

 **Article REVIEW**

**Hiroo Nakajima.** “The Monroe Doctrine and Russia: American Views of Czar Alexander I and Their Influence upon Early Russian-American Relations.” *Diplomatic History* 31.3: 439–463. doi:10.1111/j.1467-7709.2007.00627.x. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2007.00627.x> .

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**H**iroo Nakajima’s “The Monroe Doctrine and Russia: American Views of Czar Alexander I and Their Influence upon Early Russian-American Relations” is a thorough, comprehensive, well-researched re-examination of the intersection of two much-studied questions: the role of Russia in John Quincy Adams’s calculations as he formulated the Monroe Doctrine, and the resolution of the conflict between Russia and the United States over boundaries, fishing, and trade on the Northwest Coast, between 1821 and 1824.

Nakajima argues not only that Russia was a key factor in Adams’s formulation of the non-colonization principle (here agreeing with classic works on the Monroe Doctrine such as Dexter Perkins’s *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1826* (1927)) but also that “Russia also was a key factor in the way Monroe’s opposition to French intervention was presented.” (p. 442). Extending the Russia factor even further, Nakajima argues that Adams’s desire to remain on friendly terms with the Russia of Alexander I, and Alexander’s own admiration for the United States (and wish to have the U.S. as a counterweight to the British in Russian calculations) played an important role in the way in which the Monroe Doctrine took shape as well as the eagerness with which both St. Petersburg and Washington negotiated an amicable settlement to the Northwest dispute.

Much of these arguments, both separately and at times together, have been made before, most notably by N.N. Bolkhovitinov, Harold Berquist, Norman Saul, Howard Kushner, myself and others. And the archival materials on which Nakajima relies in his study (Adams, Madison, and Monroe letters, Jefferson and Alexander I correspondence, Diplomatic Despatches of RG 59, Vneshniaia Politika Rossii, the Proceedings of the Alaskan Boundary Tribunal, Fur Seal Arbitration Proceedings, and various Russian claims in the Adams papers) have also long been available and well-utilized.

What remains notable about Nakajima’s examination, however, is that he frames the issue differently from most of the other approaches to the evidence. Not only does he tie together all the various strands of American and Russian influences and bring out the strong and compelling state interests on the part of both powers to solve conflicts and keep their trading relations vibrant, he also employs Akira Iriye’s most useful framework of “favorable mutual images” in the re-inforcement which Alexander and JQA and all those working with them provided in this early crisis of Russian-American “heritage of harmony.” This focus, which goes far to explain the lengths to which both sides were willing to compromise over the boundary dispute on the northwest coast, also helps explain the decline in relations occasioned by Alexander’s death, Nicholas’s accession to the throne, and the first major American public opinion backlash occasioned by the Holy Alliance and the subsequent use of Russian troops to put down liberal

revolutions throughout Europe in the 1830s and 40s. As Nakajima quotes Adams, “most Americans viewed the Holy Alliance as ‘a mere hypocritical fraud.’” (p. 458).

Nakajima’s study, however, so focuses on state politics, mutual images, and the British-American-Russian nexus that it underplays perhaps the most crucial issue of all in John Quincy Adams’ mind: the overwhelming importance of trade and the preservation of American merchants’ (particularly new England merchants) freedom to dominate not only the Baltic but the Northwest-China trade, sometimes to the benefit of Russia and the diminution of the British, but always to the benefit of the United States and New England. Any serious and multifaceted look at Adams, his own writings (see for example, “The Opium War and the Sanctity of Commercial Reciprocity” or “the British Colonial navigation Systems” (1827)) or the interlocking Salem and Boston shipping families (Derby, Crowninshield, Cabot, Silisbee, Lloyd, Lee, Fiske, Peabody, Gray, Forrester, White) and John Miller Russell himself, the first American consul to St. Petersburg, shows the key importance of trade to his diplomacy. Adams’s political detractors perhaps were right -- he was “an amphibious animal” but he traveled first on water, and the lodestar of his diplomacy, and his policy, was always expanding American trade. This, more than anything else, explains his Russia policy.

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*Commissioned for H-Diplo by Diane Labrosse*