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Keeping the republic: Ideology and the diplomacy of John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams

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KEEPING THE REPUBLIC:
IDEOLOGY AND THE DIPLOMACY OF
JOHN ADAMS, JAMES MADISON AND JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Robert W. Smith

1997

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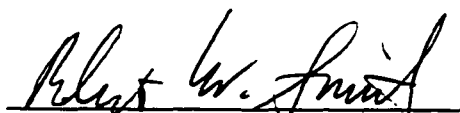
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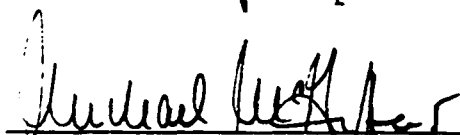
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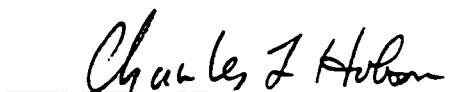

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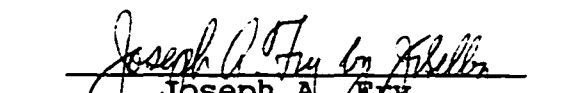
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To my mother,
Claire W. Smith,
and to the memory of my father,
Robert W. Smith, Sr.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the extent to which the political ideology that formed the basis for the American republic shaped American diplomacy, using John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams as case studies. American statesmen drew on a variety of sources for republican principles of diplomacy. The law of nations and the Scottish political economists supplied the ideas of an international balance of power and freedom of trade. English writers of the Opposition Whig school provided concepts such as political separation from Europe, reliance on a navy for defense, abhorrence of a standing army and, indirectly, the belief that the United States could use its economic power to secure its diplomatic goals.

John Adams began his career with a high degree of confidence in the virtue of the American people and the coercive power of American trade. He combined a classical martial ethic with an Opposition Whig strategic sense. Adams's experience in Europe disproved these beliefs, and as president he fell back on the republican *realpolitik*, based on naval power and separation from Europe, suggested by the Opposition Whig school.

James Madison never held out a classical model of virtue and never lost faith in the coercive power of American commerce. His combination of political economy with Opposition thought led him to reject both an army and a navy as monarchical tools of diplomacy. He saw the Constitution as a vehicle for harnessing American economic power. Madison's conception of a republican diplomacy led him, as secretary of state and president, to rely on the Embargo and similar economic measures.

John Quincy Adams combined republican *realpolitik* with a sense of Christian purpose and saw American government and diplomacy as a vehicle for moral improvement. Adams's republic rested on a continental union and a diplomacy directed against European colonization, as a manifestation of monarchy. Non-colonization included removing Spain as a neighbor in North America, preventing European political encroachment in the Western Hemisphere, and securing a hemisphere-wide consensus on neutral rights. As a congressman and critic of slavery-driven expansion, Adams demonstrated the persistence of Opposition Whig thought in American politics.

**KEEPING THE REPUBLIC:
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CHAPTER 1: THE REPUBLICAN WORLD

When asked at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention what the convention had created, Benjamin Franklin answered that the delegates had given the American people a republic, "if you can keep it."¹ Keeping the republic placed a double burden on the founding generation: to preserve liberty and free institutions at home and to defend national interests abroad. John Quincy Adams captured this duality in 1837 when he observed that "the Declaration of Independence recognized the European law of nations, as practiced among Christian nations, to be that by which they considered themselves bound, and of which they claimed their rights."² In American thought, the liberties of individuals and nations proceeded from the same source. American foreign policy would therefore be conducted on the same principles that shaped American government.

The study of republican thought and its impact on the revolutionary era has generally focused on domestic issues

¹ James McHenry, anecdote, 18---, in Max Farrand, *ed.* *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, 4 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911-1937), 4:85.

² John Quincy Adams, *The Jubilee of the Constitution: A Discourse Delivered at the Request of the New York Historical Society* (New York: S. Coleman, 1837), 73.

such as constitution making and political economy.³ Students of foreign relations have either denied or lamented that a connection between domestic principles and diplomacy existed. Hans Morgenthau argued that in the history of American diplomacy "political thought has been divorced from political action." He divided early American foreign policy into a "realist" period (dominated by Alexander Hamilton), in which diplomacy was conducted in terms of pure power politics, and an "ideological" period (dominated by Thomas Jefferson), in which diplomacy was formulated in moral terms but executed in

³ The survey of the "republican synthesis" in this study derives from Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978); and Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). Robert E. Shalhope's two articles, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 29 no. 2 (January 1972), 49-80; and "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 39 no. 2 (April 1982), 334-355, provide an overview of the literature of republicanism. For the English and European background see Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthmen: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II to the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959); Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: the Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); and J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975).

terms of power.⁴ George Kennan perceived a "legalist-moralist approach" to American diplomacy which he blamed on "the memory of the origin of our political system."⁵

Foreign relations provided the severest tests for republican government and deserve equal treatment with constitutional issues. If the proper distribution of power within the branches of government was the central question of republicanism domestically, the distribution of power among nations was even more so the ultimate diplomatic question.⁶ Furthermore, a focus on republican ideology gives a truer picture of early American diplomacy than the realist-idealist dichotomy, which assumes that one set of statesmen could divorce political thought from diplomatic action while another could not. Under a commitment to republican government, Americans in the founding generation saw no division between foreign and domestic spheres.

Republican principles of diplomacy may be divided into two groups: ideas drawn from the law of nations and political economy compatible with but not exclusive to republican government, and ideas derived directly from republican thought. A reliance on a balance of power and the precept that

⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), 7, 13.

⁵ George Kennan, *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* (New York: Mentor Books, 1952), 82-83.

⁶ Wood, *Creation*, 21-22; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 55-59.

neutral ships carrying enemy goods were not subject to capture, usually known as "free ships make free goods," fall into the first category. Royal absolutists, such as Metternich, embraced a balance of power primarily because it promoted stability. American republicans saw a balance of power abroad as a way to preserve liberty, analogous to a balanced government in domestic affairs. "Free ships make free goods" was a principle common to powers with small navies, from republican Netherlands to autocratic Russia. In American thought, it too was an expression of liberty. Both principles were certainly elements of "realist" diplomatic thought, but also promised to limit the scale and scope of war, which was generally believed to be fatal to republicanism.

The second group of ideas, taken from republican thought, mainly concerned the methods by which a balance of power and freedom of commerce might be achieved. The first diplomatic rule of a republican government, on which all American statesmen agreed, demanded a political separation from Europe and neutrality between European nations. Europe was, in Thomas Paine's words, "too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace."⁷ Paine's argument combined the republican assumptions that monarchies were prone to war and that wars, which tended to augment executive power to the point of tyranny, were fatal to republics. Neutrality would prevent

⁷ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* [1776]. Isaac Kramnick, ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 87.

encroachments of monarchy from without.

Republicanism limited the tools available to enforce neutrality and separation from Europe. A republic was a government of limited powers and could not, for example, establish standing armies, raise taxes at will, or conduct wars by executive fiat. Such policies were hallmarks of royal despotism. Thomas Paine spoke for millions when he wrote that "in England a k--- hath little more to do than to make war and give away places."⁸ The United States had to find measures of defense that did not endanger republican government. With a permanent standing army ruled out the choice generally fell between a navy or some sort of economic coercion. A navy paid for itself by protecting commerce and avoided the danger of standing army. Economic coercion, denying American agricultural exports to Europe and its colonies and closing the American market for manufactured goods, promised to substitute for any military system.

Disagreement over which choice was better is a main theme of this study. If one believed that the United States could manipulate the European balance of power in their favor (as did John Adams during the Revolution and Madison throughout his career), commercial power was an ideal weapon and perfectly suited to a republic. If one believed that a large-scale domestic shipping industry was improper for a republic, as did Madison, a navy was largely a waste of resources and a

⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

provocation to other nations. Conversely, those who favored domestic shipping and did not believe the United States could manipulate other nations approved of the navy as a particularly republican form of defense.

Two other aspects of the nature of a republican diplomacy, which appear sporadically in this study, concern the idea of a republican style of diplomacy and the extent to which republics had a common interest. The question of republican style turned on whether or not Americans were more virtuous than Europeans. If so, republican diplomacy would be plain and straightforward, shorn of royal trappings. If not, there would be little practical difference in the conduct of American and European diplomats.

The question of whether there was a common interest among republics depended on whether or not self-styled republics such as revolutionary France and South America were republics in fact as well as in name. Few suggested anything like a republic league; that would violate the first republican rule, that of political separation. There was, however, always a large gray area between active alliance or opposition and an inactive sympathy or hostility.

The United States existed in a world full of governments that were not limited in actions. Consequently, American leaders did not always have complete freedom to base diplomacy on purely republican principles. The alliance with France during the American Revolution, to cite an obvious example,

was a deviation from the idea that the survival of the American republic depended on a separation from European politics. American statesmen had to strike a balance between diplomatic necessity and ideological commitment, to find policies that would secure diplomatic goals abroad without endangering liberty at home.

The careers of John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams are case studies, although certainly not the only ones, in reconciling republican thought with diplomatic practice. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin also claim a place in a study such as this. For both pragmatic and thematic reasons they have been omitted. John Adams and James Madison were the two most systematic political thinkers and writers of the early republic, and they provide more convenient templates for this study than Franklin and Jefferson, who thought as deeply about ideology and diplomacy but wrote less in the way of republican treatises. Neither Franklin nor Jefferson produced a body of writing similar to Adams's *Thoughts on Government*, *Defence of the Constitutions* and *Discourses on Davila* or Madison's *Federalist* and "Helvidius" essays. Furthermore, Adams's and Madison's executive careers were dominated by maritime crises and make for an obvious comparison. John Quincy Adams represents a second generation of American statesmen, which was more assured of the survival of republican government. As the most successful secretary of state in American history and the sharpest critic of

Jacksonian Democratic diplomacy, John Quincy Adams believed, as had his father and James Madison, that foreign policy must reflect a commitment to republican government.

Americans learned their republicanism from a variety of sources. The classical authors of Greece and Rome were the foundation of colonial secondary and college preparatory education and supplied many of the key concepts of American republicanism. The idea of balanced government, for example, derived from Aristotle and Polybius. Americans read classical history not to understand the classical world on its own terms, but to extract moral examples. Americans could adopt classical models, such as Cato or Cicero, and condemn as enemies of republicanism others such as Caesar or Catiline, without sharing all of the assumptions of classical society. For diplomacy, the most important difference between classical and modern republicanism was that the classical state was designed to wage war, and Americans generally sought to avoid war as subversive of republican government. Furthermore, American republicanism generally, although not unreservedly, accepted commerce as a public good, whereas the classical world feared commerce.⁹

⁹ Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Founding* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 57-59, 72-76, 324, 333-334; Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 12-25, 55, 90-91, 126-127.

The American republic was founded in war and as such used the classical martial tradition when needed. In general, in a republic war was to be avoided, but when war was inevitable the classics served as a cultural reservoir to provide a republican justification for war. John Adams, for example, spent his executive career trying to avoid war. Yet in 1813 he wrote that "Republicks have been the most Warlike of all Governments." Adams also believed that if the United States had remained at peace in 1812, "the American Nation would have been, as timorous as a Warren of Hares."¹⁰ John Quincy Adams also exhibited the two republican views of war. In 1844 he feared war with Mexico over Texas as the precursor to despotism at home. In 1846, he saw war with Great Britain over Oregon as a show of virtue.¹¹ James Madison never completely embraced war, but in 1812 he did draw on the classical martial tradition when he saw no other option.

For ideas concerning the relations between men and between nations, Americans turned to four categories of Enlightenment thinkers. Three categories were mainly

¹⁰ John Adams to Richard Rush, August 11, 1813, in J.H. Powell, ed., "Some Unpublished Correspondence of John Adams and Richard Rush, 1811-1822," 3 parts. *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 60 no. 4, Vol. 61 nos. 1-2 (October 1936, January 1937, April 1937), 1:144; John Adams to Richard Rush, July 14, 1813, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Letterbook, reel 95.

¹¹ Diary entries, June 16, 1844 and March 25, 1846, in John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 12 vols. Charles Francis Adams, ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott and Co., 1874-1877), 12:52, 254-255.

theoretical: those writers who were primarily concerned with the emerging law of nations, such as Hugo Grotius and Emmerich de Vattel; those who wrote on constitutional issues, such as John Locke and Charles Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu; and those who were political economists, such as the French Physiocrats and the Scottish Common Sense school. All of these theorists sought to discover and codify the natural laws that governed human conduct. Authors such as Vattel represented a foreign policy analog to the constitutional writers who influenced the revolutionary generation. For a guide to British politics, in both diplomatic and constitutional matters, Americans turned to the fourth category, the works of the English Opposition, from the republicans of the seventeenth-century Commonwealth to James Burgh in the 1770s. Three of Robert Walpole's opponents, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, who wrote jointly as "Cato," and Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke were the most important writers of this group. Colonial experience in both politics and diplomacy served to unite theory with practice.¹²

The law of nations emerged as a coherent body of thought in the century after the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). With the end of that war, the idea of a "universal monarchy" such as the Holy Roman Empire as secular counterpart to a universal

¹² Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 70-82; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 22-54; Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle*, 33-34, 167-168; Robbins, *Eighteenth Century Commonwealthmen*, 9-21.

church gave way to recognition of multiple religions in the wake of the Reformation and a corresponding system of a balance of power among competing nation-states, no one of which could be allowed to predominate. The survival of each nation depended on the maintenance of a balance of power system, and presumably no nation would risk upsetting that system for fear of reprisal from other nations. The 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, by separating the French and Spanish Bourbons, codified the new system, replacing transnational dynasties with discrete nations as the fundamental diplomatic units.¹³

The law of nations that Americans read was the work of many hands who worked in both theory and practice. Most commentators, including James Madison and John Quincy Adams, called the Dutch lawyer and diplomat Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) the father of the law of nations, based on his 1625 work, *The Rights of War and Peace*.¹⁴ Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694), the Saxon philosopher and diplomat, followed Grotius and later

¹³ Edward Vose Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1955), 24-25, 45; Daniel G. Lang, *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic: The Law of Nations and the Balance of Power* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 2-10, 35-36; Peggy K. Liss, *Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 1.

¹⁴ James Madison, "An Examination of the British Doctrine, which Subjects to capture a Neutral Trade not Open in Time of Peace," in *The Writings of James Madison*, 9 vols. Gaillard Hunt, ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910), 7:210; Diary entry, April 2, 1835, in *MJQA*, 9:229.

influenced the Genevans Jean Jacques Burlamaqui and Jean Jacques Rousseau.¹⁵ The dominant figure in framing the law of nations was the Swiss jurist Emmerich de Vattel (1714-1767). Vattel was a native of Neuchatel, a Swiss canton that John Adams later praised for its balanced constitution. Vattel served as Saxony's minister to Bern and later as a member of the Saxon privy council. His crowning achievement was his 1758 work *The Law of Nations*, which transformed Christian Wolff's *The Law of Nations treated according to a Scientific Method* into a handbook for diplomatic practice.¹⁶ The law of nations was not an exclusively republican science; Vattel's *Law of Nations* went through dozens of editions in every major language in western Europe.¹⁷ The law of nations was compatible with American republicanism in two ways. First, the two shared a similar theoretical basis, with an emphasis on natural equality and contractual association. Second, the law of nations protected the interests of small, neutral powers and provided a justification for many American foreign policy

¹⁵ J.H. Burns, ed., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 690.

¹⁶ Lang, *Foreign Policy*, 15-16; John Adams, "Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America," Vol. 1, in *The Works of John Adams*, 10 Vols. Charles Francis Adams, ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1850-1856), 4:377.

¹⁷ Francis Stephen Ruddy, *International Law in the Enlightenment: The Background of Emmerich de Vattel's "Le Droit des Gens"* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1975), 280-285.

goals.

The law of nations was built on the idea of natural law, which formed the basis for both individual and national rights. Because nations recognized no superior authority, they could therefore be said to exist in a state of nature, which gave each nation the right to pursue its own ends. In *The Law of Nations* Vattel wrote that "nations are free, independent and equal," and each holds the right to judge its own actions. The state, Jean Jacques Burlamaqui argued, is a "moral person."¹⁸ The primacy of the individual, rather than the whole, emerged in the law of nations as in modern constitutional thought. In *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, C. B. Macpherson argued that the idea of possessive individualism, which emerged in the mid-seventeenth century, posited that individuals owned themselves and their capacities and did not owe their rights to the existence of a larger society. Society itself was a collection of free individuals rather than an organic whole.¹⁹ Americans

¹⁸ Emmerich de Vattel, *The Law of Nations* [1758]. Joseph Autty, ed. (Philadelphia: L. & J. W. Johnson & Co., 1876), Preliminaries, lxiii, par. 21; Jean Jacques Burlamaqui, *The Principles of Natural and Politic Law*, 2 vols. 4th ed. Thomas Nugent, trans. (Boston: Joseph Bumstead, 1792), 2:208; Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 48; Lang, *Foreign Policy*, 16-20; Peter S. Onuf and Nicholas Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World: the Law of Nations in an Age of Revolution, 1776-1814* (Madison, Wis.: Madison House Publishing, Inc., 1993), 10-22.

¹⁹ Richard D. Brown, *Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1600-1865* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 12-14; C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive*

implicitly accepted the idea of possessive individualism as it applied to diplomacy. Diplomacy may have paved the way for the acceptance of possessive individualism in domestic politics, as seen in John Adams's *Defence of the Constitutions* and James Madison's *Federalist* #10.

Given that nations began in a state of nature, the next question concerned the natural relationship among them. Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* took the pessimistic view that the natural state of both individuals and nations was war, or at least potential war. Without a central organ of control, there were no moral or legal limits to any state action.²⁰ Most theorists, including Burlamaqui, Grotius and Pufendorf, took the more optimistic stand that the state of nature was a state of peace and that, although no positive law of a world community governed nations, natural law and morality did.²¹ Republican government and natural law sprang from the same roots, they argued, the free association of individuals. Locke's argument that men in a natural state formed societies for mutual safety found its counterpart in Vattel, who went so

Individualism: Hobbes to Locke (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 1-3.

²⁰ Bull, *Anarchical Society*, 24-25; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: or the Matter Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* [1651]. Michael Oakeshott, ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 99-100.

²¹ Bull, *Anarchical Society*, 26-27; Burlamaqui, *Natural and Politic Law*, 1:121; Samuel Freiherr von Pufendorf, *The Law of Nature and Nations*, 5th ed. Basil Kennett, trans. (London: J. & J. Bonwicke, 1749), 108.

far as to call the European system "a kind of republic."²²

The law of nations provided a theoretical basis for many American foreign policy goals, particularly concerning freedom of trade. "It is necessary that there should be some law among nations to serve as a rule for mutual commerce," wrote Burlamaqui.²³ The first rule was that the sea was free to all. Grotius argued in *The Rights of War and Peace* that the sea was too large for any one nation to control and was therefore the common property of all.²⁴ According to Vattel "the nation that attempts to exclude another from that advantage [free navigation] does her an injury, and furnishes her with sufficient grounds for hostilities."²⁵ Vattel extended natural freedom of trade to cover the complete freedom of neutrals to trade in non-contraband goods.²⁶ The natural right to trade became a cornerstone of American foreign policy.

Enlightenment thought generally celebrated economic freedom as an expression of natural law. The French Physiocrats, whose name meant "rule of nature," called for

²² Lang, *Foreign Policy*, 35, Vattel, *Law of Nations*, Book III, ch. III, par. 47, 311; John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* [1690]. Peter Laslett, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963), par. 134, 401.

²³ Burlamaqui, *Natural and Politic Law*, 1:120.

²⁴ Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace* [1625]. A. C. Campbell, trans. (New York: M. Walter Dunne, 1901), 389-390.

²⁵ Vattel, *Law of Nations*, Book I, ch. XXII, par. 282, 125-126.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Book III, ch. VII, par. 112, 336.

free trade in reaction to long-established feudal and noble restrictions on the French economy. The Physiocrats held that private landed property and agricultural production were the source of all wealth. Although the physiocrats advocated an absolutist royal government to protect free trade from noble interference, physiocratic economic thought was compatible with that of a major voice in English republican thought, James Harrington, who held that power followed wealth, by which he meant landed property, and that widespread private holding of landed property guaranteed freedom.²⁷ A century later, on the eve of the American Revolution, the Scottish philosopher Adam Smith called for complete economic freedom in all fields in *An Inquiry into the Nature and the Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. "To prohibit a great people . . . from making all that they can out of every part of their own produce, or from employing their own stock and industry in the way that they judge most advantageous to themselves," Smith wrote, "is a manifest violation of the sacred rights of mankind."²⁸

Smith took aim at three hundred years of British and

²⁷ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), 9-11, 306; James Harrington, "The Commonwealth of Oceana," in *The Political Works of James Harrington*. J. G. A. Pocock, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 167; McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 67-68.

²⁸ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and the Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2 vols. Edwin Cannan, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 2:95.

European economic policy which he labeled "mercantilism." Mercantilism was not a set policy but rather a cluster of accumulated policies and assumptions regarding trade and national power. Mercantilism assumed that world politics was a zero-sum game, which no nation could win without another losing. Winning was defined as maintaining a favorable balance of trade by hoarding and preventing the export of gold, by preventing the export of raw materials such as wool that were needed for domestic industry, and by encouraging exports and discouraging imports. Colonies in the mercantile system existed to serve the mother country by providing raw materials and an exclusive market for exports.²⁹ Smith attacked mercantilism in each of its assumptions and argued that free trade was a surer way to wealth. At a certain point the amount of gold stockpiled would exceed demand, Smith argued, and nothing could prevent its export. Similarly, taxes designed to prevent importation were counterproductive. Smith criticized the mercantile conception of empire and wrote that the expense of defending colonies far outweighed the economic benefit of their markets.³⁰ The British national debt, incurred in defense of the colonies, which spawned the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts, proved Smith correct.

²⁹ Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934-1938), 4:13-20, 323; Michael Kammen, *Empire and Interest: The American Colonies and the Politics of Mercantilism* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott Company, 1970), 5-6, 48-49.

³⁰ Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 1:457, 495, 2:180.

Economic theory was a part of the broader mid-eighteenth century inquiry into the nature of human society. Scottish thinkers, such as David Hume, Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, believed that human society passed through four stages -- hunting, pasturage, agriculture and commerce. At each stage, virtue consisted in the full use of natural talents, with commerce as the highest and most virtuous stage of society. David Hume argued that the development of commerce and manufacturing, including luxury goods, promoted wealth, happiness, refinement and the spirit of improvement.³¹ Competition among nations improved societies as economic competition improved individuals, Adam Ferguson argued in 1752.³² The Scottish analysis of societal evolution held tremendous implications for American diplomacy, which centered on trade. The nature of American contact with the world would be in part determined by the nature of American society.

Political writers in the colonial era generally supposed luxury to be incompatible with republicanism. They believed with Montesquieu that "a soul depraved by luxury has many other desires [than the public good] and soon becomes an enemy to the laws that confine it."³³ The central problem for

³¹ David Hume, "Of Commerce," in *Writings on Economics*. Eugene Rotwein, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 13-14; McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 19-30.

³² Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* [1767] (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1971), 36.

³³ Charles Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 2 vols. [1749]. Thomas Nugent, ed. and trans. (New

Americans was at what stage did republican government become viable. American agrarians such as Jefferson, Madison and Franklin believed that the third stage as the Common Sense thinkers defined it was best suited to republicanism, and saw extensive manufactures as a sign of old age and decay. The mercantile system and the Navigation Acts were the devices by which a dying system prolonged its life at the expense of a younger and more vigorous society. Land was relatively widely distributed in America, making manufacturing inappropriate. The commerce of the new nation would be based on agricultural exports.³⁴ Thomas Jefferson summed up the agrarian creed in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*: "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue." As for manufacturing, Jefferson proposed to "let our work-shops remain in Europe."³⁵ Of the three figures in this study, Madison took the greatest interest in political economy and linked his diplomacy to the preservation of a republican economy. John Adams and John Quincy Adams, who were not primarily economic thinkers, accepted and encouraged manufactures and domestic shipping in their diplomacy, whereas Madison did not.

York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1949), 1:96.

³⁴ McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 46-49, 56-60, 66-69, 107-110.

³⁵ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* [1787]. William Peden, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 164-165.

For a guide to British politics, Americans turned to the writings of the English Opposition school, particularly those of "Cato" and Bolingbroke, who led the literary opposition to Robert Walpole. These writers provided Americans with their basic understanding of the workings of British politics and diplomacy. "Cato" shared much with natural rights thinkers such as John Locke, writing that men "are naturally equal, and none ever rose above the rest but by Force or Covenant." "Cato" used natural law to defend balanced government and attack Walpole for exceeding the natural bounds of executive authority.³⁶ The South Sea Company and the political machine that Walpole built on its ruins were the symbols of all that was wrong in British politics. To the opposition, the attempt to create a tyranny at home through the use of executive patronage and a standing army led Walpole into a diplomacy that embraced tyranny abroad and sacrificed Great Britain's national interests to France and Spain.³⁷

The accession to the English throne of the Dutch prince, William of Orange, in 1689 completely reoriented English

³⁶ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 34-36; Michael P. Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 299-301; John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters: Or essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and other important Subjects*, 4 vols. [1733] (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), #45 (Sept. 16, 1721) and #60 (Jan. 6, 1721/22), 2:85, 229.

³⁷ Rodger D. Parker, "The Gospel of Opposition: A Study in Eighteenth Century Anglo-American Ideology," 2 vols. (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Wayne State University, 1975), 1:41, 281-282.

foreign policy. In the second half of the seventeenth century England thrice fought the Dutch over commercial and colonial issues. After 1689 England and the Netherlands were allies, and England became the primary opponent of French hegemony on the continent. William's accession brought England directly into the War of the League of Augsburg (1689-1697) against France, and shortly afterward England fought the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) to prevent the union of the French and Spanish crowns. The accession of the Hanoverian King George I in 1714 made continental entanglements unavoidable. Robert Walpole spent most of his first decade as prime minister engaged in continental politics, constructing alliances with France and Prussia to protect Hanover. Fear of war with Spain and Austria in 1729 prompted Walpole to raise taxes, build an army and pay for German mercenaries, leaving the government open to the charge that it allowed the Hanoverian tail to wag the British dog. The 1730s were by comparison a quiet decade. Walpole realized that his political system depended on peace and sought to limit European commitments. Opposition figures, however, attacked Walpole's passive policy as vigorously as his active policy. French commerce in America boomed in the 1730s, especially with the Newfoundland fisheries, allowing France to challenge Great Britain as a naval power. Worse still, Walpole acquiesced in the Spanish crackdown on British smuggling in the West Indies. Parliamentary outrage allowed Walpole's opponents to force him

into war against Spain, and eventually out of office.³⁸

Opposition Whigs perceived Ruling Whig foreign policy as the diplomatic side of the corruption they saw at work in domestic politics. The satirist and Tory pamphleteer Jonathan Swift sketched out the beginnings of the Opposition critique of Ruling Whig foreign policy in his 1711 pamphlet *The Conduct of the Allies*. Swift attacked the Marlborough ministry for pursuing a backward strategy. The ministry, Swift argued, sacrificed men and money on a continental war, when the correct strategy was to focus on the navy. Great Britain had conquered German provinces on behalf of Austria, Swift continued, while Austria was slow to move against France. Swift concluded that Great Britain could not depend on continental allies for its safety.³⁹ The outbreak of war with Spain in 1739 fully revealed what the Opposition considered the proper strategy: emphasis on the navy and on the colonies, with no continental engagements. Opposition thought accepted the idea of a balance of power among nations but interpreted

³⁸ Jeremy Black, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole* (Edinburgh, Scotland: John Donald Publishers, Ltd., 1985), 112; J.R. Jones, *Britain and the World 1649-1815* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, Inc., 1980), 189-197; Paul Langford, *The Eighteenth Century 1688-1815* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 18-19, 32-33, 89-103; J.H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1950), 60; Arthur McCandless Wilson, *French Foreign Policy during the Administration of Cardinal Fleury 1726-1743: A Study in Commercial Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), 291-294.

³⁹ Jonathan Swift, "The Conduct of the Allies", in *Political Tracts, 1711-1713*. Herbert Davis, ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951), 19, 38.

it to mean among continental nations while Great Britain stood apart. In this position, the Opposition recognized its debt to Queen Elizabeth, who strengthened the navy and sent the "sea dogs" to raid Spanish commerce. In focusing on a war in the colonies, the Opposition owed an unacknowledged debt to Oliver Cromwell's Western Design. Cromwell assumed that an attack on the Spanish colonies and plate fleet in 1655 would pay for itself.⁴⁰ Eighty years later, the Opposition saw the colonial trade, rather than the plate fleet, as the main objective in the West Indies and the basis for British naval power. Naval power avoided the need for a standing army and paid for itself by protecting commerce, thus providing revenue, and was therefore the means of defense most compatible with free government.

Lord Bolingbroke was the Opposition figure most connected with foreign policy. He began his political career in 1700 at age twenty-one, when he became Member of Parliament for Wooten Bassett. Tory leader and secretary of state Robert Harley chose Bolingbroke as secretary of war in 1702, but both were replaced when Marlborough and the Whigs came to power. Harley and Bolingbroke returned to office in 1710 with the express purpose of ending British involvement in the War of the Spanish Succession. The Tories were satisfied with French defeats in Italy and the Spanish Netherlands and feared the

⁴⁰ Bernard Capp, *Cromwell's Navy: The Fleet in the English Revolution, 1648-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 87, 96-97,

war would produce a fiscal burden that would increase the influence of the Bank of England. Bolingbroke completed this task as the principal British negotiator of the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht. Bolingbroke's career in public office ended with the death of Queen Anne in 1714. He opposed the Hanoverian succession and joined the Pretender's forces in 1715.⁴¹

Bolingbroke spent the last thirty-six years of his life as a critic of the course of British politics, producing a body of work that John Adams began reading in the 1750s and had read through five times by 1813.⁴² Bolingbroke saw the Glorious Revolution as the founding moment in modern English history, "a new Magna Charta" and a triumph over parties. Parties soon re-emerged in English politics and according to Bolingbroke fell into three groups: opponents of the government, opponents of the constitution, and opponents of the constitution who supported the government. The third group was the most dangerous, Bolingbroke believed, and was responsible for public debts and taxes that degraded the nation's spirit and morals and threatened the independence of Parliament, which Bolingbroke considered the "key-stone of liberty."⁴³

⁴¹ Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle*, 8-13.

⁴² John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Dec. 25, 1813, in Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 410.

⁴³ Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *A Dissertation on Parties: In Several Letters to Caleb D'Anvers*, 9th ed. (London: T. Davies, 1771), 10-12, 102-103, 137-139, 151,

Bolingbroke saw the same spirit that unbalanced the constitution undermining British foreign policy as well. He equated a belief in a balanced constitution with advocacy of a balance of power among nations. Isaac Kramnick labels this view *realpolitik* devoid of any other considerations.⁴⁴ On the contrary, Bolingbroke always based his view of the balance of power on its relationship to balanced government at home. In his opinion, the safest position for Great Britain -- politically, economically and diplomatically -- was to remain apart from the alignments that formed the European balance. Unlike Walpole, who kept a hand in European politics, Bolingbroke believed that the European balance would take care of itself. "Great Britain," Bolingbroke wrote in *A Dissertation on Parties*, "should maintain such a dignity and prudent reserve in the broils of Europe, as become her situation, suit her interest, and alone can enable her to cast the balance." In *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, Bolingbroke criticized the "rage of warring," which created an oppressive system of taxation, and the "rage of negotiating," which preserved it. Bolingbroke argued that Great Britain "inhabits an island" and was a neighbor to the continent rather than a part of it.⁴⁵ Such an isolation from European

298; Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle*, 26-28.

⁴⁴ Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle*, 184-185; Parker, "Gospel of Opposition," 1:270.

⁴⁵ Richard Pares, "American versus Continental Warfare, 1739-1763." *English Historical Review*, Vol. 51 no. 204 (July

involvement, he declared, would allow Parliament to "take all Opportunities, by saving *unnecessary Expenses*, to pay off *our Debts*, and ease the People of their *taxes*," cutting out the roots of the Walpolean system.⁴⁶

Bolingbroke counted on trade to give Great Britain the power to act as arbiter of the European balance of power. By the early eighteenth century Great Britain began following a Dutch economic model that focused on trade and shipping rather than solely on production. "It is not the extent of territory that makes a country powerful," the English political economist Charles Davenant had written in 1699," but numbers of men well employed, a good navy, and a soil producing all sort of commodities."⁴⁷ Bolingbroke, like later Scottish political economists such as Smith and Hume, linked trade with freedom and wrote that British wealth depended on trade. The most important facet of British trade was with the American

1936), 436-440; Bolingbroke, *Dissertation on Parties*, 14-15; Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 2 vols. [1752] (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1970), 2: 167, 169-170.

⁴⁶ Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *Contributions to the "Craftsman"*. Simon Varey, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1982), #511 (April 17, 1736), 206-207.

⁴⁷ Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 78-79; Charles Davenant, "An Essay upon the Probable Methods of Making a People Gainers in the Balance of Trade," in *The Political and Commercial Works of that Celebrated Writer Charles D'Avenant, LL.D.*, 5 vols. (London: R. Horsman, 1771), 2:192-193.

colonies.⁴⁸ Trade had its political uses. Bolingbroke inserted an Anglo-French commercial agreement into the treaty of Utrecht, hoping that the promise of reciprocal trade would gain a French alliance against Austria. Parliament feared French competition and rejected Bolingbroke's articles.⁴⁹ The navy was the foreign policy tool best suited to protecting trade without risking British liberties. The army, Bolingbroke and other opposition writers believed, was a vehicle for tyranny and, if foreign policy was conducted correctly, an unneeded expense. "The sea is our barrier, ships are our fortresses," Bolingbroke wrote, "and the navies that trade and commerce alone furnish, are the garrisons to defend them."⁵⁰

Bolingbroke tied together his ideas on foreign and domestic policy in *The Idea of a Patriot King*, published in 1749. Bolingbroke had largely given up the hope that Parliament would reform itself. Virtue was not impossible to achieve, Bolingbroke believed, but it was a slow, uphill climb, and the way of corruption was much easier.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "Craftsman" #114 (September 7, 1728), in Bolingbroke, *Contributions*, 54, 64-65.

⁴⁹ Jones, *Britain and the World*, 174-176; Charles Jenkinson, Earl of Liverpool, *A Collection of all the treaties of Peace, Alliance and Commerce between Great Britain and Other Powers*, 3 vols. [1785] (New York: August M. Kelley, 1969), 2:5-144 (whole treaty), 2:40-65 (Anglo-French articles).

⁵⁰ Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *The Idea of a Patriot King* [1749]. Sydney W. Jackman, ed. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965), 65.

⁵¹ Parker, "Gospel of Opposition," 1:269-270; Bolingbroke, *Patriot King*, 6.

Bolingbroke struck a modern note regarding the presence of political parties and factions in societies. "Thus factions are in them, what nations are in the world; they invade and rob one another: and, while each pursues a separate interest, the common interest is sacrificed by all: that of mankind in one case, that of some particular community in the other," he wrote. "This has been, and must always be, in some measure, the course of human affairs, especially in free countries, where the passions of men are less restrained by authority."⁵²

The solution to factionalism and corruption was the rise of a charismatic leader whom Bolingbroke called the Patriot King, without whom the "way of salvation will not be open to us."⁵³ The Patriot King would defeat factions by transcending them and by drawing the nation to the example of virtue. "As soon as corruption ceases to be an expedient of government, and it will cease to be such as soon as a Patriot King is raised to the throne, the panacea is applied," Bolingbroke wrote. "A Patriot King is the most powerful of all reformers; for he is himself a sort of standing miracle," Bolingbroke continued, "so rarely seen and so little understood, that the sure effects of his appearance will be admiration and love in every honest breast, confusion and terror to every guilty conscience, but submission and resignation in all." "A new people will seem to arise with the new king," Bolingbroke

⁵² Bolingbroke, *Patriot King*, 62.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

believed.⁵⁴ The Patriot King may favor one faction or another, as the situation dictated, "but he will espouse none, much less will he proscribe any."⁵⁵ Regarding specific policies, the Patriot King "will not multiply taxes wantonly, nor keep up those unnecessarily which necessity has laid, that he may keep up legions of tax gatherers."⁵⁶

After the American Revolution, George Washington was the closest equivalent to a Patriot King in American politics. Bolingbroke's model for the Patriot King was Queen Elizabeth, who "united the great body of the people in her and their common interest, she inflamed them with one national spirit: and, thus armed, she maintained tranquility at home, and carried succor to her friends and terror to her enemies abroad."⁵⁷ Bolingbroke credited Elizabeth with encouraging English trade and giving "rapid motion to our whole mercantile system"; he attacked James I for squandering England's advantages.⁵⁸ Elizabeth's reign offered further proof that England was easily defended under the right monarch. As an island, England had no powerful neighbors and did not have to undertake continental engagements. Elizabeth recognized that England was first and foremost a maritime power and cultivated

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 39; Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle*, 167-168.

⁵⁵ Bolingbroke, *Patriot King*, 52-53.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 62; Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle*, 33-34.

⁵⁸ Bolingbroke, *Patriot King*, 66-67.

naval power. She knew that England had an amphibious character. "Like other amphibious animals, we must come occasionally on shore; but the water is more properly our element, and in it, like them, as we find our greatest security, so we exact our greatest force," Bolingbroke wrote.⁵⁹

John Trenchard, the senior author of *Cato's Letters*, agreed with Bolingbroke that Elizabeth's reign was a golden age. In his 1698 work *A Short History of Standing Armies in England*, Trenchard contrasted the glory of Elizabeth with the folly of James I, who soon blundered away most of Elizabeth's gains.⁶⁰ In *Cato's Letters*, which ran from 1720 to 1723, Trenchard and Gordon shared much with Bolingbroke. Like the younger Bolingbroke, "Cato" saw a reformed Parliament as the foundation of British liberty. In Letter #70 "Cato" recommended the election of legislators "who are not already pre-ingaged, nor, from their Circumstances, Education, Profession or Manner of Life are likely to be engaged, in a contrary interest."⁶¹ "Cato" did not last long enough to become as disillusioned as Bolingbroke. *Cato's Letters* ended with Trenchard's death in 1723, and Gordon later became one of

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 68-70.

⁶⁰ John Trenchard, *A Short History of Standing Armies in England* (London, 1698), 3-4.

⁶¹ Letter #70 (March 17, 1721/22), in *Cato's Letters*, 3:15-16; Parker, "Gospel of Opposition," 1:55-56.

Walpole's propagandists.⁶²

"Cato" fully agreed with Bolingbroke's view of foreign policy, fearful of continental alliances and standing armies, favoring trade and the navy. "What did *England* gain formerly by their Conquests upon the Continent, but constant Wars, Slaughter and Poverty to themselves, and to their Princes precarious foreign Provinces at *English* Expense," Trenchard and Gordon wrote in Letter #93, reflecting on recent British experience in continental politics. Conquests bred armies, "Cato" wrote in Letter #95, and "all the Parts of *Europe* which are enslaved, have been enslaved by Armies."⁶³

The navy was the proper weapon of a free people. In Letter #64 "Cato" argued that "despotick Monarchs, though infinitely powerful at Land yet could never rival *Neptune*, and extend their empire over the Liquid World."⁶⁴ "Cato" drew a direct equation between freedom, trade and naval power. Merchants naturally sought out free countries as trade "cannot long subsist, much less flourish, in Arbitrary Governments." Trade was the foundation of naval power, both as a training ground for seamen and as a source of customs revenue. Commerce had the added virtue of giving employment to those who might become troublesome at home.⁶⁵ Like Bolingbroke, "Cato" gave

⁶² Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle*, 118.

⁶³ Letter #93 (September 8, 1722); Letter #95 (September 22, 1722), in *Cato's Letters*, 3:229, 251.

⁶⁴ Letter #64 (February 3, 1721/22), *ibid.*, 2:274.

the colonial trade a high priority, arguing in Letter #106 that, "our Northern Colonies do, or may if encouraged, supply us most or all of the Materials of Navigation . . . which Management would soon make us Masters of most of the Trade of the World."⁶⁶

The implication of Opposition thought on military and diplomatic affairs was that Great Britain, separated from the continent, had the best chance at freedom. The Netherlands had escaped the fate of the rest of Europe but were constantly at risk. "Almost all *Europe* are Witnesses of the brutish Havock which the Conquerers make, and of the dismal Scenes of Ruin that they leave behind them," wrote "Cato" in letter #93.⁶⁷ The equation between isolation and liberty passed whole into American thought. Thomas Paine recognized Britain's unique place in *Common Sense* when he wrote that "Freedom hath been hunted round the globe." "Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her," Paine continued, "Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart."⁶⁸ Even though England had turned against liberty, liberty had survived there longer than anywhere else. Separation from European politics was at the center of John Adams's Model Treaty. Madison specifically compared the United States' physical situation to

⁶⁵ Letter #64 (February 3, 1721/22), *ibid.*, 2:271-272.

⁶⁶ Letter #106 (December 8, 1722), *ibid.*, 4:6.

⁶⁷ Letter #93 (September 8, 1722), *ibid.*, 3:231.

⁶⁸ Paine, *Common Sense*, 100.

Britain's in *Federalist* #41. John Quincy Adams, in his contribution to the Monroe Doctrine, sought to codify and make permanent that separation.

James Burgh (1714-1775) echoed many Opposition themes in his book *Political Disquisitions: An Enquiry into Public Errors, Defects and Abuses* (1774-1775). Burgh also served as a direct link between Opposition thought and its American adherents, personally sending a copy of *Political Disquisitions* to John Adams, who called the book "the best Service, that a Citizen, could render to his Country."⁶⁹ To Burgh, the standing army was the ultimate tool of oppression. "No nation ever kept up an army in times of peace, which did not lose its liberties," Burgh wrote. Englishmen need look no further than Cromwell, Burgh continued, for proof "that a man of courage backed by an army, is capable of any thing."⁷⁰ Burgh summed up Opposition military thought in Book Three: "A Militia with the Navy, [is] the only proper Security of a free people in an insular Situation, both against foreign invasion and domestic Tyranny."⁷¹ Like Bolingbroke and "Cato," Burgh emphasized the colonial contribution to British power. Burgh

⁶⁹ Robbins, *Eighteenth Century Commonwealthmen*, 364-365; John Adams to James Burgh, December 28, 1774, in *The Papers of John Adams*, 8 vols. to date. Robert J. Taylor, *et al.*, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977-), 2:205.

⁷⁰ James Burgh, *Political Disquisitions: An Enquiry into Public Errors, Defects and Abuses*, 3 vols [1774-1775] (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 2:349, 379.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2:389.

argued that the colonies consumed the most British-made goods and were a general national benefit.⁷²

Opposition foreign policy, emphasizing colonies and commerce over continental objects, enjoyed a brief and partial ascendancy during the Seven Years' War under William Pitt. Pitt's career as a symbol of reform and patriotism began in 1734, ironically as the member for Old Sarum, the most notorious of Great Britain's rotten boroughs. Pitt soon joined the Patriot group, which was influenced by Bolingbroke and formed the parliamentary opposition to Walpole, particularly to Walpole's Spanish policy. Pitt cemented his reputation as a disinterested patriot in 1746 when he refused to use his office as Paymaster of the Army as a vehicle for personal profit, contrary to accepted practice.⁷³

Throughout his career Pitt showed little regard for Hanoverian interests and much regard for colonies and maritime supremacy. His appointment as secretary of state for the southern department, covering France, Spain, and the colonies, made him responsible for the main theaters of the Seven Years' War and forced a partial shift in his opinion. Even though obliged to protect Hanover, Pitt reversed the British strategy

⁷² *Ibid.*, 2:281-290.

⁷³ Peter Douglas Brown, *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham: the Great Commoner* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1978), 33, 46-47, 61, 79-80; Carol Lynn Holmsky Knight, "The Political Image of William Pitt, First Earl of Chatham, in the American Colonial Press, 1756-1778" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1973), 41-42.

of the War of the Austrian Succession by putting continental strategy in the service of his American strategy, rather than using the colonies as bargaining chips over European objectives. Pitt sent troops to Hanover and subsidized Prussia to tie France down and prevent it from mounting an effective counteroffensive in America. Pitt's policy bore fruit with the fall of Louisbourg in 1758 and Quebec in 1759, leading Pitt to proclaim in 1761 that "America had been conquered in Germany." In America, Pitt was a hero because he was the first high official who gave primacy to colonial interests.⁷⁴ Pitt soon ran into conflict with the new King George III and his favorites, who feared pushing France too hard would bring Spain into the war. By April 1761, Pitt was committed to holding all of the newly-won American territories and pushing on to absolute victory over the Bourbon powers. Faced with stiff opposition in the cabinet, Pitt resigned in October 1761. The colonial press generally sided with Pitt.⁷⁵

To many British and American commentators, British foreign policy in the post-Pitt era sank back into a Walpolean pattern of meekness in the face of Spanish and French action. The Royal Navy captured the Philippines in October 1762 and

⁷⁴ Stanley Ayling, *The Elder Pitt, Earl of Chatham* (London, Collins, 1976), 197-198, 230-231; Knight, "Political Image of William Pitt," 68-72; Richard Middleton, *The Bells of Victory: The Pitt-Newcastle Ministry and the Conduct of the Seven Years' War, 1757-1762* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 10-11, 148.

⁷⁵ Knight, "Political Image of William Pitt," 88; Middleton, *Bells of Victory*, 184, 196-198.

accepted the Spanish governor's offer of four million Spanish dollars not to sack Manila. The Manila Ransom, as it became known, was never paid, and remained a stumbling block in Anglo-Spanish relations. French Foreign Minister Etienne-François, duc de Choiseul offered mediation in 1765. The British government refused but also consistently lowered its monetary demands. The Manila Ransom merged with the Falkland Islands controversy. In 1766 Great Britain established a post at Port Egmont on West Falkland, which Spain protested. Choiseul again offered mediation of the Manila Ransom if Great Britain withdrew from the Falklands. British hesitancy to go to war encouraged Choiseul to press the Spanish case and may have encouraged Spain's abortive attack on Port Egmont in 1770.⁷⁶

Choiseul also saw the opportunity to boost French interests in the Mediterranean by taking Corsica. France purchased the island from the Republic of Genoa on May 15, 1768, without consulting either the Corsican people or their leader, Pasquale Paoli. Popular British sentiment, encouraged by the author James Boswell, who publicized the Corsican cause, supported Paoli, and Paoli himself actively sought British help. Lord Shelburne concluded that Corsica was not a vital British interest and stood by as France completed its conquest in 1769. Not only had Shelburne sacrificed Great

⁷⁶ H. M. Scott, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 91-94, 104-107, 141-146.

Britain's strategic position and continental reputation, he also appeared to let a free people be absorbed by the ancient symbol of absolute monarchy.⁷⁷

British policy toward Corsica was complicated by the domestic political situation caused by the John Wilkes controversy. Wilkes was the publisher of the Pittite journal *North Briton* and was prosecuted for seditious libel over #45, which attacked the 1763 Treaty of Paris and accused the ministry of having the king lie when the king stated the treaty was beneficial to Great Britain. The government issued a warrant for Wilkes's arrest, even though he was a member of Parliament and therefore immune from arrest in most cases, including seditious libel. Wilkes's expulsion from the House of Commons in 1764 removed his immunity, and Wilkes fled to Paris. He returned in 1768 seeking a pardon that was not granted. Wilkes was elected an alderman in London and was returned as member for Middlesex in two by-elections. The House of Commons refused to seat him both times. By 1769, Wilkes became a *cause célèbre* and a champion for parliamentary reformers.⁷⁸

Opposition thought drew no distinction between foreign and domestic policy. Americans who absorbed that thought also

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 115-122; Thadd E. Hall, *France and the Eighteenth-Century Corsican Question* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 206.

⁷⁸ Ian R. Christie, *Wars and Revolutions: Britain, 1760-1815* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 63-66, 75-78.

saw British foreign, domestic, and colonial policy as a single broad-gauged plot against liberty. The Sons of Liberty in the northern colonies saw Paoli as a hero, and John Hancock named one of his ships after the Corsican. Benjamin Franklin linked American and Corsican liberty and saw the Townshend Acts and the French conquest of Corsica as a "horrid Spectacle to Men and Angels."⁷⁹ The American resistance championed Wilkes's cause with equal fervor as their own, and Wilkes returned the favor. Arthur Lee, a Virginia doctor and future diplomat, lived in London in the 1760s and worked closely with Wilkes. Lee was ultimately disappointed that more Englishmen did not see their liberty linked to colonial liberty. Wilkes was a hero to American radicals, who saw him as fighting for their cause in Great Britain.⁸⁰

Americans believed the spirit that produced the Wilkes persecution, a spirit of opposition to liberty, was the determining factor in colonial policy as well. The Stamp Act and Townshend Duties themselves were nothing short of an

⁷⁹ George P. Anderson, "Pasqual Paoli, an Inspiration to the Sons of Liberty," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, Vol. 26 (1927), 182, 200; Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Great Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 180-182; Benjamin Franklin, "A Horrid Spectacle to Men and Angels," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 30 vols. to date. Leonard W. Labaree, William B. Wilcox, Claude A. Lopez, *et al*, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959-), 16:18-19.

⁸⁰ Maier, *Resistance to Revolution*, 162-165, 199-200; Louis W. Potts, *Arthur Lee: A Virtuous Revolutionary* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 59-65.

attempt to create a Walpolean fiscal machine in America. The army sent to America, which many feared would be quartered in American homes, provided a variety of constitutional horrors and completed the Walpolean machine. Americans well read in the Real Whig works believed that an army designed to combat a foreign adversary (in this case the Indians on the western frontier) would inevitably be turned against domestic liberty. The Boston Massacre in 1770 confirmed fears of such British intentions.⁸¹

Opposition writers taught the colonists to oppose the new Parliamentary actions and, without directly recommending a course of action, suggested a power Americans might possess, inasmuch as Bolingbroke, "Cato" and other writers emphasized the colonial contribution to British power. The colonists hoped to force repeal of the Stamp Act by exploiting a supposed British dependence on American markets through non-importation. Non-importation seemed to solve a number of constitutional problems. It allowed Americans to strike a significant blow without committing treason. Also, conspicuous non-consumption increased the Americans' sense of their own superior virtue. The success of the resistance in securing the repeal of the Stamp Act convinced many American leaders that

⁸¹ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 99-102; Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 2-6; John W. Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 140-143, 376, 380-381.

the colonies were the linchpin of the empire. By the eve of the Revolution, some Americans saw all British regulations as attempts to stunt American growth. Boston merchants began calling for complete free trade by 1772, and after the outbreak of war American writers lumped the Navigation Acts with all other forms of British taxation.⁸²

Non-importation was not the cure-all that many Americans believed it to be. The idea of American taxation, if not the exact form, was widely accepted in British politics. The British merchants who traded with America were too few in number to form an effective lobby. Caution by merchants on both sides of the Atlantic assured that non-importation would be less effective against the Townshend Duties. In 1775 non-importation failed to prevent armed conflict.⁸³ However,

⁸² Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *The Fall of the First British Empire: Origins of the War of American Independence* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 56-57; John E. Crowley, *This Sheba, SELF: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 127-131; John W. Tyler, *Smugglers and Patriots: Boston Merchants and the Advent of the American Revolution* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 22-23, 172; Maier, *Resistance to Revolution*, 137-138; McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 94-95.

⁸³ Tucker and Hendrickson, *Fall of the First British Empire*, 50-56; Kammen, *Empire and Interest*, 129; Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 153-154; P. D. G. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 31-32; Jack M. Sosin, *Agents and Merchants: British Colonial Policy and the Origins of the American Revolution, 1763-1775* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 89.

Americans continued to believe for a half-century that commerce could secure American goals without recourse to large military establishments. Most saw commercial diplomacy as particularly suited to republican government. Trade was not just a lure, as Bolingbroke depicted it, but the ultimate weapon. Americans held the upper hand, Thomas Paine wrote, "while eating is the custom of Europe."⁸⁴

A commitment to republican government shaped the way Americans viewed the world, and consequently the course of American foreign policy. When the Continental Congress took up the question of foreign policy in 1775, its members looked to the political thought and experience that had led them to rebellion for guidance. Over the next 75 years changing circumstances and differing experiences led John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams to different answers to questions concerning the relationship between republican government and foreign policy.

⁸⁴ Paine, *Common Sense*, 83.

CHAPTER 2: THE DIPLOMACY OF INDEPENDENCE

If the elderly John Adams is to be believed, it would appear that he always believed in the first rule of republican diplomacy, that American liberty depended on a physical and political separation from Europe. Adams remembered listening to his father discuss the return of Louisbourg to France in 1748, from which Adams "received very grievous impressions of the injustice and ingratitude of Great Britain towards New England." British military failure in the Seven Years' War convinced Adams "that we could defend ourselves against the French, and manage our affairs better without, than with, the English."¹ Adams's youth and early adulthood were shaped by his early exposure to foreign relations through his reading of the republican texts, both classical and Whig, and through the events of his day. From English Opposition thought Adams learned that liberty at home and independence abroad depended on a balance of power among branches of government and among nations. Furthermore, separation from Europe could be maintained only by means compatible with a limited government, specifically a navy. Adams's experience in politics before the

¹ John Adams to Skelton Jones, March 11, 1809, in *WJA*, 9:611-612.

American Revolution taught him that, in the absence of a navy, economic power could secure American diplomatic goals. Resistance to British taxation convinced Adams that Americans were an especially virtuous people and could expect a quick triumph over a corrupt Britain. Adams's diplomacy during the American Revolution combined these elements of republican theory.

Adams's diary and autobiography reveal a mind steeped in the classics of English Opposition thought. "I carried with me to Worcester, Lord Bolingbroke's *Study and Use of History*, and his *Patriot King*," Adams later recalled.² Adams recorded in his diary that he spent much time reading not only Bolingbroke but also *Cato's Letters*, and Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*.³ These authors taught Adams that the central question of politics was the distribution of power. Power was a natural and necessary element in society, but it was too dangerous to be left uncontrolled. To maintain liberty, both within a state and among nations, power must be dispersed as widely as possible, so that no one received an overly large share. For Adams, power was the ability to control others. Power was necessarily aggressive and expansive, and it gained at the

² "Autobiography," in John Adams, *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, 4 vols. L.H. Butterfield, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 3:264.

³ Diary entries for Jan. 16, Feb. 15 and July 19, 1756 and June 26-27, 1760, *ibid.*, 1:2, 35, 40, 142-143.

expense of liberty and right.⁴ In *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, Adams described power as the "Desire for Dominion, that encroaching, grasping, restless, and ungovernable Principle in human Nature, that Principle which has made so much Havock and Desolation."⁵ "No simple Form of Government, can possibly secure Men against the Violence of Power," Adams wrote in a 1763 essay.⁶

Only a balanced government could contain power, but Adams believed that a republic must be virtuous as well as balanced.⁷ "The Preservation of Liberty depends on the intellectual and Moral Character of the People," Adams wrote in his notes for a speech in March 1772. "As long as Knowledge and Virtue are diffused generally among the Body of a Nation, it is impossible they should be enslaved."⁸ A people that remained virtuous and vigilant kept its liberty. Americans generally praised the British constitution for its ability to balance the forces of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, represented by the crown, lords and commons. However, by the

⁴ Wood, *Creation*, 21-22; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 55-59.

⁵ John Adams, "A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law," February 1765, in *DAJA*, 1:255-256.

⁶ John Adams, "An Essay on Men's Lust for Power," post Aug. 29, 1763, in *PJA*, 1:83.

⁷ Peter Shaw, *The Character of John Adams* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), 92; John R. Howe, Jr., *The Changing Political Thought of John Adams* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), 88.

⁸ Notes for an oration at Braintree, March 1772, in *DAJA*, 2:58.

1760s it seemed that the British had lost their virtue. The degradation of the British people allowed the crown to grow too powerful and corrupt Parliament, disturbing the balance of power. Drawing on classical history, Americans noted that in Greece and Rome the loss of freedom followed the loss of virtue.⁹

British corruption and British jealousy of American power, for Adams, were the foundations of colonial policy after 1763. According to legend, the pilgrims carved the poem, "The eastern nations sink, their glory ends/ An empire rises where the sun descends," on Plymouth Rock. Adams believed the sentiment, if not the legend.¹⁰ He had accepted the theory Benjamin Franklin put forth in 1754, that the American population would double every twenty years. The next year he observed that Rome and Great Britain rose to power from humble origins, and speculated that "the great seat of Empire" might cross the Atlantic to America. "For if we can remove the turbulent Gallicks, our own people according to the exactest computations, will in another Century, become more numerous than England itself," Adams wrote. "Should this be the Case,

⁹ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 65-77; Wood, *Creation*, 52; H. Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 25.

¹⁰ James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 1-8; John Adams to Benjamin Rush, May 23, 1807, in Alexander Biddle, ed. *Old Family Letters: Copied from the Originals for Alexander Biddle* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott and Company, 1892), 143.

since we have (I may say) all the naval stores of the Nation in our hands it will be easy to obtain mastery of the seas, and then the united force of all Europe will not be able to subdue us."¹¹

Great Britain would not permit American power to match its own. In 1774 Adams wondered how to date the history of the conflict between Great Britain and the colonies. After considering various events such as the accession of George III and the administration of Governor Francis Bernard, Adams concluded that the conflict began with the American articles of the 1763 Treaty of Paris -- "The Cession of Canada, Louisiana, and Florida to the English."¹² More specifically, the fall of Canada led the British government, like Cronos, to devour its young to maintain power. "Suffice to it say, that immediately upon the Conquest of Canada from the French in the year 1759, Great Britain seemed to be seized with a jealousy against the colonies," Adams wrote in 1780, using an Opposition Whig framework of analysis, "and then concerted the plan of changing their forms of government, of restraining their trade within narrower bounds, and raising a revenue within them by authority of parliament, for the avowed or pretended purpose of protecting, securing and defending

¹¹ John Adams to Nathan Webb, Oct. 12, 1755, in *PJA*, 1:5.

¹² Diary entry, March 31, 1774, in *DAJA*, 2:95.

them."¹³ American liberty depended on both a constitutional and an international balance of power. The Continental Congress sought to redress the international (or at least transatlantic) balance of power through the use of American trade and the conquest of Canada.

John Adams shared the common belief that through the use of trade, denying it to Great Britain and offering it to the rest of the world, Americans could manipulate the European balance of power and achieve their diplomatic goals without submission to any power and without involving themselves in European politics. On September 30, 1774, the Continental Congress approved a Continental Association that banned the importation of British and Irish goods after December 1, 1774, and banned exports to Great Britain, Ireland and the British West Indies as of September 10, 1775.¹⁴ At heart Adams was a free trader. "I am against all shackles upon Trade," he wrote to James Warren in 1777. "Let the Spirit of the People have its own Way, and it will do something."¹⁵ Adams feared that non-exportation would hurt America more than Great Britain.¹⁶

¹³ John Adams to Hendrik Calkoen, Oct. 4, 1780, in *WJA*, 7:266.

¹⁴ Gerard Clarfield, "John Adams: The Marketplace and Foreign Policy." *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 52 no. 3 (September 1979), 348-350; Jack N. Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 49.

¹⁵ John Adams to James Warren, April 6, 1777, in *PJA*, 5:145.

¹⁶ John Adams to James Warren, July 17, 1774, *ibid.*, 2:110.

"Can the Inhabitants of North America live without foreign trade?" he asked.¹⁷ Adams did recognize that commerce was the only real weapon America had, and in October of 1775 he called the non-importation and non-exportation agreements a "formidable Shield of Defense."¹⁸

"The Battle of Lexington on the 19th of April, changed the Instruments of Warfare from the Penn to the Sword," Adams wrote in his autobiography.¹⁹ To secure continental union, Congress authorized an attack on Canada. The Canada expedition falls into a gray area between military and foreign policy. Radicals in Congress saw the Canadians as fellow victims of British oppression, theoretically no different from residents of Massachusetts. Partially at John Adams's insistence, the congressional committee that drafted a list of grievances cited the Quebec Act, "establishing the Roman Catholick Religion in the Province of Quebec, abolishing the equitable system of English laws, and erecting a tyranny there."²⁰ In his own notes Adams described the Quebec Act as "Danger to us all. An House on fire."²¹ In practice, the invasion was a

¹⁷ John Adams to James Warren, Oct. 20, 1775, *ibid.*, 3:216.

¹⁸ John Adams to James Warren, Oct. 28, 1775, *ibid.*, 3:254-255.

¹⁹ "Autobiography," in *DAJA*, 3:314.

²⁰ H. James Henderson, *Party Politics in the Continental Congress* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1974), 40-41; List of Grievances, Oct. 14, 1774, in *PJA*, 2:162.

²¹ Notes of Debates, Oct. 17?, 1774, in *DAJA*, 2:154.

measure of foreign policy. Unlike Massachusetts, Canada did not ask the Continental Army to come to its aid. Also, Congress eventually sent a special delegation to sway the Canadian people, a measure not used to bring in any of the thirteen colonies.

Adams fully supported the 1775 invasion of Canada, writing in his autobiography that, being a member of several committees related to the invasion, he was "wholly occupied" by its conduct.²² Adams emphasized strategic as well as ideological reasons for taking Canada. For 150 years, New France had been a dagger aimed at New England. Adams fully expected Great Britain to use Canada the same way. "In the Hands of our Enemies it [Canada] would enable them [the British] to influence all the Indians upon the Continent to take up the Hatchet," Adams warned James Warren, "and commit their Robberies and Murder upon the Frontiers of all the Southern Colonies as well as pour down Regulars Canadians and Indians together upon the borders of the Northern."²³

Two different and uncoordinated American forces attacked Canada in 1775. In July Congress ordered General Philip Schuyler to invest Fort Ticonderoga and eventually take Montreal. Schuyler linked up with General Richard Montgomery at Lake Champlain in September. General George Washington, on his own accord, sent a force through Maine under Colonel

²² *DAJA*, 3:327.

²³ John Adams to James Warren, Feb. 18, 1776, in *PJA*, 4:28.

Benedict Arnold. Montgomery captured Montreal in November and met Arnold twenty miles from Quebec on December 2. Although short on supplies, the Americans attacked on December 30, hoping to take Quebec before losing Arnold's troops, who were due to go home the next day. The attack failed, with General Montgomery among the dead.²⁴

In planning the invasion, Congress operated under the fatal assumption that no one would live under the French system of government if given a choice. Congress sent its "Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of the Province of Quebec" in 1774, which praised representative government and denounced the Quebec Act as a violation of the rights of Englishmen.²⁵ The French Canadians held the opposite assumption, that the Quebec Act was a genuine attempt by Great Britain to accommodate the new province. Even if the French Canadians had not completely embraced their new rulers by 1774 (attempts to raise French-speaking royal regiments generally failed), they could not forget that their supposed liberators, mainly New Englanders, represented the most virulent strain of anti-Catholicism in the British colonies. The *sieigneurs*, the feudal landholding class, rallied behind the British governor, and enough *habitants* followed to insure that Canada would

²⁴ Higginbotham, *War for Independence*, 109-114.

²⁵ Gustave Lanctot, *Canada and the American Revolution 1774-1783*. Margaret M. Cameron, trans. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 27-28, 247-256.

remain British.²⁶

Adams shared Congress's assumptions, and in February of 1776, he proposed a commission be sent to Canada. Congress selected Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Chase of Maryland, who had supported the invasion, and two Catholics, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a member of the Maryland safety committee, and his cousin John Carroll, a Jesuit priest.²⁷ Adams served as chairman of the committee drafting instructions, completing his work on March 20, 1776. Adams took great pains to show that French Catholics would be welcome in a union with American Protestants. "You are to . . . declare, that we hold sacred the rights of conscience," Adams wrote, "and may promise the whole people, solemnly in our name, the free and unfettered exercise of their religion; and to the clergy, the full, perfect, and peaceable possession and enjoyment of all their estates."²⁸

Even a well-chosen commission bearing a carefully worded message of friendship could not convince the French Canadians that the Americans who had vilified them so long and so recently were now their protectors. Upon reaching Canada, the commissioners realized that the political mission was as

²⁶ Sir Reginald Coupland, *The Quebec Act: A Study in Statesmanship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 123-124, 165-168.

²⁷ Thomas O'Brien Hanley, *Revolutionary Statesman: Charles Carroll and the War* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1983), 101-103, 109.

²⁸ Instructions of March 20, 1776, in *PJA*, 4:8.

hopeless as the military effort had been. Franklin noted that the French Catholics were hostile to America and that at least half of the English Canadians were Loyalists. Franklin saw no reason to continue the mission and left Canada on May 11.²⁹ Before he left, the commissioners reported to Congress that "it would be advisable, in our opinion, to withdraw our army and fortify the passes on the lakes to prevent the enemy, and the Canadians, if so inclined, from making irruptions into and depredations on our frontiers."³⁰ Charles Carroll wrote in his journal of the "bad prospect of our affairs in Canada."³¹ Congress learned of the failure of the Canadian mission in June. Adams blamed the loss of Canada on congressional indecision, lack of information on the Canadian political situation, lack of a competent general after Montgomery's death, and a general lack of supplies, money, men and medicine.³²

As the Continental Congress learned of the military failure in Canada, it was beginning to consider what Adams later called "three Measures, Independence, Confederation and

²⁹ Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: The Viking Press, 1938), 546.

³⁰ Commissioners to John Hancock, May 6, 1776, in Franklin, *Papers*, 22:418.

³¹ Charles Carroll, *Journal of Charles Carroll of Carrollton*. Brantz Meyer, ed. (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1876), 93.

³² John Adams to Samuel Cooper? June 9, 1776, in *PJA*, 4:242-243.

Negotiations with foreign powers [which] ought to go hand in hand."³³ Radicals in and out of Congress demanded quick action on all fronts. "I expect soon to hear that the Continental Congress have published the Confederacy of the Colonies -- compleated the Republic of America -- and formed a *commercial* Alliance with France and Spain," Joseph Ward wrote Adams in late 1775.³⁴ Adams was a central figure in all three measures. He wrote *Thoughts on Government* to guide the formation of new colonial governments, which Adams saw as the precondition for independence and confederation. He drafted the Model Treaty as the basis for American relations with the world. Both the foreign and domestic halves of Adams's plan of 1776 proceeded from the same principles and drew on a combination of classical and English Opposition republicanism.

"I had read Harrington, Sydney, Hobb[e]s, Nedham, and Lock[e], but with very little Application to any particular Views: till those debates in Congress . . . turned my thoughts to those Researches which produced the *Thoughts on Government*, the *Constitution of Massachusetts*, and at length the *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States* and the *Discourses on Davila*," Adams later recalled.³⁵ In domestic affairs, opposition thought suggested that the model for free government was an uncorrupted version of the British

³³ "Autobiography," in *DAJA*, 3:327.

³⁴ Joseph Ward to John Adams, Oct. 23, 1775, in *PJA*, 3:237.

³⁵ "Autobiography," in *DAJA*, 3:358-359.

constitution. Adams believed that the British constitution represented "*a government of laws and not men*," and as such was "nothing more or less than a republic, in which the king is the first magistrate."³⁶ Adams hoped to preserve the best elements of the British constitution, even if the British themselves chose to abandon it. "A Legislature, an Executive, and a Judicial Power," comprehend all of what is meant and understood by Government," Adams wrote to Richard Henry Lee. "It is by balancing each of these Powers against the other two, that the Effort in humane Nature towards Tyranny, can alone be checked and restrained and any degree of Freedom preserved in the Constitution."³⁷

For his model citizen, whether on the foreign or domestic scene, Adams turned to classical martial virtue. He wrote in January 1776 that, "I am so tasteless as to prefer a Republic," that would "produce Strength, Hardiness Activity Courage Fortitude and Enterprise." "Under a well regulated Commonwealth," he continued, "the people must be wise and virtuous and cannot be otherwise."³⁸ If the people did not already possess a virtuous spirit, Adams hoped that the war would force such a spirit on them. "It May be the will of Heaven that America should suffer Calamities still more

³⁶ "Novanglus" VII, March 6, 1775, in *PJA*, 2:314.

³⁷ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 19; John Adams to Richard Henry Lee, Nov. 15, 1775, in *PJA*, 3:307.

³⁸ John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Jan. 8, 1776, *ibid.*, 3:398.

wasting and Distresses yet more Dreadfull," Adams wrote to his wife after Congress voted for independence. "If this be the Case, it will have this good Effect, at least; it will inspire Us with many Virtues, which We have not, and correct many Errors, Follies, and Vices, which threaten to disturb, dishonour and destroy Us."³⁹ The enemy of republican virtue was the "Spirit of Commerce" which was "incompatible with that purity of Heart, and Greatness of Soul, which is necessary for a happy Republic."⁴⁰

Adams expanded on these ideas in his first theoretical work, "Thoughts on Government," which began as a letter to George Wythe and emerged as a pamphlet in April of 1776.⁴¹ Adams implied that virtue was necessary to implement his model, writing that, "the noblest principles and most generous affections in our nature then, have the fairest chance to support the most generous models of government." Adams linked his ideas of the republican nature of the British constitution to his theory of government and emphasized the rule of law. He wrote, "that form of government, which is best contrived to secure an impartial and exact execution of the laws, is the

³⁹ John Adams to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776, in L.H. Butterfield, Marc Friedlaender and Richard Allen Ryerson, eds., *Adams Family Correspondence*, 6 vols. to date (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963-), 2:28.

⁴⁰ John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, April 16, 1776, in *PJA*, 4:125.

⁴¹ John Adams, "Thoughts on Government," editorial note, *ibid.*, 4:65-66.

best of Republics."⁴²

On constitutional matters, Adams's suspicion of human nature led him to advocate a bicameral legislature. "A single assembly is liable to all the vices, follies and frailties of an individual," he wrote, "subject to fits of humour, starts of passion, flights of enthusiasm, partialities of prejudice, and consequently productive of hasty results and absurd judgement." However, a properly balanced government could act as a guarantor of virtue. Adams advocated laws to promote education, and sumptuary laws to keep the spirit of luxury under control. "Frugality is a great revenue," wrote Adams, "besides curing us of vanities, levities, and fopperies which are antidotes to all great, manly and warlike virtues."⁴³ A constitution, Adams concluded, could be a great inspiration to a people. A properly designed constitution could, "make the common people brave and enterprising. That ambition which is inspired by it makes them safer, industrious and frugal."⁴⁴

Adams knew that men often acted on their passions and interests rather than for the public good.⁴⁵ This characteristic could also work for the public good. The desire for fame and honor implied some contribution to the public

⁴² *Ibid.*, 86-87.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 88, 91.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴⁵ Howe, *Political Thought of JA*, 16-18.

good, regardless of motive.⁴⁶ "Ambition in a Republic, is a great Virtue, for it is nothing more than a Desire, to Serve the Public, to Promote the Happiness of the People, to increase the Wealth, the Grandeur, and Prosperity of the Country," Adams wrote.⁴⁷ "The Utility of Medals, has been impressed Strongly upon my Mind," he informed Nathanael Greene, "Pride, Ambition, and indeed what a Philosopher would call Vanity, is the strongest Passion in human Nature, and next to Religion, the most operative Motive to great Actions."⁴⁸

The second half of Adams's plan of 1776, the question of foreign alliances, also emerged in the midst of the Canada debacle. On November 29, 1775, Congress established the Committee of Secret Correspondence "for the sole purpose of communicating with our friends in Great Britain, Ireland, and other parts of the world." Great Britain forced the issue of foreign involvement when Parliament passed the American Prohibitory Act, which declared American ships subject to capture and declared the colonies beyond the protection of the law. The act arrived in the Continental Congress on February 27, 1776. In response, Congress opened American ports to the

⁴⁶ Douglass Adair, "Fame and the Founding Fathers," in *Fame and the Founding Fathers*. Trevor Colbourn, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1974), 8.

⁴⁷ John Adams to unknown, April 27, 1777, in *PJA*, 5:163.

⁴⁸ John Adams to Nathanael Greene, May 9, 1777, *ibid.*, 186.

world on April 6.⁴⁹

Both moderates and radicals recognized that formal alliances with foreign powers presupposed independence. Moderates who opposed independence naturally opposed alliances. In February 1776 Robert Morris feared that making an agreement with France would prevent a reconciliation with Great Britain. "When We have bound ourselves to an eternal Quarrel with G.B. by a Declaration of Independence," John Dickinson argued in his July 1, 1776 speech against independence, "France has nothing to do but hold back and intimidate G.B. till Canada is put into her hands, then to intimidate Us into a disadvantageous Grant of our Trade."⁵⁰ Even some who favored independence shared Dickinson's concerns that an alliance should come first. Patrick Henry, whose radical credentials were unquestioned, opposed resolutions in the Virginia Assembly calling for independence, believing that confederation and foreign alliances should precede independence.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, rev. ed. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1957), 32; Rakove, *Beginnings of National Politics*, 81, 96.

⁵⁰ Robert Morris to Charles Lee, Feb. 17, 1776; John Dickinson's speech notes of July 1, 1776, in Paul H. Smith, ed. *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, 22 vols. to date (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1976-), 3:270, 4:354.

⁵¹ Patrick Henry to John Adams, May 20, 1776, in *PJA*, 4:201; John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg, dist. University Press of Virginia, 1988), 95-98.

John Adams argued that, instead of needing foreign alliances to declare its independence, America needed to declare independence before any nation would sign an alliance. Merely opening the ports was not enough.⁵² "Foreign powers could not be expected to acknowledge Us," Adams wrote, "till We had acknowledged ourselves and taken our Station, among them as a sovereign Power, and an Independent Nation."⁵³ Adams dismissed Dickinson's fears of French domination, because America did not seek a political or military alliance. "I wish for nothing but Commerce," Adams wrote.⁵⁴ In March of 1776, Adams argued in Congress, "is any Assistance attainable from F[rance]? What Connection may We safely make with her? 1st. No Political Connection. Submit to none of her Authority -- receive no Governors, or Officers from her. 2d. No Military Connection Recieve no Troops from her. 3d. Only a Commercial Connection."⁵⁵ A treaty based on trade, Adams believed, would gain French support without violating the principle of separation from European politics. His policy temporarily matched that of the moderate-dominated Committee of Secret Correspondence, which instructed the congressional commissioner to France, Silas Deane, acting the part of a

⁵² John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 12, 1776, in *AFC*, 1:377.

⁵³ *DAJA*, 3:327.

⁵⁴ John Adams to John Winthrop, June 23, 1776, *PJA*, 4:331-332.

⁵⁵ Diary entry, March 1, 1776, *ibid.*, 2:236.

private merchant so as not to give the impression that the colonies had already decided on independence, to emphasize to the French that British wealth came from American trade.⁵⁶

Adams believed that American commerce would exploit a balance between Great Britain and France that would allow the United States to remain independent. The constant demand for grain on the European continent, aggravated by endemic warfare, would guarantee American independence and commerce without requiring the United States to make any political commitments to other nations. "We have always said in America," Adams wrote in 1781, "'By and by will come a scarce year for grain in Europe, and then the nations there will begin to think us of some consequence.'"⁵⁷ Furthermore, American commerce would strike a blow for the principle of freedom of the seas, as set down by writers on the law of nations and endorsed by American republicans. "Every body throughout the world sees, that a renewal of the English monopoly of the American trade, would establish an absolute tyranny upon the ocean, and that every other ship that sails would hold its liberty at the mercy of those Lordly Islanders," Adams wrote in 1780. Adams wanted to break the British monopoly on American commerce, opening markets to

⁵⁶ Committee of Secret Correspondence to Silas Deane, March 2, 1776, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, 4:321.

⁵⁷ John Adams to C.F.W. Dumas, Jan. 31, 1781, in John Adams, *Correspondence of the Late President Adams, Originally Published in the Boston Patriot* (Boston: Everett and Munroe, 1809), 366.

France and other countries, eventually including Great Britain. Both Great Britain and France would benefit from American commerce, and neither of them would allow the other to attack the United States.⁵⁸ Adams later recalled that the Americans hoped to "annihilate all Domination at Sea, and establish a universal and perpetual Liberty for all Nations Neutral and belligerent on that element."⁵⁹

Congress placed John Adams in charge of a committee to draft a treaty of alliance that would serve as the model for American treaties with European powers. In July of 1776, Adams presented his draft of the Model Treaty. He was influenced in framing it by the Anglo-French articles of the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, which gave France and Great Britain limited most-favored-nation status and established free navigation in each other's European possessions.⁶⁰ Whereas the architect Lord Bolingbroke attempted to use trade as a prelude to a political alliance, Adams intended to use trade as a substitute for one. The Model Treaty's 30 articles guaranteed reciprocal trade, protection for each signatory's ships in the other's ports,

⁵⁸ John Adams to Edmund Jennings, published Jan. 17, 1782, in James H. Hutson, *ed*, *Letters from a Distinguished American: Twelve Essays by John Adams on American Foreign Policy, 1780* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1980), 4-5; Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 28-31.

⁵⁹ John Adams to Benjamin Rush, April 18, 1813, in *Old Family Letters*, 450-451.

⁶⁰ Model treaty, editorial note, in *PJA*, 4:263; Max Savelle, *The Origins of American Diplomacy: The International History of Angloamerica* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 150-151.

and, by excluding food and ships' stores in the definition of contraband, took a step toward the principle of "free ships, free goods." The only military concessions included merely a commitment that the United States would remain neutral (rather than ally with Great Britain) if Great Britain declared war on the allied nation, and that in the present conflict the United States would not seek a separate peace with Great Britain. Furthermore, the treaty barred a signatory from taking over any British colonies in North America. Congress adopted a slightly modified version on September 17, 1776.⁶¹

The Model Treaty revealed the connection between ideology and diplomacy, as it reflected the fear of foreign engagements inherited from the English Opposition and made a careful distinction between commercial and political treaties.⁶² The treaty showed that Adams viewed the European balance of power as Bolingbroke had, as an external system that could preserve national liberty without political or military commitments. Adams believed that the "Spirit of Commerce," the pursuit of self-interest rather than a common good, which he deplored in domestic politics, was the organizing principle of international relations.⁶³ Like his domestic system, Adams's diplomatic system depended on the martial virtue of the

⁶¹ Model treaty, in *PJA*, 4:265-277, 290-300.

⁶² Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), 43, 46-48.

⁶³ "Autobiography," in *DAJA*, 3:329.

American people. Like his radical colleagues, Adams believed that a combination of divine favor, American virtue and British corruption would bring a quick victory, making permanent foreign alliances unnecessary. "The Officers drink a long and moderate War," Adams wrote in 1777. "My toast is a short and violent War."⁶⁴

Adams hoped to avoid a political treaty well into 1777. "I have often been ashamed to hear, so many Whiggs groaning and Sighing with Despondency, and whining out their Fears that we must be subdued unless France should step in," he complained to James Warren. "Are We to be beholden to France for our Liberties?"⁶⁵ However, military necessity and French interests intervened. On September 24 Congress gave the American envoys in Paris more leeway to agree explicitly not to ally with Great Britain against France.⁶⁶ The moderates who had held out against independence rushed forward to embrace a full French military intervention. Military collapse in December led Congress to abandon the Model Treaty and authorize the envoys in Paris to agree to whatever was

⁶⁴ Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and the American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 12-23; John Adams to Abigail Adams, Sept. 2, 1777, in *AFC*, 2:336.

⁶⁵ John Adams to James Warren, May 3, 1777, in *PJA*, 5:174.

⁶⁶ Sept. 24, 1776, in Worthington C. Ford, *ed.* *Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789*, 34 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), 5:815.

necessary to bring France into the war.⁶⁷ The French foreign minister, the Comte de Vergennes, intended to use the United States to increase French power relative to Great Britain, and would not commit French resources without greater assurances that the Americans would continue to fight.⁶⁸

On November 7, 1777, Congress appointed John Adams to replace Silas Deane as a commissioner to France, and Adams set sail on February 13, 1778.⁶⁹ He accepted the appointment at the urging of such congressional allies as Henry Laurens, Richard Henry Lee and James Lovell, hoping to implement his ideas of a proper foreign policy.⁷⁰ However, Adams did not get that chance. He arrived at Bordeaux on April 1, 1778, only to learn that Franklin, Deane and Arthur Lee had signed two treaties on February 6; a commercial treaty based on the Model Treaty, and a military alliance that the Model Treaty had been designed to prevent.⁷¹

Although Adams did not originally believe a political commitment to France was either desirable or necessary, he did support the treaties for two practical reasons. First, as long

⁶⁷ Committee of Secret Correspondence to the commissioners, Dec. 30, 1776, in Franklin, *Papers*, 23:97; Rakove, *Beginnings of National Politics*, 115.

⁶⁸ Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University Press, 1954), 136-140.

⁶⁹ Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 33-34.

⁷⁰ Charles Francis Adams, *The Life of John Adams*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott and Co., 1871), 1:389-390.

⁷¹ Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 37.

as Great Britain occupied a foot of ground in North America, the United States would need French support. "Will it ever do to think of Peace, while G. Britain has Canada, Nova Scotia and the Floridas, or any of them?" he asked James Warren. "Such a peace will be but Short." "We . . . have the surest Ground to expect the Jealousy and Hatred of Great Britain," Adams wrote to Samuel Adams, "[therefore] We have the Strongest Reasons to depend upon the Friendship and Alliance of France."⁷²

Second, the treaties, once signed, held the force of American and international law. If the United States did not fulfill its obligations under the law, it could expect no further help from Europe. "This faith [in upholding the treaty] is our American Glory, and it is our Bulwark," Adams wrote to James Warren, "it is the only Foundation on which our Union can rest secured, it is the only Support of our Credit both in Finance and Commerce, it is our only Security for the Assistance of Foreign Powers."⁷³ Adams believed that French support was solid, informing Samuel Adams that, "Every suspicion of a wavering disposition in this court concerning the support of America is groundless."⁷⁴

⁷² Stourzh, *Franklin and Foreign Policy*, 154-155; John Adams to James Warren, July 26, 1778 and John Adams to Samuel Adams, July 18, 1778, in *PJA*, 6:321, 326.

⁷³ John Adams to James Warren, Aug. 4, 1778, in *PJA*, 6:347.

⁷⁴ John Adams to Samuel Adams, Fed. 14, 1779, in Francis Wharton, ed. *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, 6 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government

Once in Europe, Adams had to translate the republican theory that shaped his foreign policy in Congress into diplomatic practice. The problem fell into three overlapping questions. The first question related to the personal conduct of republican diplomats, and more generally to whether or not there was a specifically republican style of diplomacy. The second question was what military strategy was best suited to a republic. The third question was the degree to which the United States shared a common interest with other republics, or with other nations sharing similar diplomatic goals.

Upon arriving, Adams was immediately forced to deal with the first question, concerning personal conduct. Congress had recalled Adams's predecessor, Silas Deane, on August 5, 1777, on the grounds that Deane had issued too many commissions to non-English-speaking French officers. Soon afterward, Arthur Lee accused Deane of using his position to further his commercial interests. In 1776, Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais had organized Rodrigue Hortalez et Cie, a trading firm to serve as a vehicle for sending military supplies to America. Louis XVI gave the company one million *livres* in starting capital, leading Lee to believe the company was merely a front for a royal subsidy. Because the king authorized the company to sell stock to private investors, both Beaumarchais and Deane treated the company as a legitimate business. Deane invested heavily and expected a

Office, 1889), 3:48.

personal return, often mixing his private and official financial accounts in the process. Lee, by nature suspicious of those around him, spent 1778 accusing Beaumarchais and Deane of defrauding Congress. Deane responded with an essay in the December 5, 1778, *Pennsylvania Packet*, in which he attacked the Lee family in general and Arthur Lee in particular, charging them with disloyalty to the alliance and outright treason. The story reached Paris in February of 1779, causing an immediate rift between Adams, the Lee family's ally, and Franklin, who did not believe Deane was guilty of any wrongdoing.⁷⁵ Adams wrote in his diary, "that there appeared to me no Alternative left but the Ruin of Mr. Deane, or the Ruin of his Country. That he appeared to me in the light of a wild Boar, that ought to be hunted down for the Benefit of Mankind."⁷⁶

Although the Deane affair was in Adams's mind a fairly straightforward case of corruption, it was in a more important sense an obvious example of how a republican should not conduct himself. Franklin's conduct was an even more complicated problem. Adams, a self-described "stern and haughty Republican," objected to Franklin's lifestyle, calling it "a Scene of continual dissipation." Arthur Lee had earlier formed the same opinion.⁷⁷ More important, Adams criticized

⁷⁵ C. F. Adams, *Life of JA*, 1:395; Rakove, *Beginnings of National Politics*, 249-255; Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 42-43; Potts, *Arthur Lee*, 154-159, 185-186.

⁷⁶ Diary entry, Feb. 8, 1779, in *DAJA*, 2:345.

Franklin's approach to diplomacy. Just as Adams called for a government of laws and not men, he called for a diplomacy based on national interests and not diplomats. Interest was the only firm basis for a long-term policy in Adams's opinion, whereas Franklin based his diplomacy on his personal relationship with the French, playing on Louis XVI's ego as much as on French interest. Franklin expressed his gratitude toward France for its generous help in effusive public displays that Adams found distasteful for a republican.⁷⁸ "Franklin, while in France, was very French," according to one Franklin biographer. Unlike Adams and Lee, Franklin did not conceive of a republican style of diplomacy. For Adams that was the problem. Adams advocated a blunter style of diplomacy. "He [Adams] thinks . . . that America has been too free in Expressions of gratitude to France," Franklin wrote in 1780, "I apprehend he mistakes his ground, and that this court is to be treated with Decency and Delicacy."⁷⁹ Adams believed the American cause needed no embellishment. "The dignity of North America does not consist in diplomatic ceremonials or any of

⁷⁷ John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 12, 1778, in *AFC*, 3:9; *DAJA*, 4:118; Potts, *Arthur Lee*, 200-201.

⁷⁸ Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 11; Stourzh, *Franklin and Foreign Policy*, 164-165.

⁷⁹ Claude-Anne Lopez, *Mon Cher Papa: Franklin and the Ladies of Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 10; Shaw, *Character of JA*, 137-138; Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Huntington, Aug. 9, 1780, in Benjamin Franklin, *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 10 vols. Albert Henry Smyth, ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907), 8:127.

the subtleties of etiquette;" he wrote to Vergennes in 1781, "it consists solely in reason, justice, truth, the rights of mankind and the interests of the nations of Europe, all of which, well understood, are clearly in her favor."⁸⁰

Despite his feelings toward Franklin, Adams fully recognized Franklin's talents as a publicist and believed it would do more harm than good to remove the doctor. "Franklin is a Wit and a Humorist, I Know. He may be a Phylosopher, for what I know, but he is not a sufficient Statesman. He knows too little of American Affairs or the politics of Europe, and takes too little Pains to inform himself of either, " Adams wrote to Thomas McKean in 1779. "Yet such is his Name on both Sides of the Water, that it is best, perhaps, that he should be left there."⁸¹ Congress agreed and reorganized the diplomatic corps on September 14, 1778, naming Franklin as sole minister. Adams received the news on February 12, 1779, and learned that he had not been sent even a formal letter of recall. For several weeks he waited at Nantes for passage home, spending his time nursing his resentment of Franklin and Congress. He finally left on June 17, arriving at Boston on August 2.⁸²

John Adams spent the summer and fall of 1779 writing the

⁸⁰ John Adams to the Comte de Vergennes, July 18, 1781, in *WJA*, 7:445.

⁸¹ John Adams to Thomas McKean, Sept. 25, 1779, in *PJA*, 8:162.

⁸² Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 41, 49-51.

Massachusetts constitution before returning to the world of diplomacy. Once again, the battle between pro-Lee and pro-Deane forces, in conjunction with French political interests, shaped Adams's career. Conrad Alexander Gerard, the French minister to the United States, shared the American desire to draw Spain into the war, and used the divisions in Congress to make American peace demands more acceptable to Spain.⁸³

Initially, the United States presented a fairly ambitious list of peace demands. On February 23, 1779, a committee created to draft the peace ultimata recommended that the United States demand absolute independence, control of all territory to the Mississippi River, British evacuation of American territory, access to the Newfoundland fisheries, free navigation of the Mississippi, free commerce on the Mississippi below the American boundary, and either the cession or the independence of Nova Scotia. Gerard hoped to moderate these demands to make them more acceptable to Great Britain and less threatening to Spain, which entered the war as a French (but not an American) ally on April 12, 1779. Gerard used his influence to have Congress drop the issue of the fisheries, and on August 14, Congress settled on absolute independence and control of territory west to the Mississippi and south to 31 degrees north latitude as its demands. The

⁸³ Rakove, *Beginnings of National Politics*, 255-256.

fisheries were not to hold up negotiations.⁸⁴

Gerard lobbied for John Jay, then linked with pro-Deane forces, to be peace commissioner and to replace Arthur Lee as minister to Spain. Gerard achieved only a partial victory. Pro-Lee members, led by Samuel Adams, opposed Jay and abandoned Arthur Lee in favor of John Adams, whose election would secure the fisheries even without specific instructions. Congress deadlocked until both sides agreed to divide the two jobs, electing John Adams peace commissioner and John Jay minister to Spain on September 27.⁸⁵

John Adams learned of his appointment, much to his surprise, in October of 1779. Elbridge Gerry urged him to accept, and Adams agreed that the commission was too important to turn down. However, Adams believed that Franklin would attempt to frustrate the mission, and asked that Congress order Franklin to authorize payments to him. Adams sailed once more for Europe on November 13, 1779. En route, the ship began leaking, and put in at El Ferrol, Spain, on December 8.⁸⁶

Neither Vergennes nor John Adams looked forward to seeing the other again. In the summer of 1779, Gerard had reported to

⁸⁴ *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 14:456-460; Richard B. Morris, *The Peacemakers: The Great Powers and American Independence* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 15-18; William C. Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 65.

⁸⁵ Stinchcombe, *French Alliance*, 66, 73-76.

⁸⁶ Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 51-55.

Vergennes that John and Samuel Adams and Richard Henry Lee were part of a pro-British faction, and Adams and Vergennes had clashed at their first meeting over whether or not to inform London of Adams's powers to treat for peace. Adams's insistence on advising the British of his commission served to convince Vergennes that Adams was indeed pro-British.⁸⁷ Adams believed that revealing his commission to the British, "would . . . draw out from them some proofs of their present designs, and it is always important to discover early the intentions of the enemy."⁸⁸ Vergennes considered such a move premature. Great Britain had made no peace overtures, and offering peace and commerce would only convince the British that the Americans would cave into any demands the British might make.⁸⁹

Adams's insistence on a frank style of diplomacy overlapped with the second great question he faced in Europe, what military strategy was appropriate to a republic. The question put Adams for much of his time in Paris in the position of offering Congress and France unsolicited and unwanted advice on how to run the war. English Opposition thought and his own experience taught Adams that a navy was the means of defense best suited to a republic; for him a navy

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 56-59.

⁸⁸ John Adams to the Comte de Vergennes, July 17, 1780, in *WJA*, 7:228-229.

⁸⁹ Observations on Mr. J. Adams' Letter of July 17, 1780, in *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, 4:3-6.

was "our only natural and adequate defense." With a tiny navy itself, the United States had to rely on France. Like many Americans, Adams believed that French sea power would prevent the re-supply of British troops in America, allowing the United States to win without relying on French ground troops. This belief supplied the strategic assumptions of the Model Treaty.⁹⁰ However, France and Spain concentrated on British rather than American waters, planning an invasion of Great Britain. The allied fleet joined on July 22, 1779, but fell victim to delays and shipboard illness, and allowed the British fleet to escape to Portsmouth on August 31. The Franco-Spanish fleet withdrew from the English Channel on September 8.⁹¹

"Yet I must own to you, that I think France and Spain are yet to be convinced of the true Method of conducting the War," Adams wrote to Benjamin Rush. "It is not by beseiging Gibraltar nor invading Ireland, in my humble opinion, but by sending a clear Superiority of naval Power into the American Seas."⁹² Adams reported to the president of Congress in March

⁹⁰ John Adams to Samuel Huntington, Oct. 14, 1780, in Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 101, Massachusetts Historical Society; Stinchcombe, *French Alliance*, 151; R. Arthur Bowler, *Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America, 1775-1783* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 93, 123-124.

⁹¹ Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence: A Study of Arms and Diplomacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 154-157.

⁹² John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Sept. 19, 1779, in *PJA*, 8:153.

of 1780 on the strength of the French fleet, writing, "one would think that there was force enough in them to protect Us and quiet all our Fears but the Battle is not always to the strong and we must wait for Time to decide Events."⁹³ Adams criticized allied naval action in Europe, especially after he learned of Admiral Rodney's victory on January 16, 1780, against the Spanish at Gibraltar. Adams complained that vast fleets were wasted on Gibraltar, "which is but a Trifle," while even a smaller fleet would triumph off America.⁹⁴ Adams took these themes up with Vergennes on July 13, warning that some in the United States were still suspicious of the French. A show of naval force in American waters would reassure the country and force the British out of Philadelphia, isolating them in New York City.⁹⁵ Vergennes, with a smaller fleet than the British, and a reluctant ally in Spain, could not accommodate Adams, who concluded that although Vergennes wanted to see America independent, he did not want it to grow strong.⁹⁶

On July 27, 1780, John Adams left for the Netherlands, to deal with the third question regarding diplomacy and

⁹³ John Adams to Samuel Huntington, March 4, 1780, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 98.

⁹⁴ Dull, *French Navy*, 178-179; John Adams to Samuel Huntington, March 10, 1780, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 98.

⁹⁵ John Adams to the Comte de Vergennes, July 13, 1780, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 98.

⁹⁶ Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 68-70.

republicanism, to what degree were American fortunes linked to other republics and maritime states. This question raised issues regarding both Adams's opinion of the Armed Neutrality and his dealings with the Dutch government. On September 16, Adams received permission to negotiate with the Dutch until Henry Laurens, former president of the Continental Congress and member of the Adams-Lee faction, arrived. The British had captured Laurens at sea on September 3, leaving Adams as *de facto* minister.⁹⁷ While Adams was in the Netherlands, American interests seemed to coincide with Dutch entry into the Armed Neutrality. The chain of events leading to the formation of the Armed Neutrality began in July of 1778, when an American privateer attacked eight British ships sailing out of Archangel, Russia. Empress Catherine II proposed a treaty between Russia and Denmark in August, calling for mutual protection of neutral ships and British ships trading with neutrals in the North Sea. Denmark countered with an offer of mutual protection in all seas, which Russia rejected for fear that such an agreement would protect Danish shipping at Russian expense. When Spain entered the war in 1779, it claimed the right to seize and condemn as lawful prize all ships bound for the Mediterranean, on the grounds that any such ships might in reality attempt to land at Gibraltar. The Spanish capture of a Dutch ship carrying Russian cargo, followed by the capture of a Russian ship, revived the project

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71-73, 78-79.

of an agreement among the northern neutrals. Catherine II issued the Declaration of Armed Neutrality on February 28, 1780. Of the five principles of the Armed Neutrality, the first three -- freedom of neutrals to trade with belligerents, free ships make free goods, and a limited definition of contraband -- appeared in the Model Treaty. The fourth principle stated that only an effective blockade could be legal, and the fifth set the first four as the basis for judging the legality of prizes.⁹⁸

Adams was happy to take partial credit for the agreement, calling it "one of the most brilliant events which has yet been produced by the American Revolution."⁹⁹ Adams hoped that the northern powers could tie up the British fleet in Europe and make up for the lack of French naval cover. He reported that "either the War will be pushed this year with more vivacity than ever, both by Land and by Sea, or that Peace will be made without delay."¹⁰⁰ Congress shared Adams's enthusiasm, and sent Francis Dana, Adams's secretary, to apply for membership in the Armed Neutrality.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, rev. ed. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1957), 150-156.

⁹⁹ John Adams to the President of Congress, Feb. 1, 1781, in *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, 2:244-247.

¹⁰⁰ John Adams to Samuel Huntington, April 1780, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 98.

¹⁰¹ David M. Griffiths, "American Commercial Diplomacy in Russia 1780 to 1783." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, Vol. 27 no. 3 (July 1970), 382-383.

Adams was not sure if the United States would be admitted to the Armed Neutrality. "Has there been any deliberation or Consultation," Adams asked his diary, "between the maritime Powers in forming the armed Neutrality, concerning the American Question?"¹⁰² However, it seemed certain that the Dutch would join. When the British captured Henry Laurens, they also captured evidence of Dutch-American cooperation. The Dutch joined the Armed Neutrality for their own protection on November 20, 1780, and the British authorized attacks on Dutch shipping on December 20. The Dutch appealed to Russia for help on January 12, 1781. Adams hoped that Armed Neutrality would then join the war, forcing Great Britain to negotiate for peace and reducing American dependence on France. Adams's hopes, along with the Armed Neutrality itself collapsed when Russia refused to go to war for the Dutch.¹⁰³ Adams's hopes for the Armed Neutrality reflected his belief that all maritime powers formed a natural common interest with the United States.

Like his Opposition forebears, Adams believed that the Netherlands was the only modern continental nation that had achieved liberty, resulting in part from its maritime nature. He assumed that, in addition to a common maritime interest with the Armed Neutrality, America had a common political interest with the Netherlands, the sole republican member of

¹⁰² Diary entry, Jan. 14, 1781, in *DAJA*, 2:455.

¹⁰³ Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 79-82, 93.

the League. That assumption shifted the basis of his diplomacy from an emphasis on strategic interest, the foundation of the American appeal to France and Spain, to an ideological consideration, the common interest of republics. Adams opened a question that would resurface during the French Revolution and again during the Latin American wars for independence: to what degree does a similarity in government, real or perceived, dictate relations among nations?

"The permanent friendship of the Dutch may be easily obtained," Adams wrote to Franklin in June 1782.¹⁰⁴ The basis for that friendship was to be republicanism and commerce. On April 19, 1781, Adams presented a memorial to the States-General of the Netherlands, outlining the American case, and the Dutch interest in it. "If there ever was among nations a natural alliance, one may be formed between the two republics," Adams wrote. Adams went on to discuss the Pilgrims' residence at Leyden and parallels in the origins of both countries, as well as similarities in religion, government and commerce. Adams concluded that "in all the particulars the union is so obviously natural that there has seldom been a more distinct designation of Providence to any two distant nations to unite themselves together."¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately for Adams, republicanism was not a sufficient

¹⁰⁴ John Adams to Benjamin Franklin, June 13, 1782, in *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, 5:491.

¹⁰⁵ Memorial of April 19, 1781, in *WJA*, 7:399-401.

bond. The Dutch simply wished to trade with all belligerents and were not interested in schemes to remake the law of the sea. Fear of British reprisals prevented Dutch recognition of the United States until after the American victory at Yorktown and the British Parliament's decision to suspend offensive action in America.¹⁰⁶

Adams's Dutch negotiations reflected his general approach to diplomacy, that the United States should not become dependent on any power. "It seems to me of vast importance to us to obtain an acknowledgement of our independence from as many other sovereigns as possible, before any conferences for peace should be held," he wrote to Benjamin Franklin.¹⁰⁷ Adams's system of appealing to every nation that might listen to American claims conflicted with Franklin's more cautious approach. Like Adams, Franklin wished to keep the United States out of European politics as much as possible. He wrote in 1777 that the United States should not "go suitering for Alliances, but wait with decent Dignity for the applications of others." Once the alliance with France was signed, Franklin believed that no other nation could offer as much help as France, and that American interests would be best served by relying on France rather than introducing more powers and deeper American commitments to European nations.¹⁰⁸ Adams

¹⁰⁶ Dull, *Diplomatic History*, 124-125; Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 110-114.

¹⁰⁷ John Adams to Benjamin Franklin, May 23, 1781, in *WJA*, 7:422.

certainly agreed that "France deserves the first Place, among those Powers with which our Connections will be the most intimate."¹⁰⁹ In Adams's mind, Franklin's system rested on two things that Adams did not trust; Franklin's personal relationship with Vergennes, and the basic goodwill of the French.

Vergennes's actions seemed to confirm Adams's distrust. The failure of American arms in 1780 and growing strain on the French treasury, led Vergennes to look for a quick end to the war, even if that meant limiting American territorial claims. Russia and Austria seemed to offer a way out when they proposed to mediate at Vienna in May 1781. Neither power recognized American independence, but Vergennes accepted the offer nonetheless. John Adams was the American authorized to attend such a conference, but he balked at going, objecting to the fact that recognition of the United States was not a prerequisite. The mediation ultimately came to nothing, as Great Britain refused to negotiate with the Americans under any circumstances.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin Franklin to Arthur Lee, March 21, 1777, in *Franklin, Papers*, 23:511; Stourzh, *Franklin and Foreign Policy*, 160-161.

¹⁰⁹ John Adams to the President of Congress, Aug. 4, 1779, in *PJA*, 8:109.

¹¹⁰ John Adams to the Comte de Vergennes, July 19, 1781, *Adams Family Papers, Letterbook*, reel 105; Morris, *Peacemakers*, 178-181, 185-186, 207, 209; Jonathan R. Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 131.

Vergennes always considered Adams a loose cannon and tried to convince Congress to control Adams or recall him. Military failure and congressional panic operated in Vergennes's favor. In the spring of 1781 the Chevalier de la Luzerne, Gerard's replacement as minister, complained about Adams's conduct, and asked Congress to do something about it. Leaders in Congress shared the French belief that Adams, acting alone, might prolong the war by insisting on access to the Newfoundland fisheries as a condition of peace. In a show of anti-Adams and anti-New England sentiment, Congress revoked Adams's peace commission on June 15 and instead named a delegation comprised of Adams, Franklin, Jay, Laurens and Jefferson. Only Connecticut and Massachusetts opposed the measure. Congress instructed the new commission to be guided by France in negotiating peace. Congress delivered the *coup de grace* on July 15, revoking Adams's commission to negotiate a commercial treaty with Great Britain.¹¹¹

Adams received his new commission on August 24, 1781, and saw the first sign of the decay that eventually came to all republics. On that day Adams concluded he could no longer count on the virtue of the American people. The instructions were both a personal insult and a dereliction of duty. They were a symbol of Congress's abandonment of its agents comparable to its lack of support for the winter camp at

¹¹¹ Stinchcombe, *French Alliance*. 153-154, 157-159, 162, 174.

Valley Forge.¹¹² In any case, Adams wrote Franklin, "I am very apprehensive that our new commission will be as useless as my old one." The optimism of 1776, based on a belief in American virtue, had faded, and after years of disappointment Adams warned his wife, "not to flatter yourself with hopes of Peace. There will be no such thing for several years."¹¹³ Not even the British surrender at Yorktown changed Adams's mood. "I congratulate you, on the glorious news contained in these dispatches," Adams wrote to Robert R. Livingston, the secretary of foreign affairs, "but I cannot be of your opinion, that, great as it is, it will defeat every hope that Britain entertains of conquering a country so defended."¹¹⁴ At best, Adams warned his wife, there would be no peace before 1784.¹¹⁵ He was thus surprised when on September 28, 1782, John Jay informed him that Great Britain was prepared to negotiate and that he should come to Paris.¹¹⁶

By the time Adams arrived in Paris, a war that had begun as a colonial rebellion had ballooned to involve several major

¹¹² Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 97-98; Howe, *Political Thought of JA*, 120; Royster, *Revolutionary People at War*, 190.

¹¹³ John Adams to Benjamin Franklin, Aug. 25, 1781, in *WJA*, 7:459; John Adams to Abigail Adams, Dec. 2, 1781, in *AFC*, 4:382.

¹¹⁴ John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, Feb. 19, 1782, in *WJA*, 7:513.

¹¹⁵ John Adams to Abigail Adams, Sept. 24, 1782, in *AFC*, 4:382.

¹¹⁶ Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 116.

European powers, whose war aims were not necessarily those of the United States. "The Political Machine that is now in Motion is so vast, and comprehends so many nations, whose Interests are not easy to adjust," Adams observed in 1780, "that it is perhaps impossible for human understanding to foresee what events might occur to disturb it."¹¹⁷ The United States wanted its independence and possession of all territory to the Mississippi River. France wanted American independence, as it would weaken Great Britain, but did not wish the United States to become so strong as to not need French aid, or become so large as to threaten Spanish interests. Spain naturally could not openly side with a colonial rebellion, but saw the war as an opportunity to retake Minorca and Gibraltar from Great Britain. The Dutch merely wished to trade and avoid destruction at the hands of the Royal Navy. By 1782 that machine had two differing effects: to divide the alliance and make the British more conciliatory. Jay and Franklin met with Vergennes on August 10. While Jay objected to the fact that the instructions of British peace negotiator Richard Oswald did not recognize American independence, Vergennes did not. Joseph-Matthias Gerard de Reyneval, an advisor to Vergennes, added that the American claim of the lands east of the Mississippi was extravagant, and Vergennes agreed. The meeting convinced Jay that the Americans might have to violate their

¹¹⁷ John Adams to Samuel Huntington, Dec. 6, 1780, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 101.

instructions and sign a separate peace.¹¹⁸ The earl of Shelburne, the British prime minister, was ready to give the Americans much of what they wanted. Great Britain had enough enemies and wanted to split the alliance. Shelburne believed the territory north of the Ohio River was lost. Better to give it to the Americans, who would continue to trade with Great Britain, than to France or Spain.¹¹⁹

Jay submitted a draft treaty on October 5. It called for recognition of American independence and British evacuation of American territory. It set American boundaries at the Mississippi on the west, 31 degrees north latitude on the south, the St. Lawrence River and 45 degrees north latitude on the northwest, and the St. John's River to the Bay of Fundy on the northeast. The draft gave the United States the right to catch and dry fish off Newfoundland, and granted the United States and Great Britain free navigation of the Mississippi. Oswald approved of the treaty, but the British cabinet rejected it on October 17. The cabinet wanted to exclude the Americans from the fisheries, establish a Maine boundary more advantageous to Great Britain, and make some provision for American Tories.¹²⁰

John Adams arrived in Paris on October 26. He was still suspicious of Franklin, but discovered that Jay, previously

¹¹⁸ Morris, *Peacemakers*, 307-310.

¹¹⁹ Dull, *Diplomatic History*, 145-147.

¹²⁰ Morris, *Peacemakers*, 346-350.

connected with the pro-Deane moderates, was now fully anti-French. "Mr. Jay likes Frenchmen as little as Mr. Lee and Mr. Izard did," Adams noted with some satisfaction in his diary. "Our Allies dont play fair, he told me."¹²¹ Adams joined the negotiations on October 30, and sessions ran daily until November 4 when Great Britain accepted the western and southern boundaries that Jay proposed and both sides agreed on the St. Croix rather than the St. John's River as the Maine boundary. They could not agree on which of the three St. Croix Rivers, however. Adams offered in a partial concession to have Americans pay debts they incurred to Britons before 1775. Adams also proposed an article granting the Americans the right to fish off Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.¹²²

Fish and Tories remained the sticking points. By November 11, the British had accepted the loss of the Northwest and were willing to exclude the most outspoken American Tories from compensation for lands the rebels seized, but still the British insisted on compensation for neutrals. Adams opposed any compensation, fearing that it would create British and French parties in the United States. The British watered down their demand for compensation to an official request, to which the Americans agreed.¹²³

¹²¹ Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 117-119; Diary entry, Nov. 5, 1782, in *DAJA*, 3:46-47.

¹²² Morris, *Peacemakers*, 361-363; Diary entry, Nov. 4, 1782, in *DAJA*, 3:45-46.

¹²³ Morris, *Peacemakers*, 367-369, 372-373.

The last sessions began on November 25. The fisheries, perhaps the main reason John Adams was in Europe, remained the final problem. Adams, of course, was long familiar with the issue. "My Practice as a Barrister in the Counties of Essex Plymouth and Barnstable had introduced me to more Knowledge both of the Cod and the whole fisheries and their importance both to the commerce and the Naval Power of this Country than any other man possessed," Adams wrote in his autobiography.¹²⁴ Adams connected access to the fisheries to the survival of republican government in two ways. First, both the origins of the republic and its right to the fisheries rested on the same principles of natural law. Second, Adams believed that the United States was destined to be a great naval power and, like the Opposition writers before him, he believed that the fisheries formed the training ground for the sailors who would defend the republic. For the next three days, Adams defended American rights to the fisheries the same way that he gave advice to Vergennes -- he buried Oswald in an avalanche of fact and argument. He also lavishly added his opinions on what was in Britain's interest. Adams's main point was that acknowledging the United States' rights to the fisheries was safer for Britain than making concessions to France. The fisheries were a training ground for sailors. Was it not safer, he asked, to allow the United States to add to its tiny navy than the French to theirs? Since the fisheries were a

¹²⁴ *DAJA*, 4:5.

source of great profit, moreover, if the Americans shared in the fisheries, much of their profits would end up in London in trade. Could the British expect the same from the French? The fisheries were a potential source of naval conflict. Would it not be better to remove sources of Anglo-American conflict than to drive the Americans closer to France?¹²⁵ Adams presented a draft article on November 28 that gave the United States the right to fish on the Grand Banks and wherever else Americans traditionally fished. Americans would also have the liberty to dry fish on Cape Sable and the unsettled parts of Nova Scotia.¹²⁶

Adams turned the pressure up a notch on November 29, claiming a natural, if not a divine right, to the fisheries. "When God Almighty made the Banks of Newfoundland at 300 Leagues Distance from the People of America and at 600 Leagues distance from those of France and England, did he not give as good a Right to the former as to the latter," Adams thundered at Oswald. "If Heaven in the Creation gave a Right, it is ours as much as yours. If Occupation, Use, and Possession give a Right, We have it as clearly as you." Allyne Fitzherbert, Oswald's secretary, conceded the point, but saw no way around Oswald's instructions, which prohibited any such agreement. Adams vowed that he would never sign a peace that kept the Americans out of the fisheries and Henry Laurens and John Jay

¹²⁵ Diary entry, Nov. 25, 1782, *ibid.*, 3:72-74.

¹²⁶ Morris, *Peacemakers*, 376.

quickly agreed.¹²⁷ Oswald realized that the negotiations had come too far to collapse over the fisheries. He proposed reducing the Americans' claimed "right" to the coastal fisheries to a "liberty," and yielded on drying privileges but only in uninhabited areas. The Americans agreed to the compromise, and signed the Provisional Treaty on November 30, 1782.¹²⁸

Adams was pleased with the treaty, even though the American commissioners had to violate their instructions to obtain it. "The great Interests of our Country in the West and in the East are secured, as well as her independence. St. Croix is the boundary against Nova Scotia. The Fisheries are very safe, the Mississippi and the Western Lands to the middle of the Great Lakes are as well secured to Us as they could be by England," Adams wrote to James Warren. "All these Advantages we could not have obtained if we had literally pursued our Instructions."¹²⁹ Adams also acknowledged that the treaty was mainly the work of John Jay. Although the French had called Adams the "Washington of Negotiation," Adams wrote in his diary, that title belonged to Jay.¹³⁰

The treaty presented Congress with an embarrassing

¹²⁷ Diary entry, Nov. 29, 1782, in *DAJA*, 3:79-81.

¹²⁸ Morris, *Peacemakers*, 377-381.

¹²⁹ John Adams to James Warren, Dec. 12, 1782, in *Warren Adams Letters*, 2 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections*, 1917-1925), 2:186.

¹³⁰ Diary entry, Nov. 30, 1782, *DAJA*, 3:85.

problem. It could not repudiate a treaty that met and even exceeded Congress's demands. Neither could Congress ignore the fact that the commissioners openly violated their instructions. Robert R. Livingston sent a letter to the commissioners on March 25, 1783, praising the treaty but criticizing the commissioners for not consulting the French.¹³¹

The commissioners defended their stroke for independence in violation of their June 15, 1781 instructions. "Since we have assumed a Place in the Political System of the World," they averred "let us move like a Primary and not a Secondary Planet."¹³² In his diary and private correspondence, however, Adams was far more bitter. "Congress will not cutt off our Heads for making Peace, and that is some comfort," he wrote sarcastically to his wife. Adams blamed congressional weakness for preventing a commercial treaty. "It is a Glory to have broken such infamous Orders," Adams wrote in his diary.¹³³

The Americans had hoped for better terms, particularly regarding American trade with the British West Indies, in the

¹³¹ Robert R. Livingston to the Peace Commissioners, March 25, 1783, in *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, 6:338-340.

¹³² John Jay, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, July 18, 1783, in John Jay, *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, 4 vols. Henry P. Johnston, ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1890-1894), 2:556.

¹³³ John Adams to Abigail Adams, July 9, 1783 and Feb. 17, 1783, in *AFC*, 5:198, 102; Diary entry, Feb. 18, 1783, *DAJA*, 3:108.

final treaty. "The commerce of the West Indies is part of the American system of commerce," Adams wrote to Secretary Livingston, "They can neither do without us, nor us without them."¹³⁴ However, the British would make no further concessions to the Americans. The Provisional Treaty brought down the Shelburne ministry. The succeeding government, under Lord North and Charles James Fox, appointed David Hartley as Oswald's replacement. Although Hartley favored a treaty granting the Americans extensive privileges in the West Indies, neither the new government nor British public opinion would approve such a treaty. An Order-in-Council issued on July 2, 1783, excluded American ships from the British West Indies. The order essentially ended negotiations. Adams himself left soon afterward to negotiate loans in the Netherlands. Adams returned in mid-August, and with Franklin, Jay and Hartley, signed a final treaty that repeated the terms of the November 30, 1782, provisional treaty. On September 3, 1783, the negotiators read the November 30, 1782, agreement into a general peace settlement, ending the war.¹³⁵ "Ours is a Simple Repetition of the provisional Treaty," Adams wrote his wife, "So we have negotiated here, these Six Months for

¹³⁴ John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, June 23, 1783, in *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, 6:500.

¹³⁵ Bemis, *Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 249-250; Dull, *Diplomatic History*, 159-160.

nothing."¹³⁶

Having spent five years in Europe, and eight years involved in the formation of American foreign policy, John Adams believed as firmly as ever that the survival of republican government in the United States depended on a balance of power in Europe and limited political contact between America and that continent. Diplomatic experience therefore confirmed for him many English Opposition theories on foreign policy and strengthened his conviction that the United States was well rid of any political connection with Europe. "For my own Part I thought America had been long enough involved in the Wars of Europe. She had been a Football from the Beginning, and it was easy to see that France and England both would endeavour to involve Us in their future Wars," Adams wrote in his diary. "I thought [it] our interest and Duty to avoid [them] as much as possible and to be completely independent and have nothing to do but in Commerce with either of them."¹³⁷ Adams hoped to expand commercial connections all over Europe in order to avoid dependence on France.¹³⁸ Only by an impartial conduct toward all nations could the United States preserve the balance of power. "If We

¹³⁶ John Adams to Abigail Adams, Sept. 4, 1783, in *AFC*, 5:233.

¹³⁷ Diary entry, Nov. 11, 1782, *DAJA*, 3:52; Adams wrote a similar letter to Robert R. Livingston on the same day, *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, 5:877-878.

¹³⁸ John Adams to Thomas Mifflin, Sept. 5, 1783, in *WJA*, 8:146.

give exclusive privileges in Trade, or form perpetual Alliances offensive and defensive with the Powers in one Scale," he warned James Warren, "We infallibly make enemies of those in the other." Adams argued in his diary that "it was not in our interest to hurt Great Britain any further than was necessary to support our Independence and our Alliances."¹³⁹

However, Adams came to believe that republican theory did not, and perhaps should not, dictate diplomatic style. "It may be said that Virtue, that is Morality applied to the Public is the Rule of Conduct in Republicks, and not Honor," Adams wrote his wife; "True. But American Ministers are acting in Monarchies, and not Republicks."¹⁴⁰ This opinion was a subtle but significant shift in Adams's thought. He did not follow it to the logical conclusion that Franklin had been right about how to approach the French. In later diplomacy, however, particularly during the Quasi-War with France, Adams accepted European practices that he did not accept in 1777.

Adams continued to believe that foreign policy was a crucial test of republican government and that it was a test the United States was in danger of failing. Adams told Robert R. Livingston that the United States would have to strengthen the confederation or "Great Britain will take advantage of it

¹³⁹ Hutson, *JA and Diplomacy of Revolution*, 142-143; John Adams to James Warren, March 20, 1783, in *Warren-Adams Letters*, 2:142; Diary entry, April 30, 1783, *DAJA*, 3:115-116.

¹⁴⁰ John Adams to Abigail Adams, Feb. 27, 1783, in *AFC*, 5:103.

in such a manner as will endanger our peace, our safety, and even our very existence."¹⁴¹ In a letter to Elbridge Gerry on the day of the signing of the final treaty, Adams outlined what American policy should be. The United States should protect the liberties of its citizens and strengthen the confederation. It should depend on Europe for nothing, send ministers that could be trusted and support them to the fullest.¹⁴² Adams's program still, to a certain extent, depended on the republican virtue of the American people. The events of the 1780s revealed how much and how little virtue remained and led Adams to rethink the basis for republican government. As during the revolution, the conduct of foreign policy played a key role in that rethinking.

¹⁴¹ John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, July 16, 1783, in *WJA*, 8:103.

¹⁴² John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Sept. 3, 1783, in *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, 6:667-670.

CHAPTER 3: THE DISILLUSIONING OF A REPUBLICAN

Republican government in the United States had survived the war, but it faced a far more difficult task in surviving the peace. Without an external threat -- although several loomed internationally -- support for the central government under the Articles of Confederation collapsed. For John Adams, the decade after the end of the American Revolution was the shakedown cruise of American republicanism, revealing weaknesses in both the ship and its crew. By the end of the decade, John Adams had lost two key illusions at the center of the system of diplomacy he advocated during the revolution. First, he came to see that the American people were not more virtuous than any other people. He began to doubt American virtue in 1781 and lost all faith in it by 1787. Failures in diplomacy, specifically failure to combat British trade restrictions, contributed to his disillusionment. The second illusion, which Adams held throughout the revolution, was that the United States could use trade to manipulate the European balance of power. Balanced government, as in 1776, was the solution to a lack of virtue. By the 1780s Adams saw balanced government as a replacement for the virtue that Americans did not possess. Such a belief mirrored Adams's view of diplomacy,

in which he expected balance, rather than virtue, to restrain nations. In diplomacy, Adams fell back on the republican *realpolitik* of the English Opposition school; a neutrality from European politics and aloofness from the balance of power defended by a navy.

Since 1776, Adams based his diplomacy on the premise that all nations would open trade with the United States because it was in their interest to do so. Adams, like most Americans, tended to view British interest in terms of American interests and expected the two to coincide and prompt Great Britain to allow the United States back into the West Indian trade as if no war had occurred. Chancellor of the Exchequer William Pitt was prepared to offer such trade, until a severe nationalist backlash in Parliament, bent on punishing the United States for its independence, forced the Fox-North ministry to act otherwise. On July 2, 1783, the Privy Council approved an order barring American ships from the British West Indian trade. The normally powerful West Indian lobby, who like the United States favored a quick return to business as usual, assumed the measure was temporary and did not protest.¹ The order became permanent with the Limiting Act of 1788. British shipping replaced American ships in the West Indian carrying

¹ Frederick W. Marks, III, *Independence on Trial: Foreign Affairs and the Making of the Constitution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 54-56; Charles R. Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy toward the United States 1783-1795* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969), 6-9.

trade, and the British government groomed Nova Scotia as the new focal point of trade.² To John Adams, the new policy sacrificed British interest to wounded pride. "The liberal sentiments in England, respecting the trade, are all lost for the present," Adams warned Secretary Livingston. When Adams learned of the Order-in-Council passed on July 2, 1783, he wrote Livingston that "a jealousy of American ships, seamen, carrying trade, and naval power, appears every day more and more conspicuous." Four days later Adams added that "the present ministry swerve more and more from the true system, for the prosperity of their country and ours."³

British policy was most clearly explained in the earl of Sheffield's *Observations on the Commerce of the American States*, which appeared just before the July 2 Orders-in-Council. Sheffield's pamphlet reflected the resumption of British West India policy since 1651, and set policy for the next 50 years. Sheffield first reminded his readers of the outcome of the American Revolution, writing that, "it is in the light of a foreign country that America must henceforth be

² S. Basedo and H. Robertson, "The Nova Scotia-British West Indies Commercial Experiment in the Aftermath of the American Revolution, 1783-1802," *Dalhousie Review*, Vol. 61 no. 1 (Spring 1981), 53-54; Herbert C. Bell, "British Commercial Policy in the West Indies, 1783-1793," *English Historical Review* Vol. 31 no. 123 (July 1916), 440.

³ John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, July 9, 14 and 18, 1783, in *WJA*, 8:86, 97, 107.

viewed."⁴ To preserve British shipping, and the rest of the empire, the Americans could not be allowed back into the West Indies. Great Britain could not allow American shipping into the West Indies without destroying its own. Sheffield advocated developing Nova Scotia and Newfoundland as substitute granaries, and using only British ships to carry the merchandise. "Rather than give up the carrying trade of our islands, surely it would be better to give up the islands themselves," Sheffield wrote. "It is the advantage to our navigation which in any degree, countervails the enormous expense of their protection."⁵ Great Britain did not have to make any concessions to win American trade. Sheffield believed that "British manufactures will for ages ascend the great rivers of that continent."⁶ In the end, the United States could do nothing to influence British policy. "It will not be an easy matter to bring the American States to act as a nation," Sheffield argued, "they are not to be feared as such by us."⁷

Exclusion from the British West Indian trade was only the beginning of the United States' diplomatic problems. From the end of the war the United States were surrounded by

⁴ John Holroyd, earl of Sheffield, *Observations on the Commerce of the American States*, rev. ed. [1784] (New York: August M. Kelley, 1970), 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 59-60, 86, 174-175, 152.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

troublesome if not hostile nations. Great Britain refused to evacuate the northwestern forts or sign a commercial treaty as long as pre-war debts went unpaid. In addition, Great Britain kept a hand in the Northwest through missionary work and contact with Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant. Spain supported Creek Chief Alexander McGillivray in the Southwest, and closed the lower Mississippi to American shipping in 1784. The 1778 commercial treaty with France was of little use in replacing British commerce. On August 30, 1784, France shut all foreigners out of the French West Indian trade. Furthermore, France did not produce the sort of tools and textiles that American consumers preferred, and Americans desired to return to pre-war patterns of trade.⁸ Congress's failure to meet its financial commitments abroad was already taking its toll on the United States's international reputation. Adams observed that by early 1784, American credit in the Netherlands was, "dead, never to rise again, at least until the United States shall agree on some plan of revenue, and make it certain that interest and principle will be paid."⁹

As minister to Great Britain, John Adams endured the

⁸ Marks, *Independence on Trial*, 10-14, 19-24; Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 49-52; Vernon G. Setser, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy of the United States 1774-1829* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937), 86-89; Doron S. Ben-Atar, *The Origins of Jeffersonian Commercial Diplomacy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 70-71.

⁹ John Adams to Benjamin Franklin, Jan. 24, 1784, in *WJA*, 8:171.

highest level of diplomatic frustration in Europe. Adams had two goals to his mission; to sign a commercial treaty and to ensure British adherence to the peace treaty, especially regarding British evacuation of the northwestern forts. Adams expected that the British anger that blocked a commercial treaty in 1783 would still shape British policy. "The popular pulse seems to beat high against America," Adams observed early in the mission. "The people are deceived by numerous falsehoods industriously circulated in the gazettes and in conversation, so that there is much reason to believe that, if this nation had another hundred millions to spend, they would soon force this ministry into a war against us."¹⁰ Adams's first meeting with the foreign secretary, Lord Carmaerthen, on June 17, 1785 set the tone for Adams's three-year mission. Adams brought up British violations of the peace treaty and Carmaerthen responded with complaints about American violations, specifically interference with the collection of pre-war debts and the return of confiscated estates.¹¹

Adams's hope of signing a commercial treaty soon vanished. Adams wrote to Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Jay on June 26 that "we shall have no treaty of commerce until this nation is made to feel the necessity of it."¹² A little

¹⁰ John Adams to John Jay, July 19, 1785, *ibid.*, 8:282.

¹¹ Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 42; John Adams to John Jay, June 17, 1785, in *WJA*, 8:269-271.

¹² John Adams to John Jay, June 26, 1785, *ibid.*, 8:274.

over a month later Adams reported that "the boast is that our commerce has returned to its old channels, and that it can follow no other." Adams believed that British policy was rooted in the fear that a trade treaty would build American maritime power at Britain's expense.¹³ "This nation is strangely blinded by prejudice and passion," Adams wrote in November. Although Adams was mistaken in seeing British policy as rooted in anger rather than interest, he was correct in believing that maritime power was the central issue.¹⁴ Adams gave up on a commercial treaty in December 1785, informing Jay that the king and ministry were completely committed to the present navigation system and had no fear of American retaliation.¹⁵

Adams believed that the United States had justice on their side in pursuing a commercial treaty. The issue of violations of the peace treaty was not as clear cut, as both sides were in the wrong. Whenever Adams asked when the British planned on evacuating the forts, the British responded by asking when pre-war debts would be paid. Adams met with William Pitt on August 24, 1785, and the prime minister told him that the problems of the debts and posts were linked and would have to be solved together. Adams met with Carmarthen

¹³ John Adams to John Jay, Aug. 6, 1785, *ibid.*, 8:289-290.

¹⁴ John Adams to John Jay, Nov. 4, 1785, *ibid.*, 8:337; Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 17.

¹⁵ John Adams to John Jay, Dec. 3, 1785, in *WJA*, 8:350-356.

on October 20, when the foreign secretary informed him that nothing could be done regarding the posts until the debts had been repaid. Adams protested that the treaty did not require that the debts be paid, only that the United States place no legal impediments on their collection.¹⁶ The distinction was for all practical purposes meaningless. On February 26, 1786, Lord Carmaerthen presented Adams with a report showing that, although Congress had not, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia had all passed laws interfering with the collection of debts. Secretary Jay conducted his own study and concluded that "there has not been a single day since it [the peace treaty] took effect, on which it has not been violated in America, by one or other of the States."¹⁷ Adams believed that the British used the debt issue merely as a pretext to hold the forts; yet it was a pretext that the United States had provided. He criticized Massachusetts action against debt collection as "a direct Breach of the Treaty."¹⁸

Adams had no answer for British complaints about debt

¹⁶ John Adams to John Jay, Aug. 25 and Oct. 21, 1785, *ibid.*, 8:303, 326-327.

¹⁷ Lord Carmaerthen to John Adams, Feb. 28, 1786, in *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-1789*, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Blair and Rives, 1837), 2:581-591; John Jay to John Adams, Nov. 1, 1786, in *Jay, Correspondence*, 3:214.

¹⁸ John Adams to John Jay, May 25, 1786, in *WJA*, 8:394-396; John Adams to Cotton Tufts, May 20, 1786, *Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers*, reel 368; Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 63-67, 77-78.

collection, as the Americans themselves were at fault and the states would continue to act independently unless the confederation government was strengthened. "Our Federal Government is incompetent to its objects," Jay warned Adams. In turn, Adams wrote Jay that "it is now with the states to determine whether there is or is not a union in America. If there is they may easily make themselves respected in Europe, if there is not, they will be little regarded."¹⁹

Adams saw the Eden Treaty, concluded between Great Britain and France on September 26, 1786, as further evidence that the United States were little respected in Europe. The treaty granted each nation most-favored nation status in Europe. Both France and Britain hoped the treaty would encourage trade and ease domestic fiscal problems.²⁰ Since 1782, Adams had argued that American trade was more valuable to Britain than French trade, and could not believe that the Eden Treaty was economically motivated. In reality, it was a hostile move against the United States. "The time may not be far distant, however, when we may see a combination of England with the house of Bourbon against the United States," Adams

¹⁹ John Jay to John Adams, Oct. 14, 1785, in *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 2:420; John Adams to John Jay, Dec. 6, 1785, in *WJA*, 8:356.

²⁰ Jeremy Black, *British foreign policy in an age of revolution, 1783-1993* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 111; W.O. Henderson, "The Anglo-French Commercial treaty of 1786." *The Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, Vol. 10 no. 1 (August 1957), 105-106.

warned Jay.²¹ Adams expected no settlement with Great Britain concerning the posts, and told Jay that the United States "had never more reason to be upon their guard." Before his departure in 1788, Adams observed that he, and by extension his nation, had been treated with "dry decency and cold civility."²²

What was to be done? The first order of business was to abandon one of the key assumptions of the plan of 1776, that the United States could use national interest, which John Adams defined as European desire for American trade, to manipulate the European diplomatic system to work in the interest of the United States. Adams believed that the promise of trade would shield the United States from the effects of European diplomacy. His vision of free trade assumed that American navigation as well as agriculture would be protected. Yet no one nation could carry out a policy of free trade in a mercantile world. "We have hitherto been the bubbles of our own philosophical and equitable liberality," Adams warned John Jay in August 1785. Six months later Adams issued a direct attack on the French Physiocrats, writing to Jay that a policy of free trade would eliminate the need for diplomacy. That would not be the only effect. "The consequence nevertheless would be the sudden annihilation of all their manufactures and

²¹ John Adams to John Jay, Oct. 27, 1786, in *WJA*, 8:416.

²² John Adams to John Jay, Nov. 30, 1787 and Feb. 14, 1788, *ibid.*, 8:463-464, 476.

navigation," Adams continued. "We should have the most luxurious set of farmers that ever existed, and should not be able to defend ourselves against the insults of a pirate."²³

"I hope our Countrymen will learn Wisdom, be frugal, encourage their own Navigation and Manufactures and Search the Globe for a Substitute for British Commerce," Adams wrote his son.²⁴ Wisdom, to Adams, clearly meant building a navy, the politically safest method of protection, and passing commercial legislation to match British policy. Adams wrote the marquis de Lafayette that "our Timber and Masts will very soon, vindicate themselves from all English slanders." "The United States have nothing to do but go on with their Navigation Acts," Adams advised Rufus King.²⁵ Furthermore, as the French had been no more friendly than the British to American shipping, Adams advocated a strict neutrality.²⁶ Adams cheered congressional attempts to pass an impost aimed at British ships, writing that such a measure would "instantly

²³ Clarfield, "John Adams: The Marketplace and American Foreign Policy," 345-347; Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address*, 65-66; John Adams to John Jay, Aug. 10, 1785 and Feb. 26, 1786, in *WJA*, 8:299, 380-381.

²⁴ John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Sept. 9, 1785, in *AFC*, 6:355.

²⁵ John Adams to the Marquis de Lafayette, Jan. 21, 1786, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 113; John Adams to Rufus King, Feb. 14, 1786, in Rufus King, *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, 6 vols. Charles R. King, ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1894-1900), 1:161.

²⁶ John Adams to Samuel Adams, Jan. 26, 1786, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 113.

raise the United States in the consideration of Europe, and especially England."²⁷

Adams believed that the states should act if Congress did not. In June of 1785, Massachusetts passed a navigation act which prohibited exports in foreign bottoms after August 1, levied tonnage duties and tariffs on nations with no commercial treaty with the United States, and restricted foreign trade to Boston, Falmouth and Dartmouth. Adams fully approved of the act and hoped other states would copy it. "Go on," Adams urged his brother-in-law Richard Cranch. "Lay on heavy Duties upon all foreign Luxuries especially British and give ample Bounties to your own Manufactures. You will of course, continue to do all these Things upon the condition to continue in force only untill they shall be altered by a Treaty of Commerce, or an Ordinance of Congress."²⁸

Congress could not and did not follow the example of Massachusetts, and by 1789 Great Britain controlled 60 percent of the American foreign trade.²⁹ For Adams, failure to strengthen the national government and stand up to Great Britain showed the same lack of national character that led Congress to give France control of the peace negotiations. If

²⁷ John Adams to John Jay, May 16, 1786, in *WJA*, 8:391.

²⁸ Van Beck Hall, *Politics without Parties: Massachusetts Politics 1780-1791* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 123-125; John Adams to Richard Cranch, Aug. 22, 1785, in *AFC*, 6:294.

²⁹ Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 129.

John Adams had any faith in American virtue after 1781, it was gone by 1788.³⁰

Shays's Rebellion was one more symptom of American decline. "To talk of liberty in such a state of things!" Adams exploded. "Is not a Shattuck or a Shays as great a tyrant, when he would pluck up law and justice by the roots, as a [Governor Francis] Bernard or a [Governor Thomas] Hutchinson, when he would overturn them partially?"³¹ Adams's political intimates warned him of moral decay at home. "I fear we are already too far advanced in every species of Luxury to Recede," Mercy Otis Warren wrote.³² On the tenth anniversary of independence Adams himself wrote that the United States had passed from their youth to an early decline. Adams observed that the United States had failed to carry out their end of the 1783 peace treaty or made any move to defend themselves against British commercial attacks. "Our Country is grown, or at least it has been dishonest," Adams lamented to a family friend. "She has broke her faith with Nations & with her own Citizens."³³

Adams's frustrations in London brought him to a final

³⁰ Howe, *Political Thought of JA*, 106-107, 125-126, 130-131, 152-153.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 133-134; John Adams to Benjamin Hichborn, Jan. 27, 1787, in *WJA*, 9:551.

³² Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, April 27, 1785, in *Warren-Adams Letters*, 2:252.

³³ John Adams to Cotton Tufts, July 4, 1786, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 386.

disillusion regarding the virtue of the American people. Adams believed that the United States could not have declined from the height of virtue to the depths of depravity in only ten years. Therefore, the Americans could not have been especially virtuous to begin with. As Adams had suspected in 1776, the war created virtues the Americans would not always possess. Whatever Americans were, Adams concluded, they were not Spartans, and perhaps that was for the better. "It is most certain that our Countrymen, are not and never were, Spartans in their Contempt of Wealth, and I will go farther and say they ought not to be," Adams wrote to James Warren. "Such a Trait in their character would render them lazy Drones, unfit for the Agriculture Manufactures Fisheries, and Commerce, and Population of their Country; and fit only for War."³⁴ This admission resolved the contradiction of holding a political belief that feared commerce and pursuing a foreign policy that encouraged it. Adams was fully capable of portraying the United States as a simple agrarian nation to Europeans who might be threatened by a commercial and manufacturing nation. "Agriculture ever Was, and ever will be the dominant interest in America," Adams wrote to a Dutch sympathizer in 1780.³⁵

³⁴ McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 71-72; Wood, *Creation*, 104; John Adams to James Warren, July 4, 1786, in *Warren-Adams Letters*, 2:277.

³⁵ John Adams to Hendrik Calkoen, Oct. 27, 1780, in *WJA*, 7:309. See also to John Luzac, Sept. 15, 1780, *ibid.*, 7:255, and John Adams to the Comte de Vergennes, July 26, 1780, in C.F. Adams, *Life of JA*, 1:460.

Adams needed look no further than his native New England and its diversified economy to see the future course of economic development. "Agriculture, Manufactures and Commerce with one another will soon make us flourish," Adams wrote in 1786.³⁶ In the mid-1780s Adams moved the "Spirit of Commerce" from the fringe of his political philosophy, as a side effect of liberty mitigated by a balanced constitution, to the center, as the mainspring of human action, to be channelled for the good of all in a balanced government. Luxury was a part of the American future, and American thinkers had to fit it into their systems of republican government. "It is in vain, then to amuse ourselves with the thought of annihilating commerce, unless as philosophical speculations," Adams wrote to John Jay. "We are to consider men and things as practical statesmen, and to consider who our constituents are and what they expect of us."³⁷

Adams's three-volume work, *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, appeared in 1787 and 1788 and represents his attempt to come to terms with a republic not founded on virtue. Adams intended to defend balanced government in response to the French philosopher Anne Robert Turgot, who attacked the Americans for copying British

³⁶ John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British North America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 92; John Adams to Rufus King, June 14, 1786, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 113.

³⁷ McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 97-100; Wood, *Creation*, 569-574; John Adams to John Jay, Dec. 6, 1785, in *WJA*, 8:357.

forms too closely. Adams went beyond this goal, moving into an analysis of human motivation as well.³⁸ J. G. A. Pocock has called Adams's *Defence of the Constitutions* the last major work of classical republicanism.³⁹ From the beginning, however, Adams noticed the gap between the classical and modern worlds. "The inventions in the mechanic arts, the discoveries in natural philosophy, navigation and commerce, and the advancement of civilization and humanity," Adams wrote, "have occasioned changes in the condition of the world, and the human character, which would have astonished the most refined nations of antiquity."⁴⁰ "The love of poverty is a fictitious virtue, that never existed," Adams wrote later in the work, adding that, "frugality . . . is admired and esteemed more than beloved."⁴¹ A free people was inevitably drawn to luxury. "In a country like America, where the means and opportunities for luxury are so easy and so plenty," Adams wrote, "it would be madness not to expect it, be prepared for it, and provide against the dangers of it in the constitution."⁴² With a balanced constitution at home, Adams could fully accept a diplomacy centered on commerce.

³⁸ Anne Robert Turgot to Richard Price, March 22, 1778, in *WJA*, 4:278-281.

³⁹ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 526.

⁴⁰ "Defence of the Constitutions," Vol. 1, in *WJA*, 4:283.

⁴¹ "Defence," Vol. 2 and Vol. 3, *ibid.*, 5:289, 6:209.

⁴² "Defence," Vol. 3, *ibid.*, 6:95-96.

The love of distinction was another theme in Adams's book. "Every man hates to have a superior, but no man is willing to have an equal," Adams wrote, "every man desires to be superior to all others."⁴³ Natural inequalities in wealth, ability, appearance, intelligence and the like, led some to seek social or legal distinction. Americans were as likely to seek honors and awards as Europeans. "Are there not distinctions as earnestly desired and sought, as titles, garters, and ribbons are in any nation in Europe," Adams asked. "We may look as wise, and moralize as gravely as we will; we may call this desire of distinction childish and silly," Adams wrote, "but we cannot alter the nature of man; human nature is thus childish and silly."⁴⁴

"It is weakness, rather than wickedness, which renders men unfit to be entrusted with unlimited power," Adams argued, and this belief led Adams to reject Turgot's model of a government in a single assembly, and argue for a balanced government.⁴⁵ In a republic governed by a single assembly, aristocrats or those who aimed at aristocracy would either destroy or be destroyed by the commons. The result would be, "*no order, no safety, no liberty, because no government of law.*"⁴⁶ Similarly, a single popular assembly was incompetent

⁴³ "Defence," Vol. 3, *ibid.*, 6:209.

⁴⁴ "Defence," Vol. 1 and Vol. 3, *ibid.*, 4:391-392, 6:488.

⁴⁵ "Defence," Vol. 1, *ibid.*, 4:406.

⁴⁶ "Defence," Vol. 2, *ibid.*, 5:288-289.

to exercise executive power. "When a popular assembly or a senate have the management of the executive power, disputes forever arise concerning every step in foreign affairs, and discords and factions have full play."⁴⁷ A balanced constitution was the only solution. "A constitution formed upon the nature of man, and providing against his discontented temper instead of trusting to what is not in him (his moderation and contentment in power) may preserve union, harmony, and tranquility, better than any despotism," Adams argued.⁴⁸

In surveying the historical wreckage of republican governments, Adams found two that worked; Great Britain and the United States. Adams's definition of a republic was fairly loose but typical. "A limited monarchy therefore, especially when limited by two independent branches, an aristocratical and a democratical power in the constitution, may with strict propriety be called by that name [republic]." Adams explained in 1814 that he used the word "monarch" in the strict sense of "one who rules." Montesquieu had used the same definition.⁴⁹ With a clear conscience, Adams could argue that the British constitution was, "both for the adjustment of the balance and the prevention of its vibrations, the most stupendous fabric

⁴⁷ "Defence," Vol. 2, *ibid.*, 5:69.

⁴⁸ "Defence," Vol. 2, *ibid.*, 5:89.

⁴⁹ "Defence," Vol. 2, *ibid.*, 4:296; John Adams to John Taylor of Caroline, Letter XIII, 1814, in *ibid.*, 6:173; Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 1:156.

of human invention; and that the Americans ought to be applauded instead of censured for imitating it as far as they have done." Adams went on to argue that the British constitution "has still preserved the power of the people by the equilibrium we are contending for, by the trial by jury, and by constantly refusing a standing army."⁵⁰ That is, Great Britain had prevented the tools of foreign policy from turning against domestic liberty. Of course, the American version of the balanced government differed from the British, especially regarding elected senates and executives. "Here they differ from the English constitution, and with great propriety," Adams wrote, adding that sovereignty "must reside in the whole body of the people."⁵¹ "In America, there are different orders of *officers*, but none of *men*," Adams observed.⁵²

The outward form of Adams's republicanism, as outlined in *Defence of the Constitutions* was not new. Adams had classified Great Britain as a republic in the "Novanglus" letters in 1775, and his conception of balanced government was central to "Thoughts on Government" in 1776 and the Massachusetts Constitution in 1780. Adams had previously discussed the use of medals and rewards to encourage virtue. The true change in

⁵⁰ "Defence," Vol. 1, in *WJA*, 4:358, 381-382.

⁵¹ "Defence," Vol. 1, *ibid.*, 4:359. Gordon Wood argues that "Adams could not understand that in America by 1787 the magistracy and senators had become somehow as representative of the people as the houses of representatives," *Creation*, 586.

⁵² "Defence," Vol. 1, in *WJA*, 4:380.

Adams's thought was in his view of the American people. Adams never had absolute faith in American virtue, but by 1787 his view of the American people had darkened. He concluded, based on the political and diplomatic failures of the 1780s that the Americans lacked classical republican virtue, and he shaped his conception of republicanism accordingly. In 1787 Adams formed a theory of republicanism around the reality of a non-Spartan American people. In doing so, he replaced classical virtue with the "Spirit of Commerce" he had attacked in 1776.⁵³ "The best republics will be virtuous, and have been so; but we may hazard a conjecture that the virtues have been the effect of a well-ordered constitution, rather than the cause," Adams wrote near the conclusion of his work. "And perhaps it would be impossible to prove that a republic cannot exist even among highwaymen, by setting one rogue to watch another; and the knaves themselves may in time be made honest men by the struggle."⁵⁴ When John Adams decided that virtue was not needed to found a republic, he left the classical world behind. The proper constitution may lead people into virtuous behavior, but one could not take classical virtue for granted. Adams scaled virtue down to mean support for balanced government.⁵⁵

Adams did not discuss diplomacy in *Defence of the*

⁵³ Howe, *Political Thought of JA*, 147.

⁵⁴ "Defence," Vol. 3 in *WJA*, 6:219.

⁵⁵ McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 188-199.

Constitutions. However, it is clear that Adams's mission to Great Britain played a significant role in his thinking. Adams had seen that nations, like men, lust after distinction, and are governed as much by pride as by interest, by emotion as by reason. His descriptions of human characteristics in *Defence of the Constitutions* and of British actions in his dispatches to Jay are strikingly similar. Adams had long accepted the idea that the clash of interests could create a common good where none existed as the organizing principle of diplomacy; it was a key assumption of the Model Treaty. Adams applied the principle as vigorously to domestic constitutions only later. The balance of power that controlled men, and channelled their energies, could also be used to control nations. Adams already believed that the international system set one rogue to watch another, with little hope of complete success. By 1787, diplomatic experience helped bring his political thought to the same conclusions.

Adams received a copy of the proposed federal Constitution in November 1787, and pronounced it "admirably calculated to preserve the Union, to increase Affection, and to bring us all to the same mode of thinking." Although Adams questioned the senate's involvement in executive power and the lack of a bill of rights, he welcomed ratification.⁵⁶ Adams wrote that the federal Constitution allowed him to conclude A

⁵⁶ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Nov. 10, 1787, in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 210.

Defence of the Constitutions, "with unexpected dignity."⁵⁷ In a more pessimistic moment, Adams suspected that the new Constitution was, "an attempt to divide a sovereignty; a fresh essay at *imperium in imperio*, which would prevent us for a time from drawing our swords," but would ultimately fail.⁵⁸ For the time being at least, the Constitution quelled any internal threats to republican government in the United States.

Adams took office as vice president in 1789, and soon found himself ill at ease presiding over the Senate. "I feel a great difficulty how to act," Adams told the Senate on April 25. "I am Vice President, in this I am nothing, but may be everything, but I am President also of the Senate."⁵⁹ Adams devoted his first month in office to the debate over the proper title for the president. Adams's preference for a royal-sounding title left him open to the charge of monarchism, but in reality Adams hoped to use titles to harness the desire for distinction in support of republican government and to gain the respect of other nations.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ "Defence," Vol. 3, in *WJA*, 6:219.

⁵⁸ John Adams to Richard Price, April 19, 1790, *ibid.*, 9:564; Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 98-99; Wood, *Creation*, 567-569, 581.

⁵⁹ William Maclay, diary entry, April 25, 1789, in Kenneth R. Bowling and Helen E. Veit, eds. *The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 6.

⁶⁰ James H. Hutson, "John Adams' Title Campaign." *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 41 no. 1 (March 1968), 35-37.

In Adams's view, republican government suffered from two difficulties; finding disinterested leaders and ensuring that those leaders would be respected abroad. Ideally, republican government would attract men who would serve solely from a sense of duty. By 1785, Adams believed that "although there are disinterested men, there are not enough in any age or any country to fill all the necessary offices."⁶¹ Furthermore, republican simplicity was lost on a diplomatic world of titled aristocrats. Adams learned this lesson doing battle with Vergennes. "It is etiquette that governs the World," Adams wrote to Benjamin Lincoln in 1789.⁶²

"The President [of the Senate] rose in the Chair & repeated twice , with more Joy in his face than I had ever seen him assume before," Senator William Maclay of Pennsylvania observed on May 7, "he hoped the Government would be supported with *dignity and Splendor*." The next day Adams "repeatedly helped the speakers for Titles."⁶³ On May 9, a Senate committee settled on "His Highness, the President of the United States, and Protector of Their Liberties" as the president's title. The Senate postponed consideration of the report on May 11. The House of Representatives refused to consider any titles, and within a few days the title campaign

⁶¹ John Adams to John Jebb, Aug. 21, 1785, in *WJA*, 9:535.

⁶² John Adams to Benjamin Lincoln, May 26, 1789, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 115.

⁶³ William Maclay, diary entry, May 7 and 8, 1789, in *Diary of Maclay*, 27-28.

ended in defeat.⁶⁴

For Adams, a suitable title for the president would solve the problems of disinterestedness and foreign respect. "Has the national Govt at this moment attractions enough to make a seat in it, an Object of desire, to the Men of greatest Fortune, Talents, Birth or Virtue?" Adams asked William Tudor. "If the People would give Titles or marks of Distinction, this would go a great Way."⁶⁵ A proper title would draw men to office without resorting to the promise of material gain that characterized the Walpolean system. A title would also place the American president on an equal footing with European heads of state. Adams believed that any European who read the federal Constitution would correctly conclude that the president possessed the powers of a limited monarch. As such, the title of "Majesty" was the minimum title needed to demonstrate national dignity.⁶⁶ That Adams was willing to adopt European diplomatic practice, such as titles, marked the end of any idea Adams had of a republican style of diplomacy.

Not long after Adams took office as vice-president, the United States faced an external problem that bore directly on the nature of republican government, the French Revolution. On May 4, 1789, the Estates-General met for the first time in 175

⁶⁴ Hutson, "Title Campaign," 32-33.

⁶⁵ John Adams to William Tudor, June 14, 1789, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 115.

⁶⁶ John Adams to William Tudor, June 28, 1789, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 115.

years, in an attempt to rebuild French finances. The Third Estate proposed that the three estates, commons, nobles and the clergy, meet together, giving the Third Estate the numerical advantage. The nobles responded by locking the Third Estate out of Versailles, forcing the Third Estate to meet in the tennis court and proclaim themselves the National Assembly of France. Revolt spread to the people at large, and on July 14 the Paris mob stormed the Bastille in a show of defiance to royal authority. On August 4, the National Assembly abolished the last vestiges of feudalism and cut ecclesiastical ties with Rome. On August 26 the National Assembly issued its "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen," which stated, among other things, that "men are born and remain free and equal in their rights."⁶⁷

Most Americans were initially sympathetic to the French Revolution. Vice-President Adams was not among them. He took one look at the National Assembly -- a government consisting of a unicameral legislature -- and concluded that the revolution was doomed to failure. "My opinion of the French Revolution has never varied from the first assembly of the Notables to this day," Adams wrote in 1805. "I always dreaded it and never had any faith in its success or ability."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Robert R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959-1964), 1:479-487.

⁶⁸ Edward Handler, *America and Europe in the Political Thought of John Adams* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), 4-5; John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Sept. 30,

Senator William Maclay noted that Adams despised all of the pamphlets written on the French Revolution, except for Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, "and this same Mr. Burke despises the French Revolution."⁶⁹

Adams had occasion to comment on the French Revolution in his last theoretical work on politics, *Discourses on Davila*, published in 1790 and 1791. It began as a critique of Henrico Davila's *History of the Civil Wars of France* but quickly became an exposition of Adams's two favorite political topics, the human desire for distinction and the need for balanced government to control it. "There is in human nature, it is true, simple *Benevolence*, or an affection for the good of others," Adams wrote, but alone it is not a balance for the selfish affections."⁷⁰ "As no appetite in human nature is more universal than that for honor, and real merit is confined to a very few," Adams continued, "the numbers who thirst for respect are all out of proportion to those who seek it only for merit."⁷¹ Nations were no different from individuals. "As long as there is patriotism, there will be national emulation, vanity and pride," Adams wrote, making no distinctions between republics and monarchies. "It is national pride which commonly

1805, in *Old Family Letters*, 82.

⁶⁹William Maclay, diary entry, April 27, 1790, *Diary of Maclay*, 254.

⁷⁰ "Discourses on Davila," in *WJA*, 6:324.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 250.

stimulates kings and ministers."⁷²

Having restated the basic tenets of his political philosophy, Adams went on to consider the progress of the French Revolution. "We are told that our friends the National Assembly of France have abolished all distinctions," he wrote. "But be not deceived, my dear countrymen. Impossibilities cannot be performed."⁷³ A government in a single assembly was doomed to end in tyranny, Adams argued, and he praised Americans for establishing a balanced government instead of resorting to "whimsical and fantastical projects."⁷⁴ "If the people have not the understanding and public virtue enough, and will not be persuaded of the necessity of supporting an independent executive authority, an independent senate, and an independent judiciary power, as well as an independent house of representatives," Adams concluded, "all pretensions to balance are lost, and with them all hopes of security to our dearest, and all hopes of liberty."⁷⁵

The French Revolution soon became a more immediate influence in American politics. The Girondins, young and idealistic republicans, came to dominate the National Convention, and abolished the monarchy on September 22, 1792. The National Convention executed Louis XVI on January 21,

⁷² *Ibid.*, 257.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 273, 276.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 399.

