with grave domestic questions that we have lost sight of these vast interests which lie just outside our borders. They ought to be neglected no longer. They are not only of material importance, but they are matters which concern our greatness as a nation and our future as a great people. They appeal to our national honor and dignity and to the pride of country and of race. If the humiliating foreign policy of the present Administration has served to call attention to these questions and to remind us that they are quite as important at least as tariffs or currency, it will perhaps prove to have been a blessing in disguise. When we face a question of foreign relations it should never be forgotten that we meet something above and beyond party politics, something that rouses and appeals to the patriotism and the Americanism of which we never can have too much, and of which during the last two years our Government has shown altogether too little.

1. What is the relationship between America's policy of neutrality and the Monroe doctrine as it is described in this document?
2. What is the attitude of this author in regard to American expansion and imperialism?