

Carrying the John Quincy Adams tradition into the 20th century

by Jeffrey Steinberg

During the middle decades of this century, particularly during the period from the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidency through the first decades of the Cold War, a group of American historians and political scientists attempted to revive the great American System foreign policy tradition of President John Quincy Adams, the author of the Monroe Doctrine, and one of America's greatest diplomats. While their efforts were flawed in some respects, they made an invaluable contribution to American foreign policy, by producing a body of published works on the history of American diplomacy, creating several centers of genuine inter-disciplinary scholarship, and serving in government and training others who went on to serve their country with distinction.

The efforts of this ad hoc group—men like Samuel Flagg Bemis, Nicholas John Spykman, Arthur Whitaker, and Edward Mead Earle—helped shape American foreign policy during the FDR era. The influence of this group was somewhat revived during the Kennedy and Reagan Presidencies. Bemis and Spykman were behind the establishment of an inter-disciplinary program in international relations at Yale University, during the 1930s and '40s. Whitaker created a similar program at the University of Pennsylvania; and one of his protégés developed a similar curriculum at the University of Virginia. Earle headed a World War II-era military study group at Princeton University, and he taught at the Army War College, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

The fact that their work was largely trampled upon by the legions of New Left, Frankfurt School-trained revisionist historians, who came to dominate the university social science departments by the 1980s, in the name of “feminism,” “political correctness,” and “cultural relativism,” in no sense diminishes their accomplishments.

On the contrary, as the first signs of a reverse paradigm shift now surface, repudiating the irrationalism, the falsification of history, and outright anti-science biases of the past 30 years, it is particularly appropriate to look back on the efforts of these scholar-patriots, to pick up the threads of American foreign policy, as it truly evolved, free from the distortions of the New Left and Conservative Revolution schools of virulent anti-Americanism.

Twin evils

During 1936-54, the above-cited authors published a series of books, aimed at providing a framework for a national-

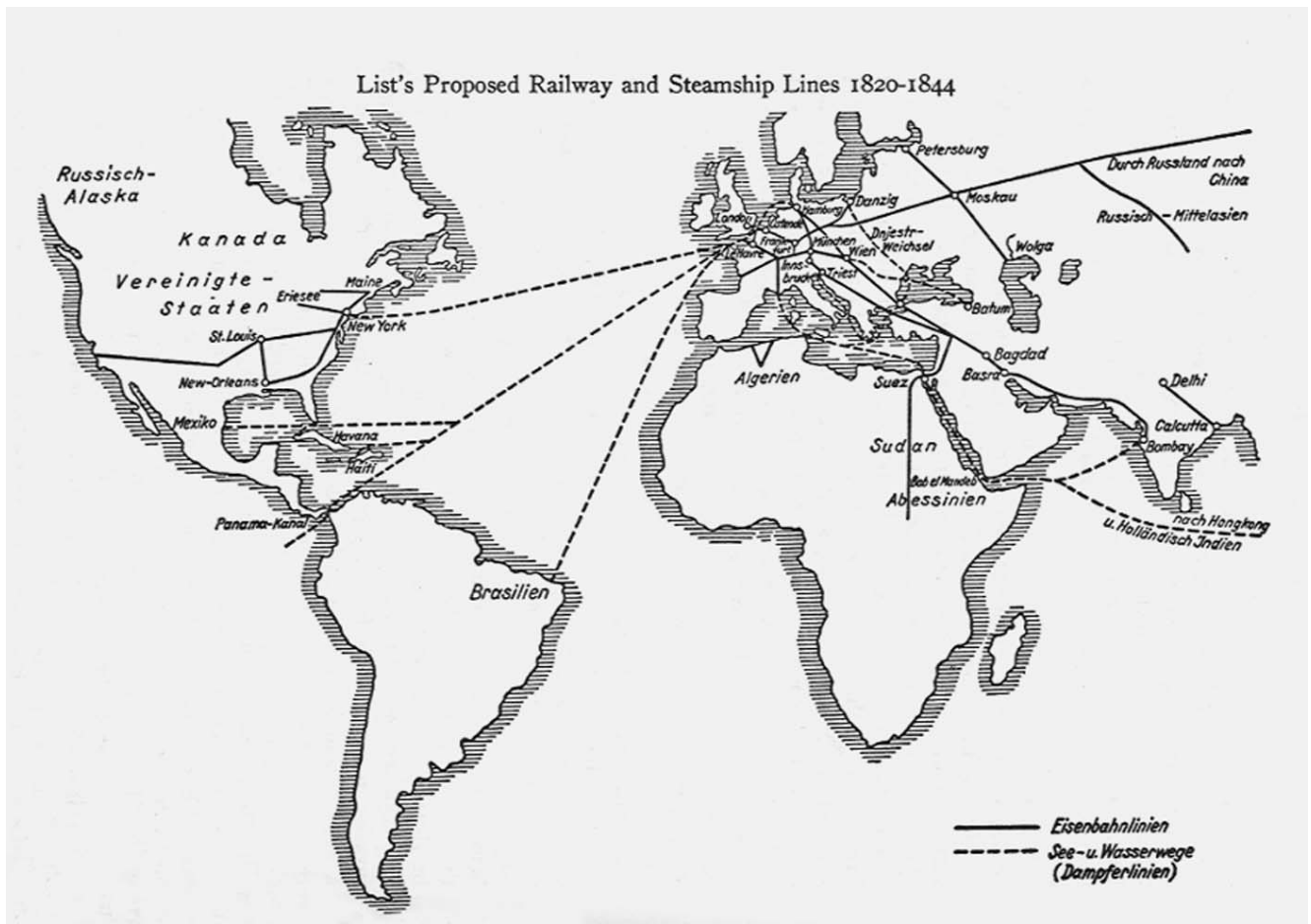
interest American foreign policy for World War II and the postwar period. The foundation for all of their works was the American System, of Washington, Hamilton, Mathew and Henry Carey, and so on. In 1943, Edward Mead Earle came out with the first edition of *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*. In that volume, he included an essay that he wrote, titled “Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton, Friedrich List: The Economic Foundations of Military Power,” in which he polemicized against the idea that Smith was a pristine advocate of free trade; rather, he developed a concise history of Hamilton's and List's roles in devising the national system of political economy, first in the newly formed United States, and, later, in Germany.