1793, as punishment for his attempted flight to Austria. On February 1, 1793, France declared war on Great Britain. The Girondins assumed they would have American support based on ideological sympathy and the 1778 treaties. On February 20, 1793, Edmond Genet set sail as the new republic's first minister to the United States. Genet's main goal was to bring the United States into the war against Great Britain, and he tried to stir up public support as a counter to the official neutrality of the Washington administration.⁷⁶

Adams was not among Genet's admirers. "A declamatory Style, a flittering, fluttery Imagination, an Ardour in his Temper, and a civil Deportment are all the Accomplishments or Qualifications I can find for his place," Adams wrote his wife.⁷⁷ More important, Adams approved of Washington's Proclamation of Neutrality and resisted any attempt to bring the United States into the war. Having renounced any ideological community with France in *Discourses on Davila*, Adams went on to deny any strategic connection. "A Neutrality absolute total neutrality is our only hope," Adams wrote to Tench Coxe. Circumstances absolved the United States of its obligations to defend the French West Indies. One could find

⁷⁶ R.R. Palmer, *Age of Democratic Revolution*, 2:36-44; Harry Ammon, *The Genet Mission* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973), 12-31, 44-45; Albert Hall Bowman, *The Struggle for Neutrality: Franco-American Revolution during the Federalist Era* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), 41-44.

⁷⁷ John Adams to Abigail Adams, Dec. 20, 1793, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 376.

justification in Vattel, but "reading is not necessary to instruct us what to do."⁷⁸

By 1793 John Adams's disillusionment was complete. He scaled public virtue down to mean no more than adherence to a balanced government at home and a strict neutrality abroad as the only way to preserve republican government. In neither case did Adams presume that the United States could reform the rest of the world through its actions. Adams embraced a republican *realpolitik*, first sketched out by English Opposition writers, based on naval power and political separation from Europe that would preserve the physical survival and republican constitution of the nation. The Wars of the French Revolution made neutrality all the more critical to the survival of the republic. This view was confirmed by Adams's long experience in diplomacy and formed the bedrock of his presidency.

⁷⁸ John Adams to Tench Coxe, April 25, 1793, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 116.

CHAPTER 4: THE BOLINGBROKEAN MOMENT

When John Adams became the second president of the United States in 1797, he had already spent more than thirty years in public life in a variety of roles. However, he had never served as a chief executive, and for him the president's role was a matter of theory rather than practice. Bolingbroke, especially his *Idea of a Patriot King*, served as Adams's guide. "I have read him [Bolingbroke], more than fifty years ago, and more than five times in my Life, and once within five Years past," Adams wrote in 1813.¹ Adams fully agreed that the executive should "espouse no party," and "govern like common father of his people."² Adams's debt to Bolingbroke on the desirability of presidential non-partisanship is generally acknowledged.³ However, Adams expanded Bolingbroke's

¹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Dec. 25, 1813, in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 410.

² Bolingbroke, *Patriot King*, 45-46.

³ Shaw, *Character of JA*, 247-248; Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents above Party: The First American Presidency, 1789-1829* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 94-97; Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 536-537; Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France, 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 4-6; Bruce Minhoff, "John Adams and the Presidency," in Thomas E. Cronin, ed., *Inventing*

teachings, reinforced by Adams's practical experience in foreign policy, to encompass a Bolingbrokean sense of foreign policy. John Adams's conduct of the Quasi-War was a successful attempt to apply Opposition Whig thought to diplomatic practice, in essence a Bolingbrokean moment. During the Quasi-War with France, Adams pursued a policy of strict neutrality combined with vigorous defense of American commerce, both enforced by the navy and executed by a president who stood above party. Such a policy, Adams believed, was the only way to preserve the republic.⁴

Adams, in recording the events of his inauguration day, noted the coming difficulties, and Washington's happiness at being rid of them. "He seemed to me to enjoy a Tryumph over me," Adams wrote his wife. "Methought I heard him think Ay! I am fairly out and you are fairly in! See which of Us will be happiest."⁵ One source of difficulty was the French reaction to the Jay Treaty. When the British seized American ships trading with the French West Indies under the Orders-in-Council of November 6, 1793, and January 8, 1794, Washington had appointed Jay as a special envoy to stave off Republican-sponsored bills in the House of Representatives threatening commercial warfare, which Washington believed would bring

American Presidency (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 304.

⁴ John Adams to James Lloyd, March 29, 1815, in *WJA*, 10:147.

⁵ John Adams to Abigail Adams, March 5, 1797, *Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers*, reel 383.

war.⁶ Even though Adams believed "the British have treated us very ill," Adams agreed with Washington that war would be fatal to the republic. Adams warned Jefferson that "Another War would add two or three Millions to our Debt, raise up a many-headed and many bellied Monster of an Army to tyrannize over Us, totally disadjust our present government and accelerate the Advent of Monarchy and Aristocracy by at least fifty years." Adams cheered Jay's appointment, writing to his wife that "Mr. Jay is to immortalize himself over again by keeping peace."⁷

Jay concluded the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation that bore his name on November 19, 1794. Jay had to abandon, at least temporarily, the doctrine that free ships make free goods. However, the treaty did secure commerce for twelve years, and preserved the peace. The Senate ratified the treaty in June 1795. In early 1796 Republicans in the House of Representatives tried to defeat the treaty by refusing to approve the appropriations needed to carry it out.⁸ Adams

⁶ Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 278-287, 299-301.

⁷ John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 22 and May 5, 1794, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 377; John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 11, 1794, in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 255.

⁸ Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 330-331; Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 410-413; Jerald A. Combs, *The Jay Treaty: Political Battleground of the Founding Fathers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 147-153, 180-183; Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1958), 107-110; Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy*, rev. ed. (New

never doubted that the House of Representatives would approve the appropriations. "We scold at Treaties for the Sake of Mauling a Minister," he wrote to John Quincy Adams, "but acknowledge them to be obligating on the national faith." John Adams's attitude in 1796 was the same as it had been in 1778; once the treaty was signed and ratified, debate was over. The alternative was war, "and if the nation solemnly determines upon War and Confusion, they ought not charge it to the Government."⁹

The House of Representatives barely approved the appropriations on April 30, 1796. A settlement with Great Britain, however temporary, naturally brought conflict with France. French Foreign Minister Charles Delacroix advised Pierre Adet, the French minister to the United States, to stir up anti-British feeling and bring the United States into war on the French side. Delacroix informed James Monroe, the American minister to France, that France considered the alliance ended the moment the Senate ratified the Jay Treaty. Threats turned into action on July 2, 1796, when the Directory decreed that France would treat American ships the same way Great Britain did, subjecting American commerce with Great

Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 358-359.

⁹ John Adams to John Quincy Adams, March 25, 1796; John Adams to Abigail Adams, April 16, 1796, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 381.

Britain to French capture.¹⁰

A second source of difficulty was the cabinet that Adams inherited from Washington. The political giants who served in the first cabinet were gone by 1797, replaced by Timothy Pickering as secretary of state, James McHenry as secretary of war, Oliver Wolcott as secretary of the treasury, and Charles Lee as attorney-general. Adams retained all of these men, partly because there was no precedent for the cabinet to resign upon a change of administration, and partly because of the difficulty in finding men willing to serve. To varying degrees, Pickering, Wolcott and McHenry were politically closer to Hamilton than Adams, and consulted with the former secretary of the treasury on public affairs. Pickering was too stubborn and independent to be anyone's subordinate, and looked to Hamilton as a kindred spirit rather than as a superior. Wolcott had served as Hamilton's deputy in the treasury department, and was his closest ally. McHenry was completely out of his depth as secretary of war, and relied on Hamilton for answers to presidential queries.¹¹

"Pickering and all his colleagues are as attached to me

¹⁰ Combs, *Jay Treaty*, 186-188; Bowman, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 237-244.

¹¹ C.F. Adams, *Life of JA*, 2:214-216; Stephen G. Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), 238, 269-280; Leonard D. White, *The Federalists: An Administrative History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 238-241. Pickering, McHenry and Lee were each last on Washington's list of candidates for their respective posts. Kurtz, *Presidency of JA*, 414-415.

as I desire," Adams wrote to Elbridge Gerry. "I have no jealousies from that quarter."¹² Adams believed he could afford to retain a cabinet that he did not appoint for the simple reason that he was the president, and as such would make the final decision on policy matters. "Here, according to the practice, if not the Constitution, the ministers are responsible for nothing, the President for every thing," Adams later wrote in the *Boston Patriot*.¹³ Adams no doubt believed that the cabinet members would either accept his decisions or resign, as had been the case under Washington. Unfortunately for Adams, Pickering considered himself independent of the president, and would oppose the president if he deemed it desirable. This difference over the role of the cabinet lay at the heart of Adams's difficulties.¹⁴

Throughout his administration, Adams followed a policy of strict neutrality toward Great Britain and France. He later wrote to Thomas Truxton that "my system has been, for nine and twenty years at least, to do justice and maintain friendship with all nations as long as we possibly could, and have

¹² John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Feb. 13, 1797, in *WJA*, 8:523.

¹³ Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 539; Letter X to the *Boston Patriot*, 1809, in *WJA*, 9:270.

¹⁴ Gerard Clarfield, *Timothy Pickering and American Diplomacy, 1795-1800* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 90-92; Peter Shaw is incorrect in seeing Adams's retention of the cabinet "as setting a self-destructive pattern of abrogating power," *Character of JA*, 255.

alliances with none if we could avoid it." To maintain a neutral course, Adams needed to avoid war with France, which he hoped to accomplish through negotiation and preparation for war.¹⁵ Alexander Hamilton generally agreed with Adams's policies at the start of the Quasi-War, and supported the idea of sending a special bi-partisan and sectionally balanced commission to France. "I would appoint a commission extraordinary to consist of M. Jefferson, or Mr. Madison, together with Mr. Cabot & Mr. Pinckney," Hamilton wrote to Pickering.¹⁶

Adams had not forgotten that Hamilton had tried to sneak vice-presidential candidate Thomas Pinckney ahead of Adams in the 1796 election, and he described Hamilton as "a proud, conceited, aspiring mortal, always pretending to morality."¹⁷ However, Adams had reached the same conclusion regarding a peace commission. He met with Thomas Jefferson on March 3, and asked the vice-president-elect if he would consider joining

¹⁵ Ralph Adams Brown, *The Presidency of John Adams* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1975), 38-41; John Adams to Thomas Truxton, Dec. 13, 1803, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 118.

¹⁶ William Stinchcombe, *The XYZ Affair* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 23; Alexander Hamilton to Timothy Pickering, March 22, 1797, in Alexander Hamilton, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 27 vols. Harold C. Syrett, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-1979), 20:545-546. See also Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, Jan. 25-31, 1797; to Theodore Sedgwick, Feb. 26, 1797; to James McHenry, March 1797; and to William L. Smith, April 5, 1797, in Hamilton, *Papers*, 20:480, 522, 571, 575.

¹⁷ John Adams to Abigail Adams, Jan. 9, 1797, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 383.

Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, whom the French had rejected as Monroe's replacement, on a peace commission. Jefferson refused, arguing that it was inappropriate for the vice-president to serve as minister, and Adams agreed. Adams then suggested a commission of Pinckney and James Madison or Elbridge Gerry. Jefferson agreed to ask Madison but did not expect him to accept, and when Adams suggested Madison to the cabinet the members unanimously opposed the appointment. On March 6, Jefferson told Adams that Madison would not serve. Adams then suggested Gerry as an independent member of the commission. The cabinet preferred Massachusetts Federalist Francis Dana. Adams relented, at least temporarily, and in May named Pinckney, Dana, and General John Marshall of Virginia as the peace commission. Adams knew that Dana hated ocean travel, and "was always apprehensive he would decline." In June, when Dana declined the appointment, Adams replaced him with Gerry.¹⁸

On March 25, Adams called for a special session of

¹⁸ This account is based on a variety of sources, including Kurtz, *Presidency of JA*, 228-229; and DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 13-28. Adams described his meeting with Jefferson in John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, April 6, 1797 and Letter XIII to the Boston *Patriot*, 1809, in *WJA*, 8:538, 9:286-287; Jefferson's version is in the "Anas," in Jefferson, *Writings*, 1:334-336. McHenry later recalled that he was the only member to criticize Gerry, in James McHenry to Timothy Pickering, Feb. 23, 1811 in Henry Cabot Lodge, *Life and Letters of George Cabot* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1877), 204-205. Adams discussed Dana in John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, June 20, 1797, in *WJA*, 8:546. John Marshall appears second to James Madison on a list of proposed envoys in John Adams's hand, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 386.

Congress to meet on May 15 to discuss defense measures. In the intervening period Adams received word of the French decree on March 2, 1797, declaring enemy goods on American ships to be lawful prizes, and condemning American ships not carrying a *rôle d'équipage*, the proper crew manifest. France intended to inflict as much damage as possible on American shipping without a formal war.¹⁹ As the French threat came from the sea, Adams advocated building a navy, combining his reading of Opposition Whig thought with his own experience. "The trident of Neptune is the scepter of the world," he wrote to Thomas Truxton. In an unused fragment of his speech to the special session, Adams argued that, "it is a maxim among maritime people that with *wood, iron, and hemp and ships to employ them any nation may do itself justice.*" The United States was a natural seapower, and its commerce demanded protection.²⁰ By "commerce", Adams always meant the carrying trade as well as agricultural exports. "Commerce has made this Country what it is," Adams wrote in a draft of his first annual message.²¹

¹⁹ R. A. Brown, *Presidency of JA*, 39-40; Bowman, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 276-277.

²⁰ John Adams to Thomas Truxton, Nov. 30, 1802, in Dudley W. Knox, ed. *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935-1938), 5:174-175; Draft of speech of May 16, 1797, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 387; Frederic H. Haynes, "John Adams and American Sea Power." *American Neptune*, Vol. 25 no. 1 (January 1965), 38-43.

²¹ Speech fragment, November 22, 1797, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 387.

Aside from being politically dangerous, an army was of no use, as the French could not mount a land invasion. "Where is it possible to send thirty thousand Men here & we are double the number we were in 1775," Adams explained to Elbridge Gerry. "We have four times the military skill and eight times the munitions of war. What would 30,000 men do here?"²²

Adams addressed the special session on May 16, outlining the diplomatic situation and his policy. Adams blamed the French for the poor relations between the United States and France, citing the French rejection of Pinckney as minister and French attempts to influence the presidential election. "They have inflicted a wound in the American breast," Adams told Congress. "It is my sincere desire, however, that it may be healed." Adams announced the new mission but also advised defensive preparations. "A naval power, next to the militia, is the most natural defence of the United States," Adams argued, echoing Bolingbroke.²³ Reaction to Adams's speech was predictable. Republicans blamed Adams for the crisis and believed the speech was a call for war. Federalists were generally pleased. In June, William L. Smith of South Carolina submitted a program along Adams's lines, increasing the navy and providing for the arming of 80,000 militia, which Congress approved. In July, Congress voted to build twelve new frigates

²² John Adams to Elbridge Gerry. May 3, 1797, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 117.

²³ Speech of May 16, 1797, in *WJA*, 9:113-115.

and improve coastal fortifications but defeated a motion to create a 15,000-man army.²⁴

Congress and the president left Philadelphia on July 19, 1797, in order to escape the summer heat and a yellow fever epidemic. Marshall sailed from Philadelphia the next day, and Gerry sailed from Boston on July 23. Before the envoys sailed, France underwent a policy shift, when the Directory replaced the anti-American Foreign Minister Charles Delacroix with Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord. Talleyrand had little influence on European policy, but was the chief architect of the Directory's American policy.²⁵

Despite the changes, Adams expected nothing from the mission. "It will be spun out into an immeasurable length, unless quickened by an embargo," Adams complained to Oliver Wolcott. "Talleyrand, I should suppose, could not be for war with this country," Adams wrote to Pickering. "A continued appearance of umbrage, and continued depredations on a weak defenceless commerce, will be much more convenient for their views."²⁶ Matters were further complicated with the coup of 18 Fructidor (September 4, 1797), in which the anti-American Jean François Reubell took control of foreign policy. John Marshall advised his government to take no solace from the political

²⁴ Kurtz, *Presidency of JA*, 234-235; DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 26-31; R. A. Brown, *Presidency of JA*, 42-45.

²⁵ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 35; Stinchcombe, *XYZ Affair*, 32-35.

²⁶ John Adams to Oliver Wolcott, Oct. 27, 1797; John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Oct. 31, 1797, in *WJA*, 8:558-559.

instability in France. "The internal commotions of France produce no external weakness, no diminution of exertion against her enemies," Marshall informed Pickering.²⁷

Marshall, Pinckney and Gerry met with each other on October 6, and called on Talleyrand two days later. Talleyrand asked the Americans to wait for official reception until he finished his report to the Directory. Official reception never came. Talleyrand sent four of his agents, Nicholas Hubbard, Jean Hottinguer, Pierre Bellamy and Lucien Hauteval, labeled W, X, Y and Z in the American dispatches, to negotiate. On October 18, Hottinguer presented Talleyrand's price for negotiation: an apology for Adams's speech of May 16, American assumption of American shipping claims against France, help in floating a loan in the Dutch money market and a £50,000 bribe for Talleyrand. The only other option, Hottinguer later argued, was war, which would end in American defeat.²⁸

Napoleon Bonaparte's victories in Italy buoyed the French spirit. In the Treaty of Campo Formio France gave Venice to Austria as part of a peace settlement, and Bellamy suggested that the United States would meet a similar fate if it allied

²⁷ Bowman, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 310-314; John Marshall to Timothy Pickering, Sept. 9, 1797, in John Marshall, *The Papers of John Marshall*, 8 vols. to date. Herbert A. Johnson, *et al.*, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974-), 3:134.

²⁸ Stinchcombe, *XYZ Affair*, 54-57; Marshall's journal, Oct. 22, 1797, and American Envoys to Timothy Pickering, Oct. 22, 1797, in Marshall, *Papers*, 3:173, 255-267.

with Great Britain against France.²⁹

Over the next five months, negotiations proceeded no further. "From our first arrival there has been a continuing effort to operate on our fears," Marshall wrote in his journal. "We have been threatened with a variety of ills, and among others with being ordered immediately to quit France."³⁰ French tactics began to work on Gerry, who was willing to discuss making a loan at the end of the war. Talleyrand, seeing his opportunity, asked for one "impartial" envoy, namely Gerry, to remain in Paris, and for the other two to leave. Marshall was more than happy to comply, and he and Pinckney left Paris in April of 1798. Gerry remained behind, believing that only he stood between war and peace.³¹

"We are waiting with great Patience for News from Paris," John Adams wrote to John Quincy Adams on March 1, 1798. "We have not received a Line from our Envoys since their arrival in that City."³² The first group of dispatches, including

²⁹ Stinchcombe, *XYZ Affair*, 58-59, Oct. 30 meeting with Talleyrand described in *American Envoys to Timothy Pickering*, Nov. 8, 1797, in Marshall, *Papers*, 3:284.

³⁰ Marshall's journal, Feb. 4, 1797, in Marshall, *Papers*, 3:195-196.

³¹ Stinchcombe, *XYZ Affair*, 109-113; Marshall's journal, March 14, 1798, in Marshall, *Papers*, 3:229-231; George Athan Billias, *Elbridge Gerry: Founding Father and Republican Statesman* (New York: The McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), 274-275.

³² John Adams to John Quincy Adams, March 1, 1798, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 386.

documents dated as recently as January 8, 1798, arrived soon after. Adams was willing to accept the etiquette of European diplomacy, but not outright extortion. The president was surprised and upset that the envoys had even talked to Talleyrand's agents. "Pinckney's answer to X, should have been We will not Say one Word in Answer to Propositions till We are recd. and meet a Minister on equal ground," Adams wrote in his personal notes.³³ Convinced that the mission had failed, Adams addressed Congress on March 19 in order to set policy. Adams did not ask for a declaration of war, but did ask for increased defensive preparations. Despite French insolence and vague talk of invasion, the main French threat came from the sea, and that was where Adams intended to meet it. Adams asked Congress to increase the navy, improve coastal fortifications, and allow merchant ships to arm. "In all your proceedings, it will be important to manifest a zeal, vigor, and concert, in defence of the national rights proportional to the danger with which they are threatened," Adams told Congress.³⁴ Republicans in Congress suspected that the crisis was a Federalist invention, and on March 30 Representative William Branch Giles of Virginia demanded the president submit the XYZ papers to Congress. The Federalists joined in, and

³³ R. A. Brown, *Presidency of JA*, 48-49; Paper in John Adams's hand titled "Remarks/ No. 1 Oct. 22, 1797," Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 386. The date refers to the date of the first dispatch describing the meeting with Hottinguer.

³⁴ Speech of March 19, 1798, in *WJA*, 9:156-157.

approved the demand on April 2. Adams immediately released the papers, embarrassing the Republicans and creating a backlash against both the French and the Republicans.³⁵

President Adams himself contributed to the backlash, spending most of the spring and summer denouncing French action in his public addresses. "There is nothing in the conduct of our enemies more remarkable than their total contempt for the people," Adams wrote to the inhabitants of Burlington County, New Jersey, "and of all real republican governments, while they screen themselves under some of their names and forms."³⁶ "As to the French, I know of no government ancient or modern that ever betrayed so universal and decided a contempt of the people of all nations, as the present rulers of France," Adams wrote to the Cincinnati of South Carolina.³⁷ Despite his rhetoric, Adams refused to rule out a peaceful settlement. "I will never send another mission to France without assurances that they will be received, respected and honored as the representatives of a great, free, powerful and independent nation," Adams told Congress on June 21.³⁸

In the meantime, Adams hoped to build up the navy. The president was, of course, a lifelong advocate of a navy,

³⁵ R. A. Brown, *Presidency of JA*, 50-52.

³⁶ John Adams to the Inhabitants of Burlington County, New Jersey, May 8, 1798, in *WJA*, 9:191.

³⁷ John Adams to the Cincinnati of South Carolina, Sept. 17, 1798, *ibid.*, 9:232-233.

³⁸ Message of June 21, 1798, *ibid.*, 9:159.

believing it to be "the most powerful, the safest and the cheapest National defence for this Country."³⁹ Like Bolingbroke, Adams believed that a navy paid for itself by protecting commerce and could not endanger domestic liberties. "To arms then, my young friends, -- to arms, especially by sea," Adams wrote in response to an address from the young men of Boston.⁴⁰ On April 27 Congress authorized the president to obtain twelve 24-gun ships. On April 30, Adams signed the bill creating the Department of the Navy. He nominated George Cabot of Massachusetts, who declined. Adams then offered the post to Maryland merchant Benjamin Stoddert, whom the Senate confirmed on May 21. The navy's first task was to sweep the Atlantic coast of French privateers. The 24-gun ship *Ganges* and the 36-gun frigate *Constellation* largely completed this task by November 1798. Through most of 1798, however, the navy relied on ten- to sixteen- gun revenue cutters for defense.⁴¹

"My hobby-horse was a navy; Alexander Hamilton's an army," Adams recalled in retirement. "I had no idea that France, involved as she was in Europe, could send any formidable invasion to America."⁴² Like Bolingbroke, Adams

³⁹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Oct. 15, 1822, in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 585.

⁴⁰ John Adams to the Young Men of Boston, May 22, 1798, in *WJA*, 9:154.

⁴¹ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 90-91; Michael A. Palmer, *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations during the Quasi-War with France, 1798-1801* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 7-10, 18-19, 52-53.

preferred to fight a limited naval war, over maritime issues, and avoid foreign entanglements. Hamilton, playing Marlborough to Adams's Bolingbroke, advocated a continental land war. Hamilton did agree that the navy should be increased, but he also advocated creating a 20,000-man standing army and a 30,000-man provisional army, which Adams did not approve. Hamilton assumed that a conflict with France would bring a conflict with Spain and would provide an opportunity for the United States to conquer Louisiana. Throughout the first half of 1798, Hamilton was in steady contact with the Venezuelan revolutionary Francisco de Miranda, who had met with Prime Minister Pitt and hoped for Anglo-American cooperation against Spain.⁴³ Adams greeted Miranda's plans with silence and later wrote that Hamilton's designs on Spanish territory, requiring a large army and an alliance with Great Britain were "in direct opposition to my system, and wholly subversive of it." Adams blamed French revolutionary excesses in part on French military aggression against other nations. "Could Mr. Pitt and Mr. Miranda believe me so fascinated, charmed, enchanted with what had happened in France," Adams asked James Lloyd, "as to be desirous of engaging myself and my country in most hazardous and expensive and bloody experiments to excite

⁴² John Adams to James Lloyd, Feb. 21, 1815, in *WJA*, 10:127.

⁴³ Kurtz, *Presidency of JA*, 293-294; DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 116-118; Manning J. Dauer, *The Adams Federalists* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1953), 145-150, 172-180.

similar horrors in South America?"⁴⁴

Congress took up defensive measures in the summer of 1798 and favored Hamilton's program, although also approving the president's naval program. Federalists in the House of Representatives came close to a declaration of war, when Peleg Sprague of New Hampshire proposed attacking all French commerce. This motion failed on June 30, and a similar motion failed on July 2. The House modified this act to permit the seizure of armed French vessels anywhere in the world, which Congress and the president approved. On July 16, Congress authorized the president to recruit a 50,000-man provisional army, which he had not asked for and did not want.⁴⁵

Nor did Adams ever intend to ask for a declaration of war. He believed that the naval campaign was a sufficient response until French policy changed, one way or the other. "Congress has already in my Judgement as well as in the opinion of the judges at Phyladelphia declared War, within the meaning of the Constitution, against that Republic, under certain restrictions and Limitations," Adams later explained to John Marshall, referring to the naval actions authorized in July 1798.⁴⁶ Adams intended to conduct the limited war

⁴⁴ John Adams to James Lloyd, March 29, 1815, in *WJA*, 10:147, 149.

⁴⁵ R. A. Brown, *Presidency of JA*, 58; DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 96-107; Kurtz, *Presidency of JA*, 321-324.

⁴⁶ Ferling, *JA: A Life*, 355-356; John Adams to John Marshall, Sept. 4, 1800, in Marshall, *Papers*, 4:255. In the case of *Bas v. Tingy*, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled

authorized by Congress at sea, and for that a large army was useless.⁴⁷

The Federalist program had a domestic component as well. Both Federalists and Republicans tended to see political opposition as something close to treason. Fearful of Republican sympathy for the French Revolution, the Federalists moved to quiet opposition.⁴⁸ The Alien and Sedition Acts included the Naturalization Act, designed to limit the political influence of immigrants who tended to augment Republican ranks by extending the waiting period for citizenship from five to fourteen years. The Alien Enemies Act allowed the president to expel aliens from hostile nations as he saw fit, and the Alien Friends Act allowed him to expel aliens from friendly nations he deemed dangerous. Finally, the Sedition Act punished "false, scandalous and malicious" statements against the president, Congress, or officers of the

that the naval legislation of July 1798 constituted a limited declaration of war against France. James Scott Brown, *ed.* *The Controversy over Neutral Rights between the United States and France 1797-1800: A Collection of American State Papers and Judicial Decisions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), 106-115.

⁴⁷ Reginald C. Stuart, *War in American Thought: From the Revolution to the Monroe Doctrine* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1982), 88; William J. Murphy, Jr. notes that utility outweighed ideology in Adams's thinking on the army, in "John Adams: The Politics of the Additional Army." *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 52 no. 2 (June 1979), 246.

⁴⁸ Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 215-218; John R. Howe, Jr., "Republican Thought and the Political Violence of the 1790s." *American Quarterly*, Vol. 19 no. 2 (Summer 1967), 150.

government in general.⁴⁹ Adams attempted to shift the blame for the enactments to Hamilton. "Nor did I adopt his idea of an alien and sedition law," Adams wrote in 1809. "I recommended no such thing in my speech." However, even if Adams did not specifically ask for such legislation, he did not veto it.⁵⁰

Congressional support for a large army and the Alien and Sedition Acts showed that Adams did not have the loyalty of his own party. The issue of who would command that army proved to Adams that his cabinet was disloyal. George Washington was the obvious choice, and Adams nominated the former president on July 4. Washington accepted, but on the condition that he be allowed to choose his major-generals and that he not be called to active duty unless Congress declared war. Until that time, the inspector-general would command the army. Washington leaned toward either Henry Knox or Charles Cotesworth Pinckney as his deputy. However, Pickering, Wolcott and McHenry lobbied heavily for Hamilton.⁵¹ Pickering wrote to Washington in an anxious, almost conspiratorial tone, telling him that "the

⁴⁹ James Morton Smith, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), 22-34, 47-48, 51-52, 94-95.

⁵⁰ Letter XIII to the Boston *Patriot*, 1809, in *WJA*, 9:291; Ferling, *JA: A Life*, 366; Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 588.

⁵¹ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 96-97; Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 234-237; Douglas Southall Freeman, *The Life of George Washington*, 7 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948-1957), 7:518-523.

appointment of Colo. Hamilton, in the manner suggested appears to me to be of such vast importance to the welfare of the country, that I am willing to risque any consequences of my frank and honest endeavours to secure it."⁵²

Washington chose Hamilton as his deputy. But Adams, who did not trust Hamilton with the command of an army, insisted that Knox was legally entitled to the inspector-generalship.⁵³ What followed was a comedy of error. Washington did not know why Adams opposed Hamilton's appointment, and Adams never explained himself to Washington. "General Knox is legally entitled to rank next to General Washington and no other arrangement will give satisfaction," Adams informed McHenry. Adams openly resented the cabinet's interference, complaining to McHenry that "there has been too much intrigue in this business with General Washington and me."⁵⁴ Washington grew tired of the conflict, and on September 25 he wrote to Adams threatening to resign if the president did not comply with their agreement.⁵⁵ When John Adams received this letter, he

⁵² Timothy Pickering to George Washington, July 6, 1798, Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, reel 9.

⁵³ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 97-98.

⁵⁴ John Adams to James McHenry, Aug. 14 and 29, 1798, in *WJA*, 8:580, 587-588.

⁵⁵ George Washington to John Adams, Sept. 25, 1798; see also George Washington to James McHenry, Sept. 16, 1798, in George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington*, 39 vols. John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 36: 456, 447.

knew he had lost. He could not afford an open rift with the hero of the revolution. On October 9, Adams wrote to Washington, telling him that he would date the commissions of Knox, Pinckney and Hamilton on the same day, and Washington could settle the matter as he saw fit.⁵⁶

A man Adams did not trust was in effective command of an army Adams did not want. At the same time Adams was forced to surrender on the question of the major-generals, he began to receive information indicating that the army was, as he believed all along, unnecessary. There were three sources of diplomatic information that Adams trusted most. The first was his son, John Quincy Adams, the American minister to Prussia. The second was Elbridge Gerry, Adams's personal friend and one of the few "1775 men" still active in public affairs.⁵⁷ The third was William Vans Murray, the American minister to the Netherlands. Murray, a Maryland Federalist, was a strong supporter of John Adams and a close friend of John Quincy Adams.⁵⁸ Dispatches from these men, along with the president's own analysis of the military situation, brought about the shift from a war footing to appointment of a second peace mission.

⁵⁶ John Adams to George Washington, Oct. 9, 1798, in *WJA*, 8:600-601.

⁵⁷ Dauer, *Adams Federalists*, 89; John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Feb. 13, 1797, in *WJA*, 8:525.

⁵⁸ Peter P. Hill, *William Vans Murray, Federalist Diplomat* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 1-45.

John Quincy Adams spent much of his time observing French actions and reported in early 1798 that France was approaching the limits of its military capacity. France was preparing an invasion of Great Britain, but preparations "are made with so much ostentation, that I have some doubts of their being serious." "The preparations for the french expedition to England continue," Adams wrote to his father in May, "though the length of time which they have taken and their not having formed any junction of forces, an opinion has lately been spreading, that it would eventually be abandoned."⁵⁹ Adams believed that if the United States resisted French action, "the terrible Republic can hurt us little by sea." Adams applauded the American reaction to the XYZ Affair, noting that the French "are alarmed at the spirit which the publication raised in our country."⁶⁰ "The spirited & decisive measures on our part have brought down the tone of Talleyrand to a degree of modesty, which he has rarely discovered," Adams wrote to Rufus King, the American minister to Great Britain.⁶¹ Adams believed the United States had gained the respect of Europe and reported to Pickering that the king of Prussia believed

⁵⁹ John Quincy Adams to William L. Smith, Jan. 10, 1798: John Quincy Adams to John Adams, May 8, 1798, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reels 130 and 133.

⁶⁰ John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, March 6 and June 19, 1798, in John Quincy Adams, *The Writings of John Quincy Adams*, 7 vols. Worthington C. Ford, ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913-1917), 2:266, 310.

⁶¹ John Quincy Adams to Rufus King, Aug. 10, 1798, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 133.

that, "the whole conduct of the American government was such as must command the esteem and ought to obtain the friendship of all other nations."⁶²

Elbridge Gerry did not similarly approve of American actions. He had remained in Paris after Marshall and Pinckney left, for fear that his departure would bring war. Gerry continued to meet with Talleyrand, who told Gerry that peace could still be achieved, but also warned him not to leave. Pickering finally ordered Gerry home in July. Gerry arrived at Boston on October 1 and went almost immediately to Quincy to meet with the president. Gerry had convinced himself that he had prevented war, and hoped to convince the president of the same thing.⁶³ In later years John Adams credited Gerry for providing the evidence that France was willing to meet the conditions Adams set in his speech of June 21, 1798.⁶⁴

Adams may have exaggerated Gerry's immediate influence. In an effort to buy time, Talleyrand may have told Gerry exactly what the envoy wanted to hear, knowing that Gerry would immediately report to the president.⁶⁵ Adams had more official information from William Vans Murray. In July 1798, Talleyrand ordered Louis Pichon, the French minister to the

⁶² John Quincy Adams to Timothy Pickering, Aug. 22, 1798, in *WJQA*, 2:354.

⁶³ Billias, *Gerry*, 285-286, 294-295; DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 146-147; Kurtz, *Presidency of JA*, 340-344.

⁶⁴ Letter III to the Boston *Patriot*, 1809, in *WJA*, 9:246.

⁶⁵ DeConde downplays Gerry's influence in *Quasi-War*, 161.

Netherlands, to begin informal negotiations with Murray. Murray wrote to Adams on July 17, describing his interview with Pichon. Murray believed that France was afraid of full-scale war with the United States. Murray's letters to Adams arrived at Pickering's office on October 2. Pickering sent the letters on to Quincy the next day, and they arrived on October 9.⁶⁶ Adams responded that the letters "made a great impression on me."⁶⁷ On October 20, Adams wrote to Pickering, asking his opinion on whether the president should request a declaration of war, or appoint a new minister to France.⁶⁸ In any case, Murray's letters convinced Adams that there would be no invasion and offered a vindication of Adams's version of republican diplomacy. "If this nation sees a great army to maintain, without an enemy to fight, there may arise an enthusiasm that seems little forseen," Adams warned McHenry. "At present there is no more prospect of seeing a French army here, than there is in Heaven."⁶⁹

Adams also received information from an unexpected and unwelcome source. George Logan, a Pennsylvania Republican whom

⁶⁶ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 147-148, 162-163; William Vans Murray to John Adams, July 1 and 17, 1798, in *WJA*, 8:677-680, 680-682; Timothy Pickering to John Adams, Oct. 3, 1798, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 391.

⁶⁷ John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Oct. 29, 1798, in *WJA*, 8:614-615.

⁶⁸ John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Oct. 20, 1798, *ibid.*, 8:609.

⁶⁹ John Adams to James McHenry, Oct. 22, 1798, *ibid.*, 8:613.

John Quincy Adams described as a "Philadelphia Jacobin," had left for France on a private peace mission in June 1798 and had met with Talleyrand and the Directory in August.⁷⁰ The president did not expect Logan's mission to help and openly wondered if such a mission was constitutional.⁷¹ Logan returned to the United States in November and reported to Adams on November 26 that France would receive any minister he sent. Adams suspected that Logan's mission was an electioneering trick, and the only concrete result was the Logan Act of January 30, 1799, which prohibited such private diplomacy.⁷²

Adams no doubt paid more attention to the military situation than to Logan's report. By the fall of 1798, the United States navy was fully deployed, with between ten and fifteen ships on station. American action, along with independent British action in the West Indies, reduced American losses to the French. Navy Secretary Stoddert believed the best policy was "to lay the foundation *now*, for an increase of the navy to that size, which shall be

⁷⁰ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 155-156; John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, Aug. 11, 1798, in *WJQA*, 2:347.

⁷¹ John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, Aug. 14, 1798, in *WJQA*, 2:349; John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Nov. 2, 1798, in *WJA*, 8:615.

⁷² DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 165-166, 172; Frederick B. Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 179-180; John Adams to Abigail Adams, Jan. 10, 1799, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 393.

sufficient both for the defense of our coasts, and the protection of our trade."⁷³ British victories also worked in the United States' favor. On August 1, 1798, Admiral Horatio Nelson destroyed the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile, stranding Napoleon Bonaparte's army in Egypt and curtailing French naval action in the Atlantic. Adams celebrated the "magnificent victory of Nelson," writing Francis Dana that the victory was "without a precedent or parallel."⁷⁴ "The English have exhibited an amazing Example of Skill and Intrepidity, Performance and Firmness at Sea," Adams later wrote his wife. "We are a Chip off that Block."⁷⁵

By December 1798, Adams clearly believed that the French would not, and could not, escalate the war. Whether or not they would make peace was an entirely different matter. Despite the various hints that France wanted to reach a settlement, there was still no official word, at least that would satisfy the conditions set forth in Adams's message of June 21, 1798. Adams therefore announced no policy changes in his annual message to Congress on December 8, 1798. He observed that the French laws subjecting neutral ships

⁷³ M. Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 72-81; Benjamin Stoddert to John Adams, Nov. 23, 1798, in George Gibbs, ed. *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams*, 2 vols. (New York: 1846), 2:116.

⁷⁴ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 161; John Adams to Francis Dana, Dec. 3, 1798, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 117.

⁷⁵ John Adams to Abigail Adams, Jan. 1, 1799, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 393.

carrying enemy goods to capture were still in operation, and that such legislation was, "an unequivocal act of war on the commerce of the nations it attacks." "Hitherto, therefore," Adams continued, "nothing is discoverable in the conduct of France which ought to change or relax our measures of defence." Adams reminded Congress that "an efficient preparation for war can alone insure peace." "It is peace that we have uniformly and perseveringly cultivated," he told Congress, "and harmony between us and France may be restored at her option." However, he would not send another minister, "without more determinate assurances."⁷⁶

Such assurances came in William Vans Murray's letters. Murray continued to meet with Pichon, who delivered messages from Talleyrand. On August 20, Murray reported that the French would agree to a Dutch mediation. It was a meaningless offer, as the Netherlands was a French protectorate, but it at least indicated that American actions were having an effect on French policy. Talleyrand wrote to Pichon on August 28, arguing that American prosperity "is more at the expense of Great Britain than us." Pichon passed this letter on to Murray on September 6. On October 7, Murray received a copy of a letter Talleyrand wrote on September 28, in which Talleyrand promised that any minister Adams sent would be properly received. Murray thought Talleyrand's method unorthodox but believed that the letter satisfied Adams's conditions, and

⁷⁶ Speech of Dec. 8, 1798, in *WJA*, 9:129-130.

sent it to the president. Adams received Murray's letters in January and February 1799.⁷⁷ Probably on the basis of these letters, Adams ordered Pickering to draft a treaty to be proposed to France.⁷⁸ Adams had sufficient information from "regular diplomatic sources" to make his decision. On February 1, 1799, George Washington forwarded a letter to him from the poet Joel Barlow, who argued that France wanted peace with the United States. Washington added that he would support any honorable peace that Adams made. Adams gave no weight to Barlow's letter, but Washington's letter seemed to offer political cover for a new mission. On February 18, 1799, Adams nominated William Vans Murray as minister to France.⁷⁹

"I desire no other inscription over my gravestone than: 'Here lies John Adams, who took upon himself the responsibility of the peace with France in the year 1800,'" Adams wrote in 1815.⁸⁰ Adams had seen that the military fervor of 1798 was dead by 1799, and that his administration's actions had brought France back to the bargaining table. Adams believed that his diplomacy allowed him to remove the army as

⁷⁷ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 151-152, 159-160, 178-179; William Vans Murray to John Adams, Aug. 20 and Oct. 7, 1798, in *WJA*, 8:688, 688-690; Letter VII to the Boston *Patriot*, 1809, in *WJA*, 9:262.

⁷⁸ John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Jan. 15, 1799, *ibid.*, 8:621.

⁷⁹ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 178-179; Letter I to the Boston *Patriot*, 1809, in *WJA*, 9:241-242; George Washington to John Adams, Feb. 1, 1799, in Washington, *Writings*, 37:119-120.

⁸⁰ John Adams to James Lloyd, Jan. 1815, in *WJA*, 10:113.

a domestic threat to republican government. "I never think of our means without shuddering," Adams wrote to McHenry on July 27, 1799. "All the declamations, as well as demonstrations, of Trenchard and Gordon, Bolingbroke, Barnard and Walpole, Hume, Burgh and Burke rush in upon my memory and frighten me out of my wits." Opposition writers had always warned of the danger of debts and armies, and Walpole learned in the late 1720s that the government could not maintain a war footing indefinitely.⁸¹

Although Adams did not nominate Murray solely for political gain, it is clear that Adams believed, in Albert Hall Bowman's words, "good policy was good politics."⁸² In execution, Adams's policy married his Bolingbrokean conception of the presidency, as a leader acting alone for the general good, to Bolingbrokean conception of the proper goals and methods of foreign policy.⁸³ In substance, the Murray nomination reflected Adams's long experience in diplomacy and his acceptance that American diplomats in Europe must act according to European rules. He accepted Talleyrand's use of Murray and Pichon as standard diplomatic practice. It is unlikely that the John Adams of 1778 would have approved of

⁸¹ John Adams to James McHenry, July 27, 1799, *ibid.*, 9:4-5.

⁸² Bowman, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 368; Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 258-259; Kurtz, *Presidency of JA*, 308-309, 335-336.

⁸³ Ketcham, *Presidents above Party*, 99.

such a roundabout approach.⁸⁴

Adams did not consult Pickering, and Pickering let his imagination run wild as to the reason Adams nominated Murray. "That capital error of Mr. Adams, in instituting the mission to France in 1799, I have long thought originated with Mr. Jefferson, or his agents," Pickering wrote in 1815.⁸⁵ "But for this," Pickering wrote in 1823, "the system of administration which had been established under Washington, and until then continued under Adams, would have remained."⁸⁶ Pickering viewed Washington's system as using close relations with Great Britain as bulwark against French radicalism. Adams did not, and he acted to preserve, "a system of eternal neutrality, if possible, in all the wars of Europe," which he believed was the only proper policy for a republic, and was Adams's system long before it was Washington's.⁸⁷

"You will be shocked, as we all were, by the President's nomination of Mr. Murray minister plenipotentiary to negotiate

⁸⁴ Stephen G. Kurtz, "The French Mission of 1799-1800: Concluding Chapter in the Statecraft of John Adams." *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 80 no. 4 (December 1965), 598.

⁸⁵ Timothy Pickering to John Lowell, Jan. 24, 1815, in Henry Adams, ed. *Documents relating to New-England Federalism, 1800-1815* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1877), 426.

⁸⁶ Timothy Pickering, *A Review of the Correspondence between the Hon. John Adams, late President of the United States, and the Late William Cunningham, Esq., Beginning in 1803 and Ending in 1812* (Salem, Mass.: Cushing and Appleton, 1823), 108.

⁸⁷ Letter II to the *Boston Patriot*, 1809, in *WJA*, 9:242; Bowman, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 367-368.

a treaty with the French Republic," Pickering wrote to George Cabot. "I beg you to believe it is the sole act of the President." "We shall recover from the shock of Murray's nomination; no preparation for war is lessened," Pickering assured Rufus King.⁸⁸ Pickering's sentiments were typical of the pro-war wing of the Federalist party. Five Federalist senators -- Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts, James Ross and William Bingham of Pennsylvania, Jacob Reed of South Carolina and Richard Stockton of New Jersey -- met with Adams on February 23, hoping to talk him out of the peace mission. When Adams refused, the senators asked for a commission rather than a single envoy, to which Adams reluctantly agreed. Two days after the meeting, Adams named Chief Justice Oliver Ellsworth and Patrick Henry, both Federalists, as Murray's colleagues.⁸⁹

The cabinet met at the president's house on March 10 to draft instructions. The president and cabinet unanimously agreed on three requirements for a treaty. First, France should indemnify American citizens for spoliation claims. Second, France should compensate shipowners for ships seized for lack of a *rôle d'équipage*. Third, the United States would offer no guarantee for French territory. As the cabinet

⁸⁸ Timothy Pickering to George Cabot, Feb. 21, 1799, in Lodge, *Life of Cabot*; Timothy Pickering to Rufus King, March 6, 1799, in King, *Correspondence*, 2:549.

⁸⁹ Letter IV to the Boston *Patriot*, 1809, in *WJA*, 8:248-250; DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 185; Richard E. Welch, Jr., *Theodore Sedgwick, Federalist: A Political Portrait* (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan university Press, 1965), 187-189.

drafted instructions, Patrick Henry declined his appointment, and Adams named Governor William R. Davie of North Carolina as his replacement.⁹⁰

Congress adjourned in mid-March, and Adams left for Quincy soon after, without having ordered the new envoys to sail. The delay was not an accident but was tied directly to American sea power in the Caribbean, as Opposition thought and Adams's own diplomatic experience dictated that it should be. In March 1799, twenty American ships were on station in the Caribbean, but most were due to rotate out for repairs. By June, only five ships remained, none with more than 24 guns. Adams pursued a twin policy of preparation and negotiation and would not launch a new mission without sufficient sea power to defend American shipping in the event of failure. In the meantime, Adams could read dispatches and issue orders as easily from Quincy as from Philadelphia.⁹¹

Pickering did his best to have the mission cancelled. Adams later recalled that Pickering "opposed, obstinated, and embarrassed me to the utmost of his power."⁹² On June 18 (30 Prarial on the French calendar) most of the Directory fell

⁹⁰ Account of March 10, 1799, meeting in Pickering Papers, reel 10; DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 186-187.

⁹¹ Brown, *Presidency of JA*, 102-107; Kurtz, "French Mission," 555; M. Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 108-109.

⁹² John Adams to William Cunningham, Nov. 7, 1808, in William Cunningham, *Correspondence between the Hon. John Adams, late President of the United States, and the Late William Cunningham, Esq., Beginning in 1803 and Ending in 1812* (Boston: E.M. Cunningham, 1823), 46.

from power. Several weeks later Talleyrand resigned and was replaced by his ally, Karl Reinhard.⁹³ Pickering believed the coup to be a sufficient reason to suspend the mission, as "the men lately in power, who gave the assurances you required, relative to the mission, being ousted in a manner indicative of a revolution in the public mind."⁹⁴

Adams advised Pickering to maintain defensive preparations but to make no changes in policy. Adams did not intend to provoke a war. "If the spirit of exterminating vengeance ever arises," Adams wrote to Pickering, "it shall be conjured up by them, not me."⁹⁵ However, Adams did not wish to send the mission prematurely. "I have no reason or motive to precipitate the mission," Adams wrote to Stoddert on September 4. On September 16, Adams wrote Pickering that it would be better to wait until after hurricane season to send the envoys.⁹⁶ By September, American naval strength was restored in the Caribbean. In October, Adams arrived at Trenton, where the government had moved after a yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia. On October 16, Adams ordered

⁹³ Bowman, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 384-387.

⁹⁴ Timothy Pickering to John Adams, Sept. 11, 1799, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 396.

⁹⁵ John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Aug. 6, 1799, in *WJA*, 9:11.

⁹⁶ John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, Sept. 4, 1799; John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Sept. 16, 1799, *ibid.*, 9:20, 30.

Ellsworth and Davie to sail, and the envoys left for Europe on November 3.⁹⁷

Ellsworth and Davie arrived in Lisbon on November 27 and spent several weeks gathering intelligence before proceeding to Paris. When the envoys arrived on March 2, 1800, they found a different government from the one they had intended to meet. Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the Directory on 18 Brumaire (November 9, 1799), establishing himself as First Consul. Bonaparte had his reasons for settling with the United States. He wanted better relations with the neutral powers of northern Europe, and a settlement with the United States would improve his image. To establish the groundwork, Bonaparte repealed the law of January 18, 1798, which subjected American vessels to capture. On February 9, 1800, Bonaparte declared two weeks of mourning in honor of George Washington, who had died on December 14, 1799. Bonaparte appointed Talleyrand as his foreign minister, but turned negotiations over to a three-man commission of Joseph Bonaparte, Pierre Louis Roederer, and Charles Pierre Claret Fleurieu.⁹⁸

For six months negotiations made no progress. The Americans insisted on indemnities for shipping losses and an end to the 1778 treaties. The French argued that the 1778 treaties were still in force and refused to pay indemnities.

⁹⁷ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 219-222; M. Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 241.

⁹⁸ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 223-231.

On September 11, Pierre Roederer observed that to the Americans, the most important goal was to end the 1778 alliance and the guarantee of French territory. The French were willing to grant this concession but only at the price of giving up the indemnities. On September 13, the American envoys agreed to postpone discussion of the indemnities and the 1778 treaties and simply restore normal relations. In the meantime, the 1778 treaties would be suspended. The two sides completed a draft on September 27 and signed the Provisional Treaty of Amity and Commerce on October 1. Bonaparte asked that the agreement be downgraded to a convention, signed in the name of the Premier Consul of the French Republic and the President of the United States. The Convention of Mortefontaine, named after Joseph Bonaparte's estate, was signed on October 3, 1800.⁹⁹ The treaty did not exactly conform to the instructions, but as Murray explained to the secretary of state, "it was our duty & for the honor & interest of the government & people of the United States, that we should agree to that treaty, rather than make none."¹⁰⁰

The treaty was concluded too late to affect the presidential election of 1800. The Republicans, in support of Thomas Jefferson, used the Alien and Sedition Acts to good political advantage. On May 1, the Republicans secured all of

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 237-257.

¹⁰⁰ William Vans Murray to John Marshall, Oct. 1, 1800, in Marshall, *Papers*, 4:310.

New York's twelve electoral votes. Adams learned of the results on May 3 and acted to distance himself from the Hamilton program. Adams cut off Hamilton's influence over military policy by demanding and receiving McHenry's resignation, replacing him with moderate Massachusetts Federalist Samuel Dexter. On May 10 Adams asked Pickering to resign. Pickering refused, and on May 12, 1800 he became the first cabinet member ever to be fired.¹⁰¹ Adams appointed John Marshall as Pickering's replacement. This may have been Adams's attempt to distance himself from the domestic program, which fell under the secretary of state's jurisdiction. Marshall opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts, writing that they would do more harm than good.¹⁰² By 1800, Marshall was exactly the type of Federalist John Adams wanted in his cabinet.¹⁰³

The cabinet purge angered Hamilton to the point where he almost preferred to elect Jefferson than to re-elect Adams. "If we must have an enemy at the head of the Government, let it be one whom we can oppose," Hamilton wrote to Theodore

¹⁰¹ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 269-272; Ferling, *JA: A Life*, 393-394; Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 264; White, *Federalists*, 252.

¹⁰² Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 729-730; John Marshall to "A Freeholder," Sept. 20, 1798, in Marshall, *Papers*, 3:505.

¹⁰³ Kurtz also makes this connection in *Presidency of JA*, 358-359.

Sedgwick.¹⁰⁴ Hamilton's true object was to swing the election to Adams's running mate, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. Throughout the summer, Hamilton distributed a private letter to Federalist leaders, cataloguing Adams's supposed faults. Republican resurgence and a Federalist split combined to deny Adams a second term. On December 3, South Carolina gave its eight votes to Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, putting the two Republicans in a first place tie.¹⁰⁵

On December 11, Davie arrived in the United States with a copy of the Convention of Mortefontaine. Adams sent it to the Senate five days later. The convention stalled in the Federalist-controlled Senate, and was rejected 16-14 on January 23, 1801. Political pressure from merchants led the Senate to reconsider. The Senate expunged Article II, which stated that the 1778 treaties were suspended, and finally approved the convention 22-9 on February 3, 1801, bringing the Quasi-War to a formal end a month before Adams left office.¹⁰⁶

To a keen student of British political history such as Adams, the end of the administration looked familiar. "We federalists are much in the situation of the party of Bolingbroke and Harley, after the treaty of Utrecht,

¹⁰⁴ Alexander Hamilton to Theodore Sedgwick, May 10, 1800, in Hamilton, *Papers*, 24:475.

¹⁰⁵ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 277-285.

¹⁰⁶ DeConde, *Quasi-War*, 288-292; Richard C. Rohrs, "The Federalist Party and the Convention of 1800." *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 12 no. 3 (Summer 1988), 250-251.

completely and totally routed and defeated," Adams wrote to Benjamin Stoddert a few weeks after leaving office.¹⁰⁷ Adams advised his youngest son to read *The Idea of a Patriot King* to see another instance where one party sought a war with France, "for the pretext to raise a regular army . . . for the purpose of Patronage and Influence."¹⁰⁸ As the Bolingbrokean moment ended, Adams could himself take some solace in a passage from *The Idea of a Patriot King*. "It is true that a prince, who gives just reasons to expect that his reign will be that of a Patriot King, may not always meet, and from all persons, such returns as such expectations deserve," Bolingbroke wrote, "but they must not hinder either the prince from continuing to give them, or the people from continuing to acknowledge them."¹⁰⁹ John Adams believed he had acted the part of a patriot president; the people, however, had not acknowledged it.

John Adams left office believing he had kept the republic. "I shall leave the State with its coffers full, and the fair prospect of a peace with all the world smiling in its face," Adams remarked in his final months in office.¹¹⁰ Adams concluded that peace and neutrality depended on naval

¹⁰⁷ John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, March 31, 1801, in *WJA*, 9:582.

¹⁰⁸ John Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Jan. 15, 1801, Adams Family Collection, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁹ Bolingbroke, *Patriot King*, 26.

¹¹⁰ John Adams to Francis A. Vanderkemp, Dec. 28, 1800, in *WJA*, 9:577.

preparation. "We cannot, without committing a dangerous imprudence, abandon those measures of self-protection, which are adapted to our situation," Adams told Congress in his last annual message.¹¹¹ As Adams left public office, he abandoned any hope that foreign policy based on the more idealistic elements of republican ideology could reform the world; for example, the small-navy principle that free ships make free goods had become part of republican ideology. If all nations adopted this principle, theoretically all naval wars would come to an end. "However desirable this may be to Humanity, how much soever Phylosophy may approve of it, and Christianity desire it," Adams wrote to John Marshall, "I am clearly convinced that it will never take place." The United States could not rely on the good will of other nations, the justice of its policies or the nature of its government, but only on the strength of its navy.¹¹² In the end, Adams abandoned the grandiose hopes (but not the ideals) of the Model Treaty for the more dependable republican *realpolitik* described by Bolingbroke and confirmed by Adams's own diplomatic experience. Adams left office convinced he had found a way to act within an international balance of power compatible with the preservation of republican government at home.

¹¹¹ Speech of Nov. 22, 1800, *ibid.*, 9:145.

¹¹² John Adams to John Marshall, Oct. 3, 1800, in Marshall, *Papers*, 4:313.

CHAPTER 5: EXTENDING THE SPHERE

Like John Adams, James Madison grew up in a time and place dominated by diplomatic issues. Among Madison's earliest childhood memories were General Braddock's defeat on the road to Fort Duquesne in 1755 and constant fear of Indian attack. More important, as a westerner he looked toward the Mississippi Valley. As Ralph Ketcham writes, "James Madison lived his life, private and public, in the presence of this vast struggle for world power."¹ As a Virginian, Madison came to political maturity at a time when the factors of Scottish mercantile houses dominated the tobacco trade.² In Madison's mind, the great issues of trade with Great Britain and control of the Mississippi River linked foreign policy and republican government in America. The survival of the American republic depended on a republican political economy, which depended on diplomatic success, which Madison defined as an equitable trade relationship with Great Britain and free use of the

¹ Ralph Ketcham, *James Madison: A Biography* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 3; Irving Brant, *James Madison*, 6 vols. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1941-1961), 1:45-49.

² T.H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 38-39.

Mississippi River. Diplomatic success in turn depended on a durable republican government which could secure those interests by means compatible with a government limited power, specifically through the use of American trade.

Madison received much of his political education under the influence of John Witherspoon at the College of New Jersey. Witherspoon derived many of his lectures from Aristotle, and added works of the Enlightenment, including the emerging republican canon: John Locke, James Harrington, Baron de Montesquieu and Algernon Sidney. Witherspoon also belonged to the Scottish Common Sense school and lectured on the emerging law of nations, especially the works of David Hume, Emmerich de Vattel, Hugo Grotius and Samuel von Pufendorf. The heavy Scottish influence, along with the economic circumstances of Madison's Virginia, probably account for the role of political economy in Madison's thought and in turn for his policies regarding trade and the Mississippi.³

Throughout his career, Madison sought to reconcile republican thought with political and diplomatic practice. He did not always succeed as, for example, when he lost a race for a state senate seat in 1777. Traditionally, Virginia freeholders gathered in the county court house and voted orally. Candidates were expected to "treat" the voters, keeping an open house and offering hospitality to all,

³ Brant, *JM*, 1:76; Ketcham, *JM*, 42-50; Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 62-65.

supporters and opponents, to avoid the appearance of corruption. Madison refused to treat, on the ground that treating was incompatible with republicanism. "The consequence was that the election went against him," Madison later recalled, "his abstinence being represented as the effect of pride or parsimony."⁴

The independent yeoman farmer, whom Madison had refused to corrupt in 1777, lay at the center of Madison's political system and by extension his diplomacy. Madison's faith in the virtue of the American people never fell as far as John Adams's, because Madison, unlike Adams, never held out a classical model for virtue. Madison's model of yeoman virtue depended more on the plowshare than the sword. Furthermore, Madison's relationship with Jefferson served as a moderating influence on Madison's own suspicions of human nature. Jefferson had no such effect on Adams.⁵

Madison generally concurred with Jefferson on issues of political economy. Free trade, liberated from colonial shackles, would preserve a republican political economy by promoting agriculture and discouraging domestic manufactures.

⁴ Charles S. Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 19-26, 51-58; Douglass Adair, ed. "James Madison's Autobiography." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 2 no. 2 (April 1945), 199-200.

⁵ Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948-1981), 2:169; Ralph Ketcham, "James Madison and the Nature of Man," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 19 no. 1 (January 1958), 63-67.

"The general policy of America is at present pointed at the encouragement of Agriculture, and the importation of the objects of consumption. The wid[er] therefore our ports be opened and the more extensive the priviliges of all competitors in our Commerce the more likely we shall be to buy at cheap & sell at profitable rat[es]," he wrote to Edmund Randolph in 1783. "But in proportion as our lands become settled, and spare hands for manufactures & navigation multiply, it may become our policy to favor these objects."⁶ In the late 1780s, Madison opposed protective tariffs and discounted the idea that a lack of domestic manufactures would leave the United States dependent on other nations. Madison believed that European desire for American agricultural products would overcome all obstacles to trade, including war. "Neutral nations, whose rights are becoming every day more & more extensive," Madison wrote, "would not now suffer themselves to be shut out of our ports."⁷

Madison believed the United States could manipulate the European balance of power to their own advantage. Trade gave the United States a strategic invulnerability that would remove the need for a dangerous and unrepblican military

⁶ James Madison to Edmund Randolph, May 20, 1783, in James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison*, 17 vols. date. William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal, et al., eds. (Chicago and Charlottesville: University of Chicago Press and University Press of Virginia, 1959-), 7:59-60.

⁷ James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, Jan. 9, 1787, *ibid.*, 9:244-245.

establishment. His view was not dissimilar to that of John Adams in drafting the Model Treaty, but while Adams gave up on economic coercion in the 1780s, Madison never did. Madison unwittingly staked the survival of republican government on the actions of other nations. Madison's system demanded that European nations see their interests as he saw them, in equitable trade arrangements and recognizing an American claim to navigate the Mississippi. Madison's great fear was not that European nations would act other than as he supposed they would but that diplomats from the eastern states would sell out Virginia's interests in favor of their own section.

For Madison, navigation of the Mississippi was vital to American independence and the preservation of republican government. When Madison entered the Continental Congress in 1779, he became one of the more vocal defenders of American claims on the Mississippi. He argued that under natural law, usage and mutual benefit gave the United States a natural claim to the right to navigate the entire course of the Mississippi.⁸ In a long letter to John Jay concerning Jay's instructions as minister to Spain, Madison listed five reasons why the United States should insist on its rights on the Mississippi: the Mississippi formed a natural boundary, the United States could not prevent western settlement, the territory east of the Mississippi fell within the colonial charters, the territory already included American citizens,

⁸ Brant, *JM*, 1:82; Ketcham, *JM*, 96-98.

and the United States needed the river more than Spain did. "An *innocent passage* (says Vattel) is due to all nations with whom a state is at peace," Madison continued, "and this duty comprehends troops equally with individuals."⁹ The Virginia delegates in Congress advised Governor Jefferson to instruct the delegation not to give up the right to the Mississippi in exchange for a Spanish alliance unless absolutely necessary.¹⁰

In defending the American claim to the Mississippi, Madison acted, in Lance Banning's term, as a "Virginia Continentalist." He sought the Mississippi as a Virginia interest but also as an interest of the whole nation.¹¹ In November 1780 Madison attacked the notion that the United States should give up the Mississippi to gain peace and implicitly criticized the idea that the Mississippi and the fisheries were equivalent interests. "Obstacles enough will be thrown in the way of peace, if [it] is to be bid for at the expense of particular members of the Union," Madison wrote. "The Eastern States must on the first suggestion take alarm for their fisheries. If they will not support the other States in their rights, they cannot expect to be supported themselves

⁹ James Madison to John Jay, Oct. 17, 1780, in *PJM*, 2:130-132.

¹⁰ Virginia Delegates to Thomas Jefferson, Dec. 13, 1780, *ibid.*, 2:242.

¹¹ Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison & the Founding of the Federal Republic* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), 42. See also McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 204-205.

when theirs come into question."¹² Unlike John Adams, Madison believed a navy and a large merchant marine were incompatible with republican government. Madison therefore considered the fisheries merely the special interest of New England, rather than a national interest. Madison advocated southern participation in a navy only as a hedge against disunion, which would leave a well-armed North to prey on a rich and defenseless southern commerce.¹³

Military disaster in the South generally and particularly in Virginia moderated Virginia's demands. The American surrender at Charleston and defeat at Waxhaw in May 1780 wiped out most of the Virginia Continentals. British advance agents appeared in Virginia in the spring of 1780 and some 2200 British troops landed in October. On January 5, 1781, British troops seized Richmond, barely missing the fleeing state government.¹⁴ The Reverend James Madison notified his namesake and cousin of the disaster on January 18, writing, "by this time I suppose you have heard thro' many Channels of ye. Loss of our Capitol, & ye. Disgrace of Virginia."¹⁵ On February 1, 1781, Madison moved in Congress that the United States give up

¹² James Madison to Joseph Jones, Nov. 25, 1780, in *PJM*, 2:203.

¹³ James Madison to Edmund Randolph, Feb. 25, 1783, *ibid.*, 6:287.

¹⁴ Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 213-224.

¹⁵ The Rev. James Madison to James Madison, Jan. 18, 1781, in *PJM*, 2:293.

the right to navigate the lower Mississippi, where it flowed between Spanish banks, if that concession would secure a Spanish alliance.¹⁶

Fear of defeat and that Adams would prolong the war over the fisheries led Madison to support the instructions of June 15, 1781 that revoked Adams's peace commission. Madison himself sponsored the motion of July 12, 1781, to strip Adams of his power to negotiate a commercial treaty with Great Britain.¹⁷ To Madison, the new instructions were a concession to military necessity. "It is impossible to expect that France should maintain the war by her own treasury," the Virginia delegation informed Governor Thomas Nelson in October 1781.¹⁸ More than a year later Madison continued to defend the instructions of June 15, 1781. On July 24, 1782, Madison opposed a motion to reconsider those instructions. On August 8 Madison conceded that the instructions were, "a sacrifice of national dignity," but defended them as "a sacrifice of dignity to policy." "The situation of our affairs and circumstances of that time rendered this sacrifice necessary." Madison dismissed any suspicions of France, arguing that "our interests are as safe in her hands now as they were before or

¹⁶ Motion on the Navigation of the Mississippi, Feb. 1, 1781, *ibid.*, 2:302-303.

¹⁷ Stinchcombe, *French Alliance*, 174; Ketcham, *JM*, 93-94; Brant, *JM*, 2:137-144; Motion on John Adams's Commission and Instructions, July 12, 1781, in *PJM*, 3:188.

¹⁸ Virginia Delegates to Thomas Nelson, Oct. 9, 1781, *ibid.*, 3:281.

as if the ministers were left wholly to their own discretion."¹⁹

When the provisional treaty of peace arrived before Congress, Madison objected to the commissioners's blatant violation of their instructions. He suspected the worst of Adams, noting that Adams's dispatches from Europe were mainly "a *display of his vanity, his prejudice against the French Court & his venom against Doctr. Franklin.*"²⁰ In debating the treaty Madison noted that "many of the most judicious members" objected to the fact that the commissioners had not consulted the French. The separate article, written by Jay, that promised the British more territory in West Florida if they held it at the end of the war "was most offensive."²¹ "In this *business Jay has taken the lead ... Adams has followed with cordiality. Franklin has been dragged into it,*" Madison explained to Edmund Randolph.²² On the floor of Congress, Madison expressed surprise that the commissioners should blame their problems on the instructions of June 15, 1781.²³

With the conclusion of the war, the United States hoped

¹⁹ Comments on Instructions to Peace Commissioners, July 24 and Aug. 8, 1782, *ibid.*, 4:437, 5:33-34.

²⁰ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Feb. 11, 1783 (partially in code), *ibid.*, 6:221.

²¹ Notes on Debates, March 12-15, 1783, *ibid.*, 6:328.

²² James Madison to Edmund Randolph, March 18, 1783 (partially in code), *ibid.*, 6:355.

²³ Notes on Debates, March 19, 1781, *ibid.*, 6:363-364.

to resume trade with Great Britain as quickly as possible, but on a more equal level than in the colonial era. On May 6, 1783, Secretary Livingston submitted a draft treaty that re-established direct trade between the United States and the British West Indies, and allowed the United States into the carrying trade between the British West Indies and Europe. In exchange British merchants were allowed to trade in the United States on an equal footing with Americans. Madison believed the price for the West Indian trade was too high, warning Jefferson that the result would be a relapse into a state of dependency to Great Britain and revival of the "scotch monopoly." In the absence of a central government capable of making a better agreement, Madison suggested that the southern states encourage their own shipping. "The monopoly which formerly tyrannized over it [Virginia's commerce] has left wounds which are not yet healed," Madison wrote to Edmund Randolph on May 20, 1783. Four days later Randolph replied to Madison, "our ports are fully open to British ships: and I am sorry to see a general ardor after those commodities which public acts have so lately proscribed."²⁴ Two years later Madison complained to James Monroe that "our trade was never more completely monopolized by G.B. when it was under the direction of the British Parliament than it is at this

²⁴ Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity*, 65-67; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, May 13, 1783; James Madison to Edmund Randolph, May 20, 1783; Edmund Randolph to James Madison, May 24, 1783, in *PJM*, 7:39, 61, 73.

moment."²⁵

The "scotch monopoly" that Madison referred to was the Scottish factor system and Scottish control of the Virginia tobacco trade. The 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland admitted Scottish merchants into the colonial trade. As Virginians moved into the piedmont, resident factors of Scottish mercantile houses followed them, selling goods on credit based on the next year's tobacco crop. Large tidewater planters dealt directly with Glasgow and Edinburgh. The net effect was that all planters, large and small, were deeply in debt, amounting to two million pounds sterling by the eve of the revolution. The end of a brief export boom in 1772 led to the collapse of banks in Scotland and London, which in turn caused a contraction of credit. The credit collapse, combined with a glut on the tobacco market, drove Virginians deeper into debt. The crash of 1772 re-emphasized the dangers of debt and luxury, which according to Whig thought undermined the personal independence required for political virtue.²⁶

Madison did not wish to restrict trade but rather to remove it from a neo-colonial state. Madison's system required

²⁵ James Madison to James Monroe, June 21, 1785, *ibid.*, 8:307.

²⁶ Breen, *Tobacco Culture*, 38-39, 89-95; Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 27-30; Emory G. Evans, "Private Indebtedness and the Revolution in Virginia, 1776 to 1796," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, Vol. 28 no. 3 (July 1971), 349; Jacob M. Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade: The View from the Chesapeake, 1700-1776* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 135-137.

that the British and other nations bid for American trade. In the absence of national commercial regulations, Madison believed that Virginia would have to act on its own. On June 8, 1784, the Virginia House of Delegates took up the "Bill Restricting Foreign Vessels to Certain Virginia Ports," better known as the Port Bill. "Whereas the Trade and Commerce carried on between the Citizens of this Common Wealth and forreign Merchants would be placed on a more equal foundation, and expedition & dispatch thereby the better promoted if the Vessels of forreign Merchants trading to this State be restricted to certain Ports," the bill began. The bill stated that all ships other than Virginian would be restricted to Norfolk, Alexandria, York, Tappahannock, and Bermuda Hundred.²⁷ "We made a warm struggle for the establishmt. of Norfolk & Alexandria as our only ports," Madison informed Jefferson, "but we were forced to add York, Tappahannock & Bermuda Hundred in order to gain anything & to restrain to these ports foreigners only."²⁸

Madison hoped to end the British monopoly that subverted a republican political economy by inviting in competitors and by denying British merchants direct access to the planters, in

²⁷ Bill restricting Foreign Vessels to Certain Virginia ports, June 8, 1784, in *PJM*, 8:64-65; Drew R. McCoy, "The Virginia Port Bill of 1784," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 88 no. 3 (July 1975), 291-292.

²⁸ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, July 3, 1784, in *PJM*, 8:93.

the hope of replacing British middlemen with Virginians.²⁹ Madison "meant to reduce the trade of G.B. to an equality with that of other nations" and would not discriminate against merchants from other states. Only then could Virginia turn its supposed economic advantages over Europe into an effective diplomatic tool.³⁰ Madison preferred free trade, but that did not mean unregulated trade. He believed that before free trade could be established the United States had to be out of debt, and all other nations had to adopt a free system.³¹ He did not make the encouragement of Virginia shipping a priority. Madison wrote to James Monroe that if the southern states "are not their own carriers I shod. suppose it no mark either of folly or of incivility to give our custom to our brethren [in the eastern states] rather than to those who have not yet entitled themselves to the name of friends."³² Revisions of the Port Bill in 1786 and 1788 expanded the number of ports of

²⁹ Richard S. Chew III, "A New Hope for the Republic" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1992), 16-17.

³⁰ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Aug. 20, 1784, in *PJM*, 8:102-103.

³¹ James Madison to James Monroe, Aug. 7, 1785, *ibid.*, 8:333-335.

³² James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, April 16, 1781; James Madison to Edmund Randolph, Feb. 25, 1783; James Madison to James Monroe, Aug. 7, 1785, in *PJM*, 3:72, 6:287, 8:335; Drew McCoy has called the Port Bill "a classic mercantilist measure in that it specifically encouraged the development of a native (i.e. Virginian) seamen." "Port Bill," 293. Richard Chew is closer to the mark in arguing that encouragement of seamen was a minor part of the bill, "New Hope," 51-52.

entry for foreign and domestic shipping, essentially defeating the purpose of the original bill. Virginia's ratification of the Constitution in 1788 made the Port Bill unconstitutional.³³

Peace did not make the achievement of Madison's second goal, securing the right to navigate the Mississippi, any easier. In fact, Congress's inability to act may have made Spain more intransigent. In the summer of 1785, Spain sent Don Diego de Gardoqui to the United States to negotiate with Secretary Jay. The Count de Floridablanca, the Spanish foreign minister, forbade Gardoqui from making any concessions on Spain's claim of absolute control over the navigation of the lower Mississippi. However, Gardoqui could offer commercial concessions, including most-favored-nation status, and was willing to give up Spanish claims to territory north of 31 degrees north. Gardoqui even offered Spanish naval protection against the Barbary pirates. Jay, almost desperate to find a way out of the commercial depression, was anxious to bargain. By 1786 Jay was prepared to compromise on the Mississippi, which he had refused to do five years before. Jay would not give up the right to the lower Mississippi, but would agree to forbear the use for 25 years, enough time for the west to fill up with Americans. On August 3, Jay asked Congress to approve his actions, putting the choice as one between accommodation,

³³ McCoy, "Port Bill," 299-303.

war or disgrace.³⁴

In the West, settlement continued with or without an agreement with Spain. In the early 1780s, Virginians and non-Virginians alike poured into Kentucky. By 1784, all political groups within Kentucky agreed on separation from Virginia, in order to escape Virginia taxation and better organize defense against Indian attacks. Virginia leaders generally approved, but set conditions insuring that Kentucky would pay its share of the Virginia public debt. The Jay-Gardoqui negotiations complicated matters, leading some Kentuckians to favor independence from the United States as well as Virginia. General James Wilkinson secretly met with Spanish officials and urged them to hold the line against the United States, promising that Spain could reach an agreement with an independent Kentucky.³⁵

To Madison, the use of the Mississippi was central to the preservation of the republic. Free access to the Mississippi would promote the settlement of the west, which in turn would prevent the development of American manufactures, while

³⁴ Marks, *Independence on Trial*, 25-32.

³⁵ Norman K. Risjord, *Chesapeake Politics 1781-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 235-238; Patricia Watlington, *The Partisan Spirit: Kentucky Politics, 1779-1792* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 89-93; Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Pinckney's Treaty: America's Advantage from Europe's Distress*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 118-124.

producing a large market for foreign manufactures.³⁶ In May of 1786, James Monroe informed Madison of the progress of the Jay-Gardoqui negotiations, warning that Jay might agree to the closure of the lower Mississippi. Madison replied that it was a "dishonorable policy" to sell the "*affection of our ultramontane brethren*" in a treaty with a nation, "*whose government religion & manners unfit them, of all the nations in Christendom for a coalition with this country.*"³⁷ Monroe had worse news in August. "It is manifest here that Jay & his party in Congress are determin'd to pursue this business as far as possible," Monroe wrote, "either as the means of throwing the western people & territory without the Govt. of the U.S. and keeping the weight of population & govt. here, or dismembering the govt. itself, for the purpose of a separate confederacy."³⁸ In response to the negotiations, Madison submitted a resolution to the House of Delegates, claiming a natural right to the Mississippi and calling on the Virginia delegates in Congress to reject any attempt to surrender it. Madison returned to the Continental Congress in January 1787 and on April 18 proposed that negotiations with Spain be moved

³⁶ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Aug. 20, 1784, in *PJM*, 8:107.

³⁷ James Monroe to James Madison, May 31, 1786; James Madison to James Monroe, June 21, 1786 (partially in code), *ibid.*, 9:68-69, 82.