Of Hamilton, he wrote: “He was the most influential single member of Washington's cabinet, roaming far afield from his own duties as Secretary of the Treasury. During the years 1789-1797, he probably did more than any other single person to formulate the early national policies of the United States, some of which came to have the binding force of tradition. His tragic death in 1804, when he was only 47, was a national disaster.”

Earle had a similar appreciation of List as a patriot of both the American and German nation-states. He wrote, “Hamilton's influence on Friedrich List is evident in much of what the latter wrote. And in view of List's association with the protectionist groups in the United States, including the economist Mathew Carey, there can be little doubt that List considered the *Report on Manufactures* a textbook of political economy.”

In the realm of foreign policy, all of the works of these historians begin with the groundbreaking efforts of John Quincy Adams, during his tenure as Secretary of State in the Monroe administration, in crafting the Monroe Doctrine. Samuel Flagg Bemis, for example, was the author of a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (1949). Arthur Whitaker wrote *The Western Hemisphere Idea: Its Rise and Decline* in 1954, warning that the successful revival of the Monroe Doctrine in FDR's “Good Neighbor Policy” was in jeopardy of being undermined in the postwar period. Whitaker was on the State Department policy-planning staff during World War II.

Each of these authors, in their own way, warned against the twin evils that had reared their heads at various moments



This map of global rail and steamship corridors, first devised by Friedrich List, was published as part of Earle's article on Smith, Hamilton, and List in the 1971 second edition of his textbook, *Makers of Modern Strategy*. The trans-Eurasian and North American transcontinental rail corridors, the rail lines running from Berlin to Baghdad and from Paris to Vladivostok, conform precisely to the proposals put forward by Lyndon LaRouche in his *European Productive Triangle and Eurasian Land-Bridge* plans. When Earle died, a third edition of his book was published, minus the chapter on Smith, Hamilton, and List.

during the history of the American republic: on the one side, isolationism, and, on the other, what Whitaker called “national imperialism.” In *The Western Hemisphere Idea*, Whitaker wrote: “What supplanted isolationism in the United States was not a simple two-way schism between those who were for it and those who were against it, but a three-way split, for the anti-isolationists themselves were already tending to fall into the two groups that were to take definite shape in the 20th century. In one group were the internationalists, in the other, the advocates of increased participation in world politics on a go-it-alone basis—in common parlance, the national imperialists.”

Whitaker placed Theodore Roosevelt in the latter camp. Franklin Roosevelt, in contrast, was the champion of the internationalist camp, by which Whitaker meant the advocates of Monroe's notion of a community of principle among sovereign nation-states.

Whitaker was not using the term “internationalists” as a synonym for world federalism. On the contrary, as the post-World War II era saw the emergence, for the first time, of pow-

erful forces openly advocating world government, this group led the charge against them. Thus, Nicholas John Spykman, in his 1942 war-mobilization tract, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, was already warning against the danger of “world federation,” in the following terms: “World federation is still far off. This is perhaps just as well because the world-state would probably be a great disappointment to its advocates and very different from that they had anticipated. Brotherly love would not automatically replace conflict, and . . . international wars would become civil wars and insurrections.”

For this group of American scholars, the two beacons of American foreign policy were the efforts of John Quincy Adams to set the United States on a course of mutual respect and support for national emancipation of all peoples from the European colonial yoke; and Franklin Roosevelt's strong revival of that policy, through his initial efforts to revive “Good Neighbor” relations with all of the states of the Western Hemisphere, great and small; and, his later passionate commitment to bring an end to all forms of colonial rule, as the direct fruit of America's indispensable role in defeating Hitler.