³⁸ James Monroe to James Madison, Aug. 14, 1786, *ibid.*, 9:104.

to Madrid and entrusted to Thomas Jefferson.³⁹

The Mississippi question led Madison to rethink the nature of the union. On March 20, 1785, Madison wrote a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette concerning the Mississippi which reveals Madison's thinking on the problem, and stands at the beginning of a line of argument he would complete in *Federalist* #10. As usual, Madison asserted a natural right to the Mississippi. "If the United States were to become parties to the occlusion of the Mississippi they would be guilty of treason against the very laws under which they obtained and hold their national existence." Furthermore, Spain had its policy backward. If Spain wanted peace, it should allow the Americans to cultivate their lands and use the Mississippi. Otherwise, the Americans who would have gone west would go to sea, where they could do Spain the most harm. "As these [settlements] become extended the members of the Confederacy must be multiplied, and along with them the Wills which are to drive the machine. And as the Wills multiply so will chances against a dangerous union of them," Madison explained. "We experience every day the difficulty of drawing thirteen states into the same plans. Let the number be doubled & so will the difficulty. In the multiplicity of our Counsellors, Spain may be told, lies her security," Madison wrote, no doubt thinking

³⁹ Resolution Reaffirming American Rights to Navigate the Mississippi, Nov. 29, 1786; Resolution to Transfer Negotiations with Spain to Madrid, April 18, 1787, *ibid.*, 9:182-183, 388.

of Kentucky as he did.⁴⁰ Here is an early indication of Madison's thinking on faction. "Extending the sphere," that is, increasing the number of interests in society, was of no use unless the government was capable of absorbing the extension. If such competence was the test of republican government, it was a test the confederation was failing.⁴¹

Whereas Adams's writings on the failure of the 1780s turned on the virtue of the people as reflected in the state governments, Madison's turned on the power of the states relative to the union. The American people, in Madison's view, had sufficient yeoman virtue (if not classical virtue) to sustain the republic. The weakness of the government threatened to force the United States prematurely into large-scale domestic shipping and manufactures. The problems of the United States could only be saved by a stronger national government. State solutions, such as the Port Bill, were no longer sufficient, if they ever were. "The states are every day giving proofs that separate regulations are more likely to set them by the ears than to attain the common object," Madison wrote to Jefferson. "When Massts. set on foot a retaliation of the policy of G.B. Connecticut declared her

⁴⁰ James Madison to the Marquis de Lafayette, March 20, 1785, *ibid.*, 8:251-252.

⁴¹ Cathy D. Matson and Peter S. Onuf, *A Union of Interests: Political and Economic Thought in Revolutionary America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 60-66.

ports free."⁴²

For answers, Madison looked to history. Between April and June of 1786, Madison composed his "Notes on Ancient and Modern Confederacies," intended for his private use. After surveying the history of confederacies, Madison came to one inescapable conclusion -- all confederacies fail. Furthermore, the failure of a confederation was often the result of a failure in diplomacy. The Achaean League fell when "the Romans seduced the members of the League by representing that it violated their sovereignty."⁴³ Madison devoted the longest section to a discussion of the United Netherlands, which seemed to offer the most lessons for the United States. The Netherlands' problems included a jealousy among the provinces and an extreme difficulty in getting anything accomplished. The United States had experienced both. Madison also noted that "Grotius has sd. that the hatred for his Countrymen agst the H. of Austria kept them being destroyed by the vices of their Constitution." Madison no doubt was thinking that war with Great Britain had overshadowed the defects of the Articles of Confederation. Peace had made those defects all the more obvious.⁴⁴

Madison attended the Annapolis Convention in September

⁴² James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, March 18, 1786, in *PJM*, 8:502.

⁴³ "Notes on Ancient and Modern Confederacies," April-June, 1786, *ibid.*, 9:8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9:16-17.

1786, one of only twelve delegates to appear. The convention only issued a call for another convention to meet at Philadelphia in May 1787, which the Virginia legislature unanimously approved.⁴⁵ Despite this small progress toward finding a solution, the union seemed closer to collapse. "We hear that great commotions are prevailing in Massts." James Madison informed his father. Shays's Rebellion did not suddenly convince anyone that the confederation was in trouble, but to Madison and other nationalists it was a symbol of all that had gone wrong.⁴⁶ Madison's mood seemed to worsen as the Philadelphia convention drew nearer. "Indeed the present System neither has nor deserves advocates; and if some strong props are not applied will quickly tumble to the ground," Madison complained to Edmund Pendleton. "The bulk of the people will probably prefer the lesser evil of a partition of the Union into three or more practicable and energetic Governments," Madison continued.⁴⁷

However, partitioning the union would only invite foreign interference and endanger republicanism. For Madison, the only acceptable solution was to create a balanced national

⁴⁵ Ketcham, *JM*, 185; James Madison to George Washington, Nov. 8, 1786, in *PJM*, 9:166.

⁴⁶ James Madison to James Madison, Sr., Nov. 1, 1786, in *PJM*, 9:154; David P. Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 123.

⁴⁷ James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, Feb. 24, 1787, in *PJM*, 9:294-295.

government. Madison explained to Washington that the government under the confederation lacked executive and judiciary branches, and the power to protect the states against each other or against internal enemies.⁴⁸ Unlike Adams, Madison focused on the balance of power between the states and the central government. "I hold it for a fundamental point that an individual independence of the States, is utterly irreconcilable with the idea of an aggregate sovereignty," Madison wrote to Edmund Randolph. "I think at the same time that a consolidation of the States into one simple republic is not less unattainable than it would be inexpedient."⁴⁹ Madison suggested two remedies to Jefferson, proportional representation and a veto over state laws. Both would free the central government from dependence on the states, and prevent the states from "thwarting and molesting each other, and even from oppressing the minority within themselves by paper money and other unrighteous measures which favor the interest of the majority."⁵⁰

In April 1787, Madison prepared a memorandum entitled,

⁴⁸ James Madison to George Washington, April 16, 1787, *ibid.*, 9:383-385.

⁴⁹ James Madison to Edmund Randolph, April 8, 1787, *ibid.*, 9:369.

⁵⁰ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, March 19, 1787, in *ibid.*, 9:318-319; Charles F. Hobson argues that the negative on state laws was central to Madison's solution to the republican crisis. "The Negative on State Laws: James Madison, the Constitution and the Crisis of Republican Government," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 36 no. 2 (April 1979), 218, 221-223.

"The Vices of the Political System of the United States," which he used in his speeches and copied for other members of the Constitutional Convention. Madison blamed most of the United States problems on the unchecked power of the states. The states had prevented the United States from meeting its obligations by failing to meet their tax quotas, and by passing laws preventing the execution of the peace treaty of 1783. The states had trampled on the rights of their own citizens and of each other.⁵¹ People and elected officials acted out of private interest rather than the public good. Madison recognized that a division into various interest groups was inevitable and could not be stopped by religious or personal influence.⁵² The only solution was to increase the number of interests that the central government acted upon, or rather to increase the scope of the government to contain the interests that already existed. "If an enlargement of the sphere is found to lessen the insecurity of private rights, it is not because the impulse of a common interest or passion is less predominant in this case with the majority," Madison wrote, "but because a common interest or passion is less apt to be felt and the requisite combinations become less easy to be formed by a great than a small number. The Society becomes broken into a greater variety of interests, of pursuits, of

⁵¹ "Vices of the Political System of the United States," April-June, 1787, in *PJM*, 9:348-355.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 9:353-355.

passions, which check each other."⁵³ Like Adams, Madison seemed willing to substitute a balance for virtue. Madison was no doubt influenced by David Hume's 1752 essay, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth." Hume also recognized the inevitability of faction and opposing interest, and proposed that the people be divided into as many smaller divisions as possible. However, Madison's and Hume's solutions were slightly different. Hume hoped to reorganize Parliament for more equal representation, but he could assume the existence of a national government. Madison had to create one.⁵⁴

Madison arrived in Philadelphia on May 3, and after nearly two weeks of anxious waiting, the Constitutional Convention met in Independence Hall on May 14. In his "Character Sketches" Georgia delegate William Pierce wrote that "in the management of every great question," Madison, "took the lead in the Convention, and tho' he cannot be called an Orator he is a most agreeable, eloquent, and convincing Speaker."⁵⁵ Madison set the convention's agenda from the beginning. He drew up a set of proposals that became the

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 356-357.

⁵⁴ Ketcham, *JM*, 186-187; David Hume, "The Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth," [1752], in David Hume, *Moral and Political Philosophy*. Henry D. Aiken, ed. (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1948), 380-383. Douglass Adair was the first to point out the connection between Hume and *Federalist* #10. See "'That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science': David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth Federalist," in *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, 93-106.

⁵⁵ Ketcham, *JM*, 190-192; William Pierce, "Character Sketches," in Farrand, *Records*, 3:94.

Virginia Plan, which Edmund Randolph submitted to the convention on May 29. The fifteen-point plan maintained the fiction that the delegates intended to have the Articles of Confederation "corrected & enlarged," and then moved on to propose an entirely new government. The Virginia Plan called for a bicameral legislature, with the lower house elected by the people and the upper house by the lower house, and each branch elected in proportion to each state's population. Each branch could originate legislation and veto state laws. The national legislature would choose an executive who would act with a national judiciary as a council of revision. The new government would provide for the admission of new states and guarantee republican government in each state. The plan provided for amendments, required an oath of loyalty to the union, and would be submitted to the states for ratification. Until the new government took effect, the Continental Congress would continue to function as the central government.⁵⁶

For a while, the convention seemed to fall in with Madison's hopes. On May 30 the Committee of the Whole voted to postpone discussion of the Virginia Plan in order to consider the nature of the union, and whether a federal union or a national government was needed. To Madison this issue was old

⁵⁶ "Virginia Plan," in *PJM*, 10:15-17; Madison's notes for May 29 in Farrand, *Records*, 1:18-23; Forrest McDonald has argued that Madison's reputation as an influential member of the Convention is inflated. While the final Constitution did bear little resemblance to the Virginia Plan, much of the debate was essentially a reaction to the Virginia Plan. McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 205-209.

ground, and he argued that a national government was needed to prevent dependence on the states.⁵⁷ The next day the convention took up Randolph's proposal for a bicameral legislature, with the lower house elected by the people. Madison argued that "the great fabric to be raised would be more stable and durable if it should rest on the solid foundation of the people themselves, than if it should stand merely on the pillars of the Legislatures." Both measures passed.⁵⁸ Within two weeks, Madison set the Convention on a path to create a national government. Despite two later defeats for Madison, the vote against the negative on state laws (June 8) and the vote for representation by state in the Senate (July 16), the debate was largely over the powers of a national government, rather than over a choice between a national government and a loose confederation.⁵⁹

The foreign policy questions of the convention centered on the power to make war and the power to regulate commerce and reflected the Opposition Whig fear that war augmented executive power. The debate over war powers directly involved the relationship between the executive and the legislature. On June 1 the Committee of the Whole began discussion of the

⁵⁷ Madison's notes, May 30, in Farrand, *Records*, 1:33, 37.

⁵⁸ Madison's notes, May 31; journal, May 31, *ibid.*, 1:49-50, 47-48.

⁵⁹ Madison's notes, June 8; journal, July 16, *ibid.*, 1:164-168, 2:13; Max Farrand, *The Framing of the Constitution of the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1913), 96-105.

composition and powers of the executive. Charles Pinckey of South Carolina "was for a vigorous Executive," but feared that its powers "might extend to peace & war &c which would render the Executive a Monarchy." Roger Sherman of Connecticut added that he "considered the Executive magistracy as nothing more than an instrument for carrying the will of the Legislature into effect, that the person or persons ought to be appointed by and accountable to the Legislature only."⁶⁰ Madison, along with James Wilson of Pennsylvania, argued that the executive powers "do not include the Rights of war & peace &c."⁶¹ On June 4, the convention approved a single executive with a partial veto over legislation. The next day the convention rejected the idea of legislative appointment.⁶²

Madison, like many Americans of the revolutionary era shared the Opposition Whig fear of executive power, which influenced his thinking on the war powers of the new government. "In time of actual war, the great discretionary powers are constantly given to the Executive Magistrate," Madison told the convention on June 29. "Constant apprehension of War has the same tendency to render the head too large for the body. A standing military force, with an overgrown Executive will not long be safe companions to liberty." Madison concluded with the classic Whig thesis, that the

⁶⁰ Madison's notes, June 1, in Farrand, *Records*, 1:64-65.

⁶¹ Rufus King's notes, June 1, *ibid.*, 1:70.

⁶² Journal, June 4-5, *ibid.*, 1:93-94, 116.

"means of defence agst. foreign danger have always been the instruments of tyranny at home."⁶³ In Great Britain, the power to make war, that is, to decide on war and to wage it, rested with the king, although Parliament gained greater influence over foreign policy during the eighteenth century. On August 17, Madison and Gerry divided the two aspects of the war power, giving Congress the decision, in the power to declare war and giving the executive the power to repel sudden attacks. The motion passed 7-2.⁶⁴

The debate over commercial regulations threatened to stir up sectional conflict. Madison opposed a prohibition on export duties, arguing that one day they might be necessary to raise revenue or to force "equitable regulations from other nations." However, a solid bloc of southern states and two shipping states, Massachusetts and Connecticut, voted to prohibit export duties.⁶⁵ The debates also developed how the new government could contain sectional disputes. General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina captured the spirit of mutual concessions best when he told the convention that it was not in the southern interest to have any regulation of commerce, but northern concessions on the slave trade demanded a generous response. The rich but weak southern states needed the support of the northern, and to get it,

⁶³ Madison's notes, June 29, *ibid.*, 1:465.

⁶⁴ Madison's notes, Aug. 17, *ibid.*, 2:318-319.

⁶⁵ Madison's notes, Aug. 21, *ibid.*, 2:361-364.

Pinckney was willing to give Congress complete control of commercial policy.⁶⁶ Madison also noted that a navigation act would harm the South by raising shipping rates, but congressional power to regulate commerce would remove a major source of interstate conflict.⁶⁷ In a sense, the debate over commercial regulation showed how each section was willing to use the other. The South was willing to allow national commercial regulation as long as population growth seemed to favor the South. The North was willing to protect staple exports for the possibility of protecting shipping and manufacturing. The point of the new government was that it could protect the interests of all sections.⁶⁸

The convention spent the last few weeks on the exact wording of the Constitution, which the convention unanimously approved on September 17.⁶⁹ Madison intended the Constitution to solve several problems. First, it would create a government that would protect national interests. Second, it could achieve the two foreign policy goals Madison believed vital to the survival of republican government. The constitution would form a government strong enough to keep open the Mississippi thereby keeping the West in the union, preventing European interference in American politics, and preserving a republican

⁶⁶ Madison's notes, Aug. 29, *ibid.*, 2:449-450.

⁶⁷ Madison's notes, Aug. 29, *ibid.*, 2:451-452.

⁶⁸ Madison and Onuf, *Union of Interests*, 119.

⁶⁹ Journal, Sept. 17, in Farrand, *Records*, 2:641.

political economy. The new government could also more fully regulate commerce and pass laws designed to force Great Britain into a more equitable trade relationship. By preserving an outlet for western products through the Mississippi, and creating a freer trade system on the Atlantic, the United States could preserve and exploit its agriculture as a diplomatic tool. Therefore, Madison believed that the Constitution prevented the United States from being driven into domestic manufactures. It would create a government that would protect sectional as well as national interests.⁷⁰ Moreover, Madison helped create what Gordon Wood calls, "a new and original sort of republican government," one that did not require virtue for its success.⁷¹ However, Madison's defeats on state representation in Congress and the negative on state laws made him pessimistic. "I hazard an opinion that the *plan should* it be adopted will neither effectively answer its *national objects* nor prevent the local mischiefs which every where *excite disgusts* agst. the *state governments*," Madison wrote to Jefferson.⁷²

Madison further explained his views on the new Constitution in a letter to Thomas Jefferson on October 24,

⁷⁰ McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 121-124, 131-134; Forrest McDonald correctly points out that Madison's nationalism was always tempered by his concern for Virginia's interests, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 204-205.

⁷¹ Wood, *Creation*, 475.

⁷² James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Sept. 6, 1787 (partly in code), in *PJM*, 10:163-164.

1787. Early on, the convention abandoned the idea of a confederation and "embraced the alternative of a Government which instead of operating on the States, should operate without their intervention on the individuals composing them." The convention had four goals; to provide for an executive and a stable legislature, to draw a line between federal and state power, to safeguard sectional interests, and to settle disputes between the large and small states.⁷³ The delineation of federal and state power was the most difficult. The only solution was a federal negative on state laws. "Without such a check in the whole over the parts, our system involves the evil of imperia in imperio," Madison argued. "If a compleat supremacy some where is not necessary in every Society, a controuling power at least is so."⁷⁴ The negative was also necessary for the protection of individual rights. For proof, Madison turned to his now-familiar analysis of faction. All civilized societies developed various interests in religion, politics and economics. In such a state, simple majority rule would easily become tyranny. Such an "extended sphere" required a more complex government that could prevent interests from combining to oppress the minority.⁷⁵ "Divide et

⁷³ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Oct. 24, 1787, *ibid.*, 10:207-208.

⁷⁴ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Oct. 24, 1787, *ibid.*, 10:209.

⁷⁵ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Oct. 24, 1787, *ibid.*, 10:212-214.

imperiam, the reprobated axiom of tyranny," Madison argued, "is under certain qualifications, the only policy by which a republic can be administered on just principles."⁷⁶ Madison had never based his republicanism on a classical model of citizenship. In 1787 he also reversed the classical idea that a republic had to be small and homogeneous. Madison, like Adams, reached the conclusion that balance could be substituted for classical virtue as the theoretical basis for the American republic.

Whatever its flaws, Madison believed the Constitution was "the best that could be obtained from the jarring interests of States, and the miscellaneous opinions of Politicians."⁷⁷ "It is not necessary that the former should be perfect," Madison wrote in *Federalist* #38, comparing the proposed new government to the old, "it is sufficient that the latter is more imperfect."⁷⁸ Ratification was by no means assured, and Madison's own early tally showed New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey and Maryland for ratification, with Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and Virginia badly split.⁷⁹ Madison

⁷⁶ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Oct. 24, 1787, *ibid.*, 10:215.

⁷⁷ James Madison to Philip Mazzei, Oct. 8, 1788, *ibid.*, 11:278.

⁷⁸ James Madison, *Federalist* #38, in Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and James Madison, *The Federalist*. Jacob E. Cooke, ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 246.

⁷⁹ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Oct. 24, 1787, in *PJM*, 10:216-217.

helped gain ratification in two ways; as coauthor of *The Federalist* and as a member of the Virginia ratifying convention. In October of 1787, Madison met with Alexander Hamilton and John Jay to collaborate on *The Federalist*, written under the pseudonym "Publius." Jay fell ill in November, leaving Hamilton and Madison to write most of the essays. The result, as Irving Brant put it, was to "admit a larger proportion of Madison's philosophy into a commentary destined to become a political guidebook."⁸⁰

Madison's first effort, *Federalist* #10, appeared on November 22, 1787. It is generally seen as the most important among the essays, and is the most prone to conflicting interpretations. William Appleman Williams, for example, has argued that Madison used the term "extend the sphere," in the literal sense of physical expansion, and that continental expansion was the only way to preserve republican government.⁸¹ Portraying *Federalist* #10 as a forward-looking document takes it out of its political context. *Federalist* #10 can be read as a summation of the influence of the Mississippi question on Madison's thinking, specifically forcing Madison to explain how an extended republic would work. It was a defense of past expansion rather than a call for future

⁸⁰ Brant, *JM*, 3:171; Ketcham, *JM*, 239.

⁸¹ William Appleman Williams, "The Age of Mercantilism: An Interpretation of the American Political Economy, 1763-1828," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 15 no. 4 (October 1958), 424-426.

expansion.

Madison began with what had become his standard analysis of faction. "By a faction I understand a number of citizens whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and activated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of the other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community," Madison explained.⁸² Madison learned from the Scottish common sense school that factionalism was an inevitable and unchanging feature of human behavior. Factions sprang from any number of causes, including "a zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning Government and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice."⁸³ "But the most common and durable source of factions, has been the various and unequal distribution of property," Madison wrote, guaranteeing that civilized society contained a multitude of different interests. "The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principle task of modern Legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operation of the

⁸² *Federalist* #10, Nov. 22, 1787, in *The Federalist*, 57.

⁸³ *Federalist* #10, *ibid.*, 58-59; Douglass Adair "'That Politics May be Reduced to a Science:' David Hume, James Madison and the Tenth Federalist," in *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, 95-97; Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," in Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein and Edward C. Carter II, eds. *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 71-74.

Government."⁸⁴

Next, Madison moved on to the advantage of a republic over a democracy. Arguing against Montesquieu's theory that a republic could exist only in a small territory, Madison wrote that the chief advantage of a republic was "the greater number of citizens, and greater sphere of country, over which the latter may be extended."⁸⁵ In a simple democracy, which would necessarily be a smaller society, it would be easier to form a majority that could control the government. "Extend the sphere, and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests," Madison wrote, "you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of the other citizens."⁸⁶ "The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular States, but they will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other States" Madison concluded, "a religious sect, may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the Confederacy, but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it, must secure the national Councils against any danger from that source."⁸⁷ The threats of division that accompanied the Jay-Gardoqui negotiations forced Madison to

⁸⁴ *Federalist* #10, in *The Federalist*, 59.

⁸⁵ Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 1:120; *Federalist* #10, in *The Federalist*, 62.

⁸⁶ *Federalist* #10, *ibid.*, 63-64.

⁸⁷ *Federalist* #10, *ibid.*, 64-65.

explain how a republic could exist over a territory that some already considered too large. The only way was to split the thirteen state interests into a myriad of individual interests by creating a government that acted directly on those individual interests, and contained them within a balanced structure.

Two later *Federalist* essays shed further light on Madison's thinking in *Federalist* #10. Madison returned to the size of the republic in *Federalist* #14, and argued that the natural limit of the republic was the furthest distance a representative could travel. The thirteen original states clearly fell within those limits. The average distance from the Atlantic to the Mississippi was 750 miles which still fell within the natural boundaries of a republic.⁸⁸ Madison revisited the problem of faction in *Federalist* #51, specifically addressing the issue of religious freedom. Madison compared political to religious liberty, arguing that "the degree of security in both cases will depend on the number of interests and sects." The number of interests and sects, in turn, "may be presumed to depend on the extent of country and number of people comprehended under the same government."⁸⁹ Although Madison wrote that economic factions were the most "common and durable," it seems clear that he regarded political and religious conflicts as the more

⁸⁸ *Federalist* #14, Nov. 30, 1787, *ibid.*, 85-86.

⁸⁹ *Federalist* #51, Feb. 6, 1788, *ibid.*, 351-352

immediately dangerous, as shown in the Virginia politics of the 1780s. Madison certainly did not rule out future expansion. However, *Federalist* #10 did not demand it. Madison wrote primarily to defend expansion that had already taken place.⁹⁰

Madison devoted much of his effort to explaining the two chief balances of the Constitution -- between the branches of government and the between the states and the central government. "The novelty of the undertaking immediately strikes us," Madison wrote in *Federalist* #37.⁹¹ "Experience has instructed us that no skill in the science of Government has yet been able to discriminate and define, with sufficient certainty its three great provinces, the Legislative, Executive and Judiciary," Madison wrote, "or even the privileges, and powers of the different Legislative branches." The "interfering pretensions of the larger and smaller states" only complicated matters.⁹² Part of the problem was that in republics, the lower house of the legislature tended to dominate affairs, which Madison noted in *Federalist* #48 and *Federalist* #49.⁹³ Madison defended an independent, single executive and a bicameral legislature on these grounds. "In

⁹⁰ Paul Rahe advances a similar argument in *Republics Ancient and Modern*, 586-591.

⁹¹ *Federalist* #37, Jan. 11, 1788, in *The Federalist*, 233.

⁹² *Federalist* #37, *ibid.*, 235, 237.

⁹³ *Federalist* #48, Feb. 1, 1788 and *Federalist* #49, Feb. 2, 1788, *ibid.*, 333-334, 341.

republican government the legislative authority, necessarily, predominates," Madison wrote in *Federalist* #51. "The remedy for this inconveniency is to divide the legislature into different branches; and to render them by different elections, and different principles of action." The relative "weakness of the executive may require on the other hand, that it be fortified."⁹⁴

The balance between the states and the central government was more difficult, perhaps because Madison himself was slow in accepting any state role in the central government.⁹⁵ Madison used the first half of *Federalist* #39 to argue that the Constitution did form a republican government, and the second half to outline its national and federal aspects. "But if the Government be national with regard to the *operation* of its powers, it changes its aspect again when we contemplate it in relation to the extent of its powers," Madison argued. "The proposed Constitution therefore is in strictness neither a national nor a federal constitution, but a composition of both."⁹⁶ Madison used *Federalist* #40 to ease the shock of the new government, arguing that the principles of the Constitution were merely "the expansion of principles which

⁹⁴ *Federalist* #51, *ibid.*, 350.

⁹⁵ Lance Banning, "The Practicable Sphere of a Republic: James Madison, the Constitutional Convention, and the Emergence of Revolutionary Federalism," in Beeman, *et al.*, eds. *Beyond Confederation*, 186-187.

⁹⁶ *Federalist* #39, Jan. 16, 1788, in *The Federalist*, 256-257.

are found in the Articles of Confederation," and that the new government was, as stated in the Virginia Plan, an "enlargement" of the old.⁹⁷ Madison hoped to allay fears of the central government. "The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the Federal Government, are few and defined," Madison wrote in *Federalist* #45. "Those which are to remain in the State Governments are numerous and indefinite."⁹⁸ Responding to accusations that the Constitution would wipe out the state governments, Madison wrote in *Federalist* #46 that the state and federal governments were merely "different agents and trustees of the people, instituted with different powers and designated for different purposes."⁹⁹

Madison did not focus on the foreign policy implications of the Constitution in *The Federalist*, but did agree with John Jay that the new government would solve the nation's diplomatic problems. Madison touched on the subject, and his writings give an insight to his thinking on future diplomatic problems. *Federalist* #41 is the key to Madison's conception of a republican foreign policy. Like the English Opposition writers, Madison believed a large peacetime military establishment was incompatible with liberty at home. Madison wrote that "the liberties of Rome proved the first victim of her military triumphs, and that the liberties of Europe, as

⁹⁷ *Federalist* #40, Jan. 18, 1788, *ibid.*, 262-263.

⁹⁸ *Federalist* #45, Jan. 26, 1788, *ibid.*, 313.

⁹⁹ *Federalist* #46, Jan. 29, 1788, *ibid.*, 315.

far as they ever existed, have with few exceptions been the price of her military establishments."¹⁰⁰ Madison believed that the proper form of government, such as the Constitution provided, combined with a physical separation from Europe provided all the protection necessary against foreign invasion, and eliminated the need for a large military. "America united with a handful of troops, or without a single soldier, exhibits a more forbidding posture to foreign ambition, than America disunited, with an hundred thousand veterans ready for combat," Madison wrote. Furthermore, the union "will be the only source of our maritime strength."¹⁰¹

Madison's public enthusiasm for a navy fluctuated depending on his audience. As he wrote *The Federalist* to sway New York, he played up the naval angle more than usual. In addition, Madison doubtless realized that within a few days his essay would appear in the Boston newspapers, where the Massachusetts convention was at that moment considering ratification.¹⁰² The bedrock of Madison's diplomacy was not a navy, but a strong union that would prevent foreign powers from playing one state off another, and effectively regulate commerce. That way, the United States could avoid the fate of continental Europe.

In considering the powers of the House of

¹⁰⁰ *Federalist* #41, Jan. 18, 1788, *ibid.*, 271.

¹⁰¹ *Federalist* #41, *ibid.*, 271-272, 274-275.

¹⁰² *Federalist* #41, *ibid.*, 275.

Representatives, Madison wrote in *Federalist* #53 that, although the House did not directly participate in foreign negotiations, "from the necessary connection between the several branches of public affairs, those particular branches will frequently deserve attention in the ordinary course of legislation, and will sometimes demand particular legislative sanction and cooperation."¹⁰³ Madison did not elaborate on this point, but Madison's actions in the 1790s suggest that the "ordinary course of legislation" most likely included commercial regulations and war.

There was still the matter of Virginia's ratification. Madison returned to Virginia from Philadelphia in March 1788 and was promptly chosen to represent Virginia in the ratifying convention. He arrived in Richmond on June 2.¹⁰⁴ Patrick Henry led the antifederalist assault, attacking the Constitution, in an apocalyptic tone, for giving up Virginia's power and security, and for abandoning a government that had led the United States to independence.¹⁰⁵ Madison responded that Virginia's liberty was safe under the Constitution and that a strong central government was the defense against foreign

¹⁰³ *Federalist* #53, *ibid.*, 364.

¹⁰⁴ Ketcham, *JM*, 250-253.

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Henry, speech of June 5, 1788, in John P. Kaminski and Gaspare J. Saledino, eds. *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution: Virginia*, 3 vols. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988-1993), 2:593.

danger.¹⁰⁶ After three weeks of debate, Virginia approved the Constitution on June 25, 1788, becoming the tenth state to do so.¹⁰⁷

Students of political thought have noted that John Adams and James Madison shared a commitment to balanced government.¹⁰⁸ They also shared at least a grudging acceptance of the modern world. These similarities, however, mask a large gap between the two. Both were prepared to abandon the need for classical martial virtue as the theoretical basis of the republic. However, Madison did cling to the belief that republican foreign policy could manipulate the conduct of other nations, whereas Adams did not. The Constitution was for Madison an instrument designed to harness the commercial power he believed would shield the republic from European politics and secure diplomatic goals without recourse to a military. Madison did not share Adams's vision of a republican *realpolitik*; instead, Madison embraced a commercial diplomacy that represented a hybrid of Opposition fear of military power with his vision of a republican political economy.

¹⁰⁶ James Madison, speech of June 9, 1788, in *PJM*, 11:82.

¹⁰⁷ Ketcham, *JM*, 263-264.

¹⁰⁸ Both Charles Beard and Robert Brown credit Adams and Madison jointly for the ideas behind the Constitution. Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), 314; Robert E. Brown, *Charles Beard and the Constitution: A Critical Analysis of "An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution"* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956), 189.

CHAPTER 6: ENGINES OF THE EXECUTIVE

"The Country persuasion was an ideology of suspicion and resistance, tough and serviceable for purposes of revolution, though less of an asset when it came to nation-building," Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick wrote in *The Age of Federalism*. James Madison disagreed, believing that English Opposition thought was the key to American nation-building and its outward expression, the making of foreign policy.¹ Unlike John Adams, James Madison saw an independent legislature as the prime mover in foreign affairs. Madison did not trust the executive with sole control over the war power, concluding that such a grant of power was too similar to monarchical practice.² Madison interpreted the events of the 1790s within the framework of English Opposition thought. Madison believed that republicanism was under assault from two fronts; at home, from Alexander Hamilton's fiscal plans, which threatened to undermine agrarianism and a republican political economy, and abroad, from a Federalist diplomacy controlled by the

¹ Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 24.

² Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party*, 116-119. Ketcham argues that Madison also accepted the "Patriot King" as the model for the executive. However, Madison hoped for an independent president that would carry out rather than initiate policy.

executive that favored British monarchy over French republicanism.

As a member of the House of Representatives, Madison immediately planned to use the new government to raise a public revenue and free American trade from British domination. He introduced a proposal on April 8, 1789, to revive the impost of April 18, 1783. He proposed higher duties on such items as rum, wine, molasses, sugar, coffee and tea and called for staggered duties on tonnage. Madison proposed that American-built and owned ships pay the lowest tonnage duties, followed by ships from nations in a commercial treaty with the United States (specifically French ships). Ships from other nations (especially Great Britain) would pay the highest duties.³ Madison had learned from the French Physiocrats and the Scottish Common Sense school to oppose commercial restrictions in principle, telling the House of Representatives that, "if industry and labor are left to take their own course they will be directed to those objects which are the most productive, and this is a more certain and direct manner than the wisdom of the most enlightened legislature could point out." However, American ships would disappear from the sea if the United States kept its ports open while other nations maintained closed systems.⁴ Furthermore, the United

³ Ketcham, *JM*, 280-282; Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 69-74; Speech of April 8, 1789, in *PJM*, 12:65-66.

⁴ Speech of April 9, 1789, in *PJM*, 12:71-72.

States could not afford free trade as long as American trade to foreign ports was "restrained to an artificial channel."⁵

Madison's plan for commercial discrimination and his entire system of republican diplomacy through the War of 1812, rested on his almost unshakable faith in the power of American commerce, specifically the export of agricultural goods, to break down the British mercantile system. Economic power as tool of diplomacy avoided the use of a military and would prevent the means of diplomacy from turning against domestic liberty. "It would be proper to consider the means of encouraging the great staple of America, I mean agriculture," Madison told the House of Representatives on April 9, 1789, "other nations can and do rival us [in manufactures] but we may be said to have a monopoly in agriculture."⁶ "The produce of this country is more necessary to the rest of the world than that of other countries is to America," Madison added on April 25.⁷ Great Britain needed the United States as an export market; and the British West Indies were virtual economic hostages to America. "The supplies of the United States are necessary to their existence, and their market to the value of her islands," Madison explained to Jefferson. Trade also gave the United States a military advantage. "In time of war, which

⁵ Speech of April 21, 1789, *ibid.*, 12:100.

⁶ Speech of April 9, 1789, *ibid.*, 12:71; Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern*, 733.

⁷ Speech of April 25, 1789, in *PJM*, 12:112.

is generally decided in the West Indies, friendly offices not violating the duties of neutrality," Madison continued, "might effectually turn the scale in favor of an adversary."⁸ "As to the British West-Indies, it had been fully shewn, that they could neither prosper nor subsist without the market of the United States," Madison argued a year later, "they were fed from our granaries."⁹

Madison's main goal was to break the British stranglehold on American trade by encouraging other nations to compete to buy American exports and sell the United States their manufactured goods and shipping services. Commercial discrimination would preserve republicanism by preventing the development of domestic manufacturing industries and a large-scale shipping industry existing independently of agricultural production. Also, commercial diplomacy would secure American diplomatic goals without war, which Madison believed was republicanism's greatest enemy.¹⁰ Unfortunately for Madison, the New England congressmen opposed Madison's proposals, forcing Madison to shift his argument to appease them, emphasizing results which he believed New Englanders would

⁸ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, June 30, 1789, *ibid.*, 12:269-270; Combs, *Jay Treaty*, 78-79.

⁹ Speech of May 4, 1790, in *PJM*, 13:218.

¹⁰ Drew McCoy argues that Madison, in addition to breaking the British hold on American trade, *did* hope to develop a domestic shipping. However, McCoy has ignored Madison's view of sailors in "Republican Distribution of Citizens." McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 137-145.

favor.¹¹ Madison told the House of Representatives on April 21, 1789, that his proposals were needed "to form a school for seamen, to lay the foundation for a navy."¹² "I am a friend to the navigation of America, and shall be always ready to go as great lengths in favor of that interest as any gentlemen on this floor," Madison declared on May 4.¹³ Speaking on trade regulations a year later, Madison argued that if the British maintained their trade practices "our own navigation and manufactures would in the meantime be encouraged."¹⁴

Madison certainly believed that shipping and manufactures could increase as a result of commercial discrimination, but he left the New Englanders with the false impression that he himself favored those ends. Madison hoped and believed that Great Britain would alter its navigation system first. Throughout the 1780s, Madison argued against encouraging manufactures as being incompatible with a republican political economy. In his 1792 essay, "Fashion," Madison used the plight of Great Britain's shoe buckle manufacturers, left destitute by the increased use of laces, as a cautionary tale. "The condition of those who receive employment and bread from the precarious source of fashion and superfluity, is a lesson to

¹¹ Paul A. Varg, *New England and Foreign Relations, 1789-1850* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1983), 11-17.

¹² Speech of April 21, 1789, in *PJM*, 12:101-102.

¹³ Speech of May 4, 1789, *ibid.*, 12:126.

¹⁴ Speech of June 25, 1790, *ibid.*, 13:256.

nations as well as individuals," Madison wrote. "In proportion as a nation consists of that description of citizens, and depends on external commerce, it is dependent on the consumption and caprice of other nations." Madison agreed with Thomas Paine that food never went out of style.¹⁵

Neither did Madison view shipping as an unquestioned good. In his March 3, 1792, *National Gazette* article, "Republican Distribution of Citizens," Madison wrote that the "life of the husbandman is pre-eminently suited to the comfort and happiness of the individual." On the other hand, "the condition to which the blessings of life are most denied is that of the sailor." "How unfortunate, that in the intercourse, by which nations are enlightened and refined, and the means of safety extended," Madison continued, "the immediate agents should be distinguished by the harshest condition of humanity."¹⁶ It seems unlikely that Madison would have actively supported the expansion of a class he clearly believed to be unfit for republican government. Madison saw shipping as beneficial only if it were kept subordinate to agriculture. He did not seek to create an American shipping monopoly or, in contrast to his New England colleagues, encourage the carrying trade as a separate endeavor. Madison believed that commercial discrimination would promote American

¹⁵ "Fashion," March 20, 1792, *ibid.*, 14:258.

¹⁶ "Republican Distribution of Citizens," March 3, 1792, *ibid.*, 14:245.

shipping to the point of breaking the British hold on the American economy without creating a domestic rival to agriculture.¹⁷

Madison's diplomacy was realistic in that it rested on an accurate assessment of West Indian economics. The United States provided 90 percent of the flour and meal consumed in the British West Indies, as well as two-thirds of the grain and half of the salt meat and dried fish. The United States was Great Britain's largest export customer, importing 90 percent of its manufactured goods from Britain.¹⁸ However, West Indian economics did not dictate British policy. The navigation system was politically popular at home and did no economic damage. Furthermore, no other nation produced the manufactured goods that Americans wanted. Therefore, commercial diplomacy was unable to bend British policy to American wishes. "For What Advantage Can they expect to derive from a Treaty that they are not already possessed of?" one merchant complained to Madison.¹⁹

Madison was not the only statesman concerned with public finance. As secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton bore

¹⁷ McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 156-158. McCoy does not mention Madison's passage on sailors in his discussion of the *National Gazette* essays.

¹⁸ Combs, *Jay Treaty*, 25-28; Bradford Perkins, *The First Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1795-1805* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 12-14.

¹⁹ Combs, *Jay Treaty*, 87-89; Thomas Pleasants, Jr. to James Madison, July 10, 1790, in *PJM*, 13:271.

primary responsibility for putting the nation's fiscal affairs in order. Like Madison, Hamilton assumed a high volume of trade with Great Britain, but unlike Madison, Hamilton believed that restoring public credit was more important than forcing trade concessions. Revenue from imports and excise taxes could fund the entire national debt. On January 9, 1790, Hamilton submitted his Report on Public Credit to Congress. He proposed creating a sinking fund that would pay off the \$52 million national debt and allow the assumption of the \$25 million in state debts as part of the national debts. With public credit restored, Hamilton hoped to develop American fiscal and manufacturing power. On December 14, 1790, he proposed the creation of the Bank of the United States, which would provide a medium of exchange. Finally, on December 5, 1791, Hamilton submitted his Report on Manufactures, calling for protective tariffs and other measures designed to encourage the development of American manufacturing.²⁰

To Madison, Hamilton's fiscal plans represented nothing short of an attempt to impose a Walpolean system on the United States, which in Madison's opinion would inevitably lead to corruption and tyranny. In addition, Madison saw a threat to Virginia's interests from northern states replacing the pre-

²⁰ Forrest McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979), 149, 168-171, 192-194, 232-236; Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 123-131.

war obstacles Britain posed to managing Virginia's credit.²¹ Madison objected to the assumption of state debts on the grounds that, using its great holdings in western lands, Virginia had already paid its public debt and that, by increasing the national debt, assumption forced Virginia to pay toward the other states' debts. More important, Madison believed that debt itself was a political evil. "I am of the opinion also that the measure is not politic," Madison told the House of Representatives on April 22, 1790, "because, if, the public debt is a public evil, an assumption of the state debts will enormously increase, and, perhaps, perpetuate it." Madison moved on to his practical objections later in the same speech, noting that Virginians already suffered from a huge private debt. "If, sir, the state debts should be assumed, Massachusetts will then get rid of her embarrassments," Madison argued, "but what would be the situation of Virginia?"²² Hamilton's supporters dismissed such objections as the special pleading of local interests. Madison "is so much a Virginian; so afraid that the mob will cry out, *crucify him*; [he] sees Patrick Henry's shade at his bedside every night," Fisher Ames of Massachusetts observed.²³ Madison was

²¹ McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 152-155; Ketcham, *JM*, 312-315; Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 146-150; Richard R. Beeman, *The Old Dominion and the New Nation, 1788-1801* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 67-71.

²² Speech of April 22, 1790, in *PJM*, 13:167, 171.

²³ Fisher Ames to William Tudor, March 8, 1790, in Fisher Ames, *Works of Fisher Ames*, 2 vols. W.B. Allen, ed.

willing to trade one local interest for another, and agreed to support assumption in exchange for the promise that the capital would eventually be moved to a site on the Potomac.²⁴

Madison saw Hamilton's proposals for a bank and for American manufactures as additional threats to republicanism. "The construction of the constitution which have been maintained on the occasion [of introducing the proposal for a bank]," Madison argued, "go to the subversion of every power whatever in the several States."²⁵ "If Congress can do whatever in their discretion can be *done by money*, and will promote the *general welfare*, the Government is no longer a limited one possessing enumerated powers," Madison complained privately to Edmund Pendleton, "but an indefinite one subject to particular exceptions."²⁶ Madison attacked Hamilton's reports on the bank and manufactures publicly in a series of articles in the *National Gazette*. He criticized Hamilton's attempts to increase the power of the central government under the topic "Consolidation." "Let it be the patriotic study of all to maintain the various authorities established by our complicated system, each in its own respective constitutional

(Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1983), 1:729.

²⁴ Ketcham, *JM*, 307-310.

²⁵ Speech of Feb. 2, 1791, in *PJM*, 13:386.

²⁶ James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, Jan. 21, 1792, *ibid.*, 14:195.

sphere," Madison wrote.²⁷ Madison specifically attacked the Report on Manufactures under "Fashion," arguing that "the mutability of fashion" made manufacturing an unsuitable and unrepblican occupation for Americans.²⁸ In "The Union. Who are its Real Friends?" Madison denounced the Hamiltonian program as a whole. "In a word," he wrote, "those are real friends to the Union who are friends to that republican policy throughout, which is the only *cement* for the Union of a republican people in opposition to a spirit of usurpation and monarchy."²⁹ Hamilton's reports, and Madison's opposition to them, opened up the divisions that created the first party system. "Virginia moves in a solid column, and the discipline of party is as severe as the Prussian. Deserters are not spared," Fisher Ames observed in January of 1793. "Madison is become a desperate party leader, and I am not sure of his stopping at any ordinary point of extremity."³⁰

It was the question of foreign policy, shaped by the wars of the French Revolution, that locked the division between Federalist and Republican parties into place. In the beginning, the French Revolution did not affect the United States, except as a matter of speculation. Most Americans,

²⁷ "Consolidation," Dec. 3, 1791, *ibid.*, 14:139.

²⁸ "Fashion," March 20, 1792, *ibid.*, 14:259.

²⁹ "The Union. Who are its Real Friends?" March 31, 1792, in *ibid.*, 14:275.

³⁰ Fisher Ames to Thomas Dwight, Jan. 1793, in Ames, *Works*, 2:960.

including Madison, were sympathetic, hoping France would join the United States in the family of republics. The National Assembly in turn looked to the United States for guidance. "It is impossible to desire better dispositions toward us, than prevail in this assembly," Jefferson reported from Paris. "Our proceedings have been viewed as a model for them on every occasion; and tho' in the heat of debate men are generally disposed to contradict every authority urged by their opponents, ours has been treated like that of the bible, open to explanation but not to question."³¹

Four years later revolution turned to Anglo-French war, which Edmond Genet symbolically brought to the United States. American reaction hardened and sharpened the divisions that had emerged over Hamilton's reports.³² Hoping to have policy set before Genet arrived, Washington asked Hamilton and Jefferson for their opinions, and received diametrically opposed answers. Hamilton believed that the 1778 treaties died with Louis XVI, and recommended that Washington suspend them. Jefferson believed the treaties were still in force. Washington did not want to repudiate the treaties outright, but he did not have any intention of adhering to the articles

³¹ Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 158-159; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Aug. 28, 1790, in Jefferson, *Papers*, 15:366.

³² Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 273-275; Richard Buel, Jr. *Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), 52.

pledging American defense of the French West Indies. Hamilton gained only a tactical advantage when Washington issued the Proclamation of Neutrality on April 22, 1793.³³ The president did not use the word "neutrality" in the brief statement, but rather said that "the duty and interest of the United States require that they should with sincerity and good faith adopt and pursue a conduct friendly and impartial toward the belligerent powers."³⁴ Jefferson complained that Hamilton wanted to nullify the French treaty based on what Jefferson called "an ill-understood scrap of Vattel," which appeared to support the idea that a change in government voided treaties concluded by the previous government. Madison responded that "the attempt to shuffle off the Treaty altogether by quibbling on Vattel is equally contemptible for the meanness & folly of it."³⁵

Citizen Genet did not want American neutrality but American help, and he was prepared to use any means to obtain it. He landed at Charleston, South Carolina, on April 8 and began stirring up crowds and handing out blank military commissions. He slowly worked his way north, arriving in

³³ McDonald, *Hamilton*, 265-266; Bowman, *Struggle for Neutrality*, 52-54; Combs, *Jay Treaty*, 109-113; Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1958), 151-153, 205-206.

³⁴ Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 1:156.

³⁵ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, April 28, 1793; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, May 8, 1793, in *PJM*, 15:10, 13.

Philadelphia in May, where he continued to encourage pro-French sentiment. Worse still, he commissioned Americans as French privateers aboard the *Petite Democrate*. This action forced Jefferson to ask for his recall in August.³⁶

Hamilton himself led the Federalist charge against Genet and for the Proclamation of Neutrality in the newspapers, writing as "Pacificus" in the *Gazette of the United States* in the summer of 1793. In "Pacificus" #1, Hamilton defended the president's right to issue the Proclamation of Neutrality on the basis of the president's power to negotiate and execute treaties. He called the president the "organ of intercourse" with foreign nations, and therefore the branch of government with the right to interpret treaties.³⁷ In the course of his argument, Hamilton gave the president the right of initiative in foreign relations. He moved on to the specifics of the Franco-American relations in "Pacificus" #2. The military treaty of 1778, Hamilton argued, was purely defensive. The French decree of November 19, 1792, which called for a general revolt against all monarchies and promised French aid, proved that the current war was offensive on the French part.³⁸ Hamilton discounted the idea that the United States owed France military and commercial help out of gratitude. Such a

³⁶ Ammon, *Genet Mission*, 44-45, 65-73, 86-91, 108-110.

³⁷ "Pacificus" #1, June 29, 1793, in Hamilton, *Papers*, 15:38, 40, 43.

³⁸ "Pacificus" #2, July 3, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:56, 59-60.

policy, he argued, "will have a natural tendency to lead us aside from our own true interest, and to make us the dupes of foreign influence."³⁹

Republicans saw Federalist policy as further evidence of monarchism and as the diplomatic consequence of Hamilton's fiscal policies. Jefferson read Hamilton's essays in that light and urged Madison to "take up your pen, select the most striking heresies, and cut him to pieces in the face of the public."⁴⁰ Madison was a strong opponent of Washington's policy toward France, both on constitutional and policy grounds.⁴¹ He denied the president had the authority to declare neutrality without congressional approval. The president could not go further than a statement that the United States was at war or peace. "The right to decide the question [of peace or war] . . .," Madison wrote to Jefferson, "seems to me to be essentially & exclusively involved in the right of the Legislature, of declaring war in a time of peace, and in the P[resident]. & S[enate]. of making peace in time of war."⁴²

Madison responded to Hamilton in the *Gazette of the*

³⁹ "Pacificus" #3, July 17, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:106.

⁴⁰ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, July 7, 1793, in *PJM*, 15:43; Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 209-212.

⁴¹ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, May 8, 1793, in *PJM*, 15:13.

⁴² James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, June 13, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:29.

United States, writing as "Helvidius." These essays, although somewhat labored and legalistic in tone, come close to being a definitive treatise on the republican theory of foreign relations. The Constitution left the question of control of foreign policy vague. Madison, who clearly favored a prominent role for the legislature in the convention and in the *Federalist*, resolved that question in favor of the legislature. As Madison pointed out in *Federalist* #41, the United States was physically removed from European politics. Therefore, the president's power to repel sudden attacks would not figure into the power to conduct foreign policy. He sought to reverse the British formula of diplomatic initiative. In Great Britain, the war power belonged to the king. Parliament only entered the discussion at the end of the process, voting up or down, just in the sense of expressing public opinion on policy decisions that were already made. Madison placed the power to decide on war with Congress and then expanded the war power to include all matters that could affect the decision between war and peace, that is, every aspect of foreign policy. Madison's formulation placed Congress at the beginning of the policy process, reducing the president's role to administration rather than formation of policy. Madison also linked legislative control to a reliance on international law.⁴³ Madison had not expected the rise of the executive. "I

⁴³ Lang, *Foreign Policy*, 133-135; Edward Keynes, *Undeclared War: Twilight Zone of Constitutional Power* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 33; Samuel

see, and *politically feel* that will be the weak branch of the Government," Madison wrote in 1789. Events had since proven otherwise.⁴⁴

In his first "Helvidius" essay, Madison argued that a declaration of war was a law, and as such was the province of the legislature. "It is," Madison wrote, "one of the most deliberative acts that can be performed, and when performed, has the effect of *repealing* all the *laws* operating in a state of peace, so far as they are inconsistent with a state of war." According to the Constitution, Madison continued, this power rested with Congress. Madison discounted the presidential power over the military as having no bearing on the questions of foreign policy. "Those who are to *conduct a war* cannot in the nature of things, be proper or safe judges, whether a *war ought* to be *commenced, continued, or concluded*."⁴⁵ In his second essay, Madison followed this theme to its logical conclusion. Not only did Congress have the right to declare war, but also "to judge the causes of war," which implied that Congress, and not the president, should lead in making foreign policy. "The executive has no other discretion than to convene and give information to the legislature on occasions that may demand it," Madison wrote,

Flagg Bemis has noted that "international law itself was in a state of flux." Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 185.

⁴⁴ James Madison to Edmund Randolph, May 31, 1789, in *PJM*, 13:190.

⁴⁵ "Helvidius" #1, Aug. 24, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:69-71.

"and whilst this discretion is duly exercised the trust of the executive is satisfied, and that department is not responsible for the consequences."⁴⁶

Madison directly attacked Hamilton's views regarding the French treaties in his third essay. Citing such authorities as Vattel and Burlamaqui in his defense, Madison argued that the 1778 treaties remained in force despite the change in the French government.⁴⁷ Madison returned to the issues of legislative and executive power in his final two essays. "In no part of the constitution is more wisdom to be found than in the clause which confides the question of war or peace to the legislature, and not to the executive department," Madison wrote in "Helvidius" #4. He repeated the argument "that the executive has no right, in any case to decide the question, to decide whether there is or is not cause for declaring war." Madison also repeated a central tenet of Whig ideology when he wrote that "the executive is the department of power most distinguished by its propensity to war."⁴⁸ Madison attacked the Proclamation of Neutrality in his final essay. "In exercising the Constitutional power of deciding a question of war, the Legislature ought to be as free to decide, according to its own sense of the public good, on one side or the other side," Madison wrote. Washington's proclamation, Madison

⁴⁶ "Helvidius" #2, Aug 31, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:82, 86.

⁴⁷ "Helvidius" #3, Sept. 7, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:98-99.

⁴⁸ "Helvidius" #4, Sept. 14, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:108-109.

continued, was improper in that light.⁴⁹

However much Madison disagreed with Washington's policies, neither he nor his fellow Republicans could abide Genet's conduct. "Your acct. of G---- is dreadful," Madison wrote to Jefferson in July of 1793. Two months later, Madison wrote James Monroe that Genet's "conduct has been that of a madman." Jefferson himself concluded that Genet "*will sink the republican interest if they do not abandon him.*"⁵⁰ In the end, Genet's country abandoned him as well. On June 2, 1793, the Jacobins, led by Maximilien Robespierre, took control of the Convention. Beginning in the fall the new government sent its opponents, including Genet's political patrons, to the guillotine. The Jacobins feared that Genet had alienated the United States, and on November 17 Robespierre denounced Genet and generally accused the Girondins of treason. Jean Fauchet arrived at Philadelphia as the new French minister on February 21, 1794. Genet, knowing the guillotine awaited him in Paris, retired to permanent exile in New York.⁵¹

Despite Genet and despite the Terror, Republicans retained a basic sympathy for what they believed to be the republican ideals of the French Revolution. "Genet is a madman

⁴⁹ "Helvidius" #5, Sept. 18, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:116.

⁵⁰ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, July 18, 1793; James Madison to James Monroe, Sept. 15, 1793; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Aug. 15, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:45, 110-111, 50; Ketcham, *JM*, 343-344.

⁵¹ Ammon, *Genet Mission*, 112, 155-159, 171.

but do not let us quarrel with his nation," George Nicholas wrote to James Madison.⁵² Jefferson himself hoped for a French landing in Great Britain, writing that, "I should be tempted to leave my clover for awhile, to go and hail the dawn of liberty & republicanism in that island."⁵³ Conversely, the Republicans hated Great Britain, and Great Britain provided a reason in the Orders-in-Council of June 8 and November 6, 1793, and January 8, 1794. Long before Congress received word of the November 6 Order, Madison had decided on the proper policy toward Great Britain. Indeed, it was the same policy that he had advocated in 1789. On January 3, 1794, Madison introduced resolutions recommending commercial discrimination against Great Britain, using the same arguments he had used five years before. "We stand with respect to the nation exporting those luxuries in the relation of an opulent individual to the labor in producing the superfluties, for his accommodation," Madison told the House of Representatives, "the former can do without those luxuries, the consumption of which gives bread to the latter."⁵⁴ Madison discounted the possibility of war, arguing that "every consideration of

⁵² George Nicholas to James Madison, Feb. 9, 1794, in *PJM*, 15:256.

⁵³ Thomas Jefferson to William Branch Giles, April 27, 1795, in Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 12 vols. Paul Leicester Ford, ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904-1905), 8:172.

⁵⁴ Speech of Jan. 3, 1794, in *PJM*, 15:169.

interest must prevent it."⁵⁵ On March 25, the House of Representatives moved to stronger measures, taking up a sequestration of British debts and a non-importation act. The Committee of the Whole approved non-importation on April 15.⁵⁶ Madison complained that the appointment of John Jay as envoy extraordinary "has had the effect of impeding all legislative measures for extorting redress from G.B."⁵⁷

Madison opposed the Jay Treaty from the beginning, but as a member of the House of Representatives, there was little he could do beyond public criticism. By signing the treaty the United States "relapsed into some dependence" on Great Britain, Madison argued in his pamphlet "Political Observations."⁵⁸ Madison continued to oppose the treaty after its ratification in June of 1795. He summed up Republican anger in a draft petition, writing that the treaty "is in its present form unworthy the voluntary acceptance of an Independent people, and is not dictated to them by the circumstances in which providence has kindly placed them."⁵⁹

Madison attacked the treaty both as bad policy and as a violation of the Constitution. He drafted a petition to the

⁵⁵ Speech of Jan. 23, 1794, *ibid.*, 15:206.

⁵⁶ Combs, *Jay Treaty*, 121-122.

⁵⁷ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, May 11, 1794, in *PJM*, 15:327.

⁵⁸ "Political Observations," April 20, 1795, *ibid.*, 15:516.

⁵⁹ Draft of a Petition, Sept. 1795, *ibid.*, 16:75-76.

Virginia General Assembly in which he argued that the treaty interfered with Congress's power to regulate commerce.⁶⁰ When the House of Representatives convened in December, Madison observed to James Monroe that there was, "a clear *majority who disapprove the treaty* but it will *dwindle* under the *influence of causes well known* to you."⁶¹ Hoping to soften opposition, Washington submitted Pinckney's Treaty with Spain, which secured the right of deposit at New Orleans, to the Senate at the same time the House took up the appropriations needed to carry out the Jay Treaty. In the House, the Federalists played on the fear of war if the United States did not approve the appropriations.⁶²

In March 1796, Madison began to attack the treaty's constitutionality. The congressional power over appropriations placed the treaty before the House of Representatives, but Madison continued to base his arguments on the congressional war power. He joined in the demand that Washington deliver all of the papers connected with the treaty, and when the president refused, Madison complained that Washington had interfered with Congress's right to ask for such

⁶⁰ Petition to the General Assembly, Oct. 12, 1795, *ibid.*, 16:102.

⁶¹ James Madison to James Monroe, Dec. 20, 1795 (partly in code), *ibid.*, 16:170.

⁶² Combs, *Jay Treaty*, 180-183; DeConde, *Entangling Alliances*, 133; Bemis, *Pinckney's Treaty*, 267-281.

information.⁶³ Madison believed that the Jay Treaty made the treaty making power of the Senate and president superior to the war powers of Congress. The Constitution, he asserted, made the treaty power subordinate to the war power. The Jay Treaty was essentially an alliance with a power at war, Madison argued, and the treaty could drag the United States into the war without congressional approval. The United States could send troops around the world, or keep a standing army at home in peacetime, all as a result of the abuse of the treaty making power. "Under this aspect," Madison argued, the Treaty power would be tremendous indeed."⁶⁴ Madison attacked the provisions of the treaty in April. The treaty endangered American interests in the northwest by allowing the British to take part in the Indian trade, and completely reversed American policy by acceding to the British interpretation of neutral rights, and rejecting, "free ships, free goods." In the end Madison urged the House of Representatives to reject the appropriations needed to implement the treaty.⁶⁵

Madison met his match in Federalist Fisher Ames of Massachusetts. On April 28, 1796, Ames rose in defense of the Jay Treaty. In a lengthy speech, Ames declared that rejection of the appropriations meant war with Great Britain and then

⁶³ Speech of March 7 and April 6, 1796, in *PJM*, 16:254, 292-293.

⁶⁴ Speech of March 10, 1796, *ibid.*, 16:258-259.

⁶⁵ Speech of April 15, 1796, *ibid.*, 16:316-325.

listed every imaginable calamity that would come as a result. "If, however, the vote should pass to reject, and a spirit should rise, as it will with the public disorder, to make confusion worse confounded," Ames told the House, "even I, slender and almost broken as my hold upon life is, may outlive the government and Constitution of my country."⁶⁶ The Committee of the Whole voted 50-49 in favor of implementation on April 29. The next day the House passed the appropriations 51-48.⁶⁷

Madison was not surprised that settlement with Great Britain brought conflict with France; nor did he have much confidence that John Adams could resolve it successfully. Madison wrote Jefferson that "an awful scene appears to be opening upon us." Jefferson expressed some optimism that war could be avoided. "I do not believe Mr. A. wishes war with France," he wrote Madison, "nor do I believe he will truckle to England as servilely as has been done." Madison, however, expected that war would be "the fruit of the British Treaty."⁶⁸

Madison retired from the House of Representatives in March 1797, and from his home watched events with an

⁶⁶ Speech of April 28, 1796, in Ames, *Works*, 2:1182.

⁶⁷ Combs, *Jay Treaty*, 186-188.

⁶⁸ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Jan. 22, 1797; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Jan. 22, 1797; James Madison to James Madison, Sr., March 12, 1797, in *PJM*, 16:471, 474, 500-501.

increasing sense of doom. Since the late 1780s, Madison believed that Adams was at heart a monarchist, and viewed Adams's diplomacy accordingly. Madison fully expected that Adams would "go indirectly to war, by using the frigates as convoys and arming private vessels of which the owners & mariners will often be British subjects under American colours." Madison compared Adams unfavorably to Washington, with Adams "taking as great pains to get into war, as [Washington] took to keep out of it."⁶⁹

The aftermath of the XYZ Affair, particularly Adams's speech of March 19, 1798, only heightened Madison's fears. The speech was a product of the president's well-known "violent passions," and further proof of the Whig doctrine that, "the Ex. is the branch of power most interested in war & most prone to it." With the president and the Senate in complete control of foreign policy, "it is evident that the people are cheated out of the best ingredients in their Govt. the safeguards of peace which is the greatest of their blessings." The particulars of the XYZ Affair had no influence on Madison's thinking, as he believed the Federalists had manufactured the French crisis out of the Jay Treaty. Talleyrand's actions were no cause for war, Madison wrote to Jefferson, but he fully expected the Federalists to use them as such. Furthermore, the emphasis on naval action threatened to shift the basis of

⁶⁹ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Feb. 12 and 18, 1798, *ibid.*, 17:78, 82.

American political economy from agriculture to the carrying trade. By 1800 Jefferson believed the United States had gone "navigation mad, and commerce mad, and navy mad, which is worst of all."⁷⁰

"Perhaps it is a universal truth that the loss of liberty at home is to be charged to provisions agst. danger real or pretended from abroad," Madison wrote in response to the Federalist program. Viewing events through the lens of English Opposition thought, Madison saw the military buildup and the Alien and Sedition Acts as the logical conclusion of a Federalist attempt to create a British-style corrupt parliamentary government.⁷¹ As a private citizen, Madison could do little except offer advice. In the fall of 1798, Madison and Jefferson helped the Virginia and Kentucky legislatures draft responses to the Alien and Sedition Acts. Jefferson's draft of the Kentucky Resolutions declared the acts null and void and proposed creating committees of correspondence. Madison's Virginia Resolutions did not go quite as far. Madison did declare that the acts were unconstitutional, but advocated no action beyond sending the

⁷⁰ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, April 2 and 22, 1798, *ibid.*, 17:104, 118; Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestly, January 18, 1800, quoted in McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 174.

⁷¹ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, May 13, 1798, in *PJM*, 17:130; Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 259-263; Lawrence Delbert Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 137-139.

resolutions to other states.⁷²

As the Quasi-War continued, Madison stepped up his public activity. He published an anonymous essay of "Political Reflections," which reiterated his private opposition to Federalist policy. He again argued that "*the fetters imposed on liberty at home have ever been forged out of the weapons provided for defence against real, pretended, or imaginary dangers from abroad.*"⁷³ As a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, he wrote the Report of 1800, which reaffirmed and expanded on the principles of the Virginia Resolutions. "The constitution of the United States was formed by a sanction of the states, given by each in its sovereign capacity," Madison asserted, using an argument he had rejected thirteen years before. The states therefore had a right to determine whether or not the Constitution had been violated, and to decide whether or not, "such questions as may be of sufficient magnitude as to require their interposition." "Consolidation of the states into one sovereignty, would be to transform the republican system of the United States into a monarchy," Madison continued, and he opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts on those grounds. The acts concentrated power in the hands of the president. The states not only had a right to declare acts

⁷² Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Nov. 17, 1798; Virginia Resolutions, Dec. 21, 1798, in *PJM*, 17:178-181, 188-190.

⁷³ "Political Reflections," *Philadelphia Aurora and General Advertiser*, Feb. 23, 1799, *ibid.*, 17:242.

unconstitutional, but also a right to coordinate efforts among the several states.⁷⁴ By 1800, Madison was willing to give the states a greater role in national affairs than he had favored in 1787, a shift dictated by the need to preserve republican government. The doctrine of state interposition may be seen as the reverse side of the negative on state laws.⁷⁵

Federalist diplomacy confirmed for Madison the tenet of Opposition Whig thought that the tools of foreign policy could easily be turned against domestic liberty. Madison's approach to foreign policy in the 1790s reveals a duality in his thought regarding the connection between republicanism and diplomacy. Madison's long political experience showed him that republican theory did not always explain or conform to political practice. However, Madison's theories of how a republican diplomacy should work were unmodified by diplomatic practice. Unlike John Adams, Madison never abandoned the reformative aspects of republican diplomacy. It had not failed for Madison in the 1790s; it merely had not been tried. As secretary of state and president, Madison fully expected American agricultural produce to act as the republican sword and shield against monarchy at home and abroad. Madison's difficulties came when other nations did not act as he believed they would.

⁷⁴ "Report of 1800," *ibid.*, 309-310, 315-316, 324-328, 348.

⁷⁵ Hobson, "Negative on State Laws," 234-235.

CHAPTER 7: THE REPUBLICAN CRISIS

Like John Adams, James Madison came to executive office with little direct executive experience. Unlike Adams, Madison also had no direct experience in the conduct of diplomacy, apart from those elements of foreign policy that came before Congress. When he became secretary of state in 1801, Madison had spent twenty years in national politics determining the connection between republican government and foreign policy. In many ways, Madison's approach to the problem, and his strengths and weaknesses, were revealed in two *Federalist* essays, the famous *Federalist* #10 and the less well-known but for diplomacy equally important *Federalist* #41. In *Federalist* #10 Madison accepted as a fixed feature of human nature that people split into factions for a myriad of reasons. *Federalist* #10 provided a theory that fit around the fact of a territorially large and potentially larger American republic. *Federalist* #41, however, showed the extent to which Madison tried to force diplomacy to fit republican theory. *Federalist* #41 presumed that distance would shield the United States from Europe's wars, and that an effective union and national government would provide greater protection than any military organization. Madison's reaction to *Federalist* diplomacy

revealed what Madison considered a republican foreign policy. Madison emphasized the yeoman virtue of economic independence rather than classical martial virtue. Commercial coercion, Madison believed, was a far safer course for republican government than military preparation, agreeing with Gallatin and Jefferson that "pretended tax-preparations and army-preparations against contingent wars tend only to encourage wars."¹

Madison's combination of Opposition Whig thought and agrarian political economy led him to a belief in the omnipotence of American commercial power and an abhorrence of what the Federalists considered normal military preparation. Madison therefore unwittingly staked the survival of republican government on events he could not control. Madison assumed that national interests, like human nature, were fixed, and fixed in a way that benefitted the United States. Britain needed the United States to buy its manufactured goods and feed its West Indian colonies. France and Spain, to a lesser extent, required American supplies for their colonies, and would presumably want to cultivate American political friendship as a counterweight to Great Britain. Madison expected greater reason from nations than he did from the American people. He had no direct experience, as John Adams

¹ Ketcham, *JM*, 425; Albert Gallatin to Thomas Jefferson, c. Nov. 16, 1801, in Albert Gallatin, *The Writings of Albert Gallatin*, 3 vols. Henry Adams, ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott and Company, 1879), 1:71

had, to make him believe otherwise; there was no foreign policy equivalent of his electoral defeat of 1777. Madison's success in constitutional matters came when he shaped theory to match American practice. His failures as secretary of state and president came from his attempts to force the vagaries of diplomacy to conform to a theoretical model.

The two issues that shaped Madison's early exposure to foreign policy, control of the Mississippi River and trade with Great Britain, best reveal the connection between republican ideology and Madison's diplomacy. Pinckney's Treaty had temporarily settled the Mississippi question in 1795, and promised to do so as long as Spain owned Louisiana. In Rufus King's words, the Spanish were "quiet neighbours," and posed little threat to American interests.² Then Napoleon Bonaparte decided to use Louisiana in combination with the reconquest of St. Domingo as the basis for a new French empire in North America. French and Spanish negotiators concluded the Treaty of St. Ildefonso on October 1, 1800, which ceded Louisiana and six warships to France in exchange for an Italian kingdom for the Duke of Parma. France was not to take possession of Louisiana until it delivered the Italian territory. The retrocession of Louisiana, combined with the signing of the Peace of Amiens between France and Great Britain on March 27,

² Rufus King to James Madison, April 2, 1803, in King, *Correspondence*, 4:24.

1802, promised to give France a free hand in North America.³

Soon after the secret Treaty of St. Ildefonso was signed rumors of its conclusion circulated among European diplomats. In late March 1801 Rufus King wrote from London that Spain had ceded Louisiana and the Floridas to France.⁴ Two months later Madison wrote that "intelligence has come thro' several channels, which makes it probable that Louisiana has been ceded to France."⁵ President Jefferson feared the worst. Jefferson called New Orleans the "one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. "The day that France takes possession of N. Orleans," Jefferson wrote to Robert R. Livingston, minister to France, would be the day on which the United States must ally with Great Britain.⁶ To Jefferson, the Floridas were as important as the port of New Orleans itself. "Whatever power, other than ourselves, holds the country east of the Mississippi becomes our natural enemy," the president warned.⁷ Spain suspended the American

³ Alexander DeConde. *This Affair of Louisiana* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 97-102.

⁴ Rufus King to James Madison, March 29, 1801, in James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series*, 3 vols to date. Robert A. Rutland, *et al.*, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986-), 1:55.

⁵ James Madison to James Monroe, June 1, 1801, *ibid.*, 1:245.

⁶ Thomas Jefferson to Robert R. Livingston, April 18, 1802, in Jefferson, *Writings*, 7:364-365.

⁷ Thomas Jefferson to Pierre S. Dupont de Nemours, Feb. 1, 1803, *ibid.*, 9:439.

right of deposit at New Orleans on October 18, 1802, leading the Jefferson administration to conclude that neither France nor Spain was a safe neighbor.⁸

Madison agreed with Jefferson that anything that threatened American access to the Mississippi threatened the survival of a republican political economy, and therefore the vital interests of the union.⁹ Officially, Madison argued that the West was fully attached to the union and would not throw in with France to protect its interests. Madison also believed that all sections agreed on the importance of the Mississippi, with the only dispute over "the degree of patience which ought to be exercised during the appeal to friendly modes of redress."¹⁰ The union had come too close to collapse over the same issue in the 1780s for Madison to be completely confident. "We are fully aware of the tendency of the reported Cession of Louisiana, to plant in our neighbourhood troubles of different kinds, and to prepare the way for very serious events," Madison wrote to Rufus King in London.¹¹ "A mere neighbourhood could not be friendly to the harmony which both

⁸DeConde, *Louisiana*, 119-121; Arthur P. Whitaker. *The Mississippi Question 1795-1803: A Study in Trade, Politics and Diplomacy* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1934), 189-192.

⁹ McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 197-198.

¹⁰ James Madison to James Monroe and Robert R. Livingston, March 2, 1803; James Madison to Charles Pinckney, January 10, 1803, in *WJM*, 7:13-14, 2.

¹¹ James Madison to Rufus King, May 1, 1802, in *PJM:SS*, 3:173.

countries [France and the United States] have so much an interest in cherishing," Madison wrote to Livingston on May 1, 1802, "but if a possession of the mouth of the Mississippi is to be added the other causes of discord, the worst events are to be apprehended." Madison instructed Livingston to "spare no effort" to determine the extent of the retrocession, and to convince France to cede New Orleans and the Floridas to the United States.¹² Madison issued similar instructions to Charles Pinckney, minister to Spain, in case Spain still owned the Floridas. Madison proposed to make the Mississippi "a common boundary, with a common use of its navigation, for [the United States] and Spain."¹³

For Madison, some sort of purchase was a policy better suited to republican government than the military solution advocated by some Federalists, including Alexander Hamilton. On February 16, 1803, Senator James Ross of Pennsylvania sponsored a resolution authorizing the president to call up the militia and appropriate \$5 million for an expedition against New Orleans whenever the president deemed it necessary. Madison believed that the resolution "drove at war thro' a delegation of unconstitutional power to the Executive." Madison was as unwilling in 1803 as he was in 1793 to use the president's role as commander-in-chief to formulate

¹² James Madison to Robert R. Livingston, May 1, 1802, *ibid.*, 3:175-176.

¹³ James Madison to Charles Pinckney, May 11, 1802, *ibid.*, 3:215-216.

foreign policy.¹⁴

As long as France was at peace with Great Britain, Bonaparte was intent on building his American empire. Livingston reported that his attempts to discuss New Orleans were "premature" and that France planned to take possession of Louisiana.¹⁵ The defeat of the French army in St. Domingo and the ice-choked French ports that prevented resupply made Bonaparte more willing to sell. The prospect of renewed war with Great Britain further motivated the French consul. Livingston sought to take advantage of the situation in January 1803, when he again offered to buy New Orleans and the Floridas. He added a buffer zone north of the Arkansas River, becoming the first negotiator to suggest a cession of land west of the Mississippi.¹⁶

In January 1803 Jefferson appointed James Monroe as special envoy to assist in negotiations. Madison issued instructions on March 2, directing Monroe and Livingston to purchase New Orleans and the Floridas, with no mention of acquiring land to the west of the Mississippi. As a fallback position, if France would not sell New Orleans, Madison

¹⁴ McDonald, *Hamilton*, 357-358; DeConde, *Louisiana*, 140; James Madison to James Monroe, March 1, 1803, in James Madison, *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison*, 4 vols. William C. Rives, ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott and Co., 1865), 2:178.

¹⁵ Robert R. Livingston to James Madison, September 1, 1802, in *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, 6 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1833-1861), 3:525.

¹⁶ DeConde, *Louisiana*, 130-131, 149-154.

advised the envoys to secure free navigation of the rivers of West Florida.¹⁷ By mid-April, Bonaparte was prepared to sell all of Louisiana, which he believed to be worthless without New Orleans, in order to prevent an Anglo-American alliance. On May 2, 1803, French and American negotiators concluded an agreement in which the United States paid \$15 million for all of French Louisiana. Borders were not precisely defined; nor were the Floridas specifically mentioned, although Monroe later recalled that the Americans understood the cession to include territory west of the Perdido River.¹⁸ In any case, the French project for an American empire was at an end.

"The annexation of Louisiana was an event so portentous as to defy measurement; it gave a new force to politics, and ranked in historical importance next to the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the Constitution, -- events of which it was the logical outcome," wrote Henry Adams, himself no admirer of Jefferson or Madison.¹⁹ More recent commentators have also seen the Louisiana Purchase as the end result of Madison's political philosophy. Ralph Ketcham wrote that by doubling the size of the nation, Madison provided more

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 135-136; James Madison to James Monroe and Robert R. Livingston, March 2, 1803, in *WJM*, 7:17-19, 28-29.

¹⁸ DeConde, *Louisiana*, 167-172; James Monroe. *The Autobiography of James Monroe*. Stuart Gerry Brown, ed. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1959), 164.

¹⁹ Henry Adams, *The History of the United States during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison*, 9 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889-1891), 2:49.

land for yeoman farmers. The Louisiana Purchase was therefore, "perfectly suited [to] Republican political and social theory."²⁰ Such an analysis, however, reads history backward, by assuming that *Federalist* #10 was a call for expansion, and that Madison intended to acquire all of Louisiana. Certainly Madison approved of the purchase, but for him the main problem was securing the navigation of the Mississippi River.

Reaction to the unexpected result of the negotiations varied by party and section. Sectionalist-minded Federalists such as William Plumer of New Hampshire feared that the Louisiana Purchase made an already too large country ungovernable and vulnerable at the frontier.²¹ The Republicans and some Federalists supported the treaty, but policy-makers were at a loss as to what to do with the excess territory. James Monroe believed it would be best to move slowly into the western country.²² William C. C. Claiborne, governor of Mississippi Territory and later governor of Orleans Territory, believed that Spain might trade East and West Florida for an American cession of lands between the Sabine River and the Rio Grande. Claiborne advised, however, that the United States

²⁰ Ketcham, *JM*, 420.

²¹ Speech of October 24, 1803, in William Plumer, *William Plumer's Memorandum of Proceedings in the United States Senate 1803-1807*. Everett Somerville Brown, ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 6.

²² James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, September 25, 1804, in James Monroe, *The Writings of James Monroe*, 7 vols. Stanislaus Murray Hamilton, ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898-1903), 4:256.

should make no concessions to gain territory between the Perdido River and New Orleans.²³ Jefferson was reluctant to give up any new territory, for fear of allowing Spain to regain access to the Mississippi.²⁴ Jefferson was willing to delay settlement, but would only give up territory east of the Rio Grande for East Florida. Madison instructed James Monroe and Charles Pinckney to purchase the Floridas and forbade American diplomats from making any agreement that allowed Spain back onto the banks of the Mississippi.²⁵

Madison shared Jefferson's desire to secure the Floridas as well as his reluctance to give up lands west of the Mississippi River. Spanish possession of West Florida, bordering New Orleans, threatened American control of the mouth of the Mississippi. Madison's instructions to Monroe of July 29, 1803, fifteen days after receipt of the purchase treaty, listed the Floridas as the main objective. Madison wrote Monroe that he should not trade western territory, as it was potentially too valuable to the United States, and West Florida was worthless to France or Spain without New

²³ William C. C. Claiborne to James Madison, January 24, 1804, in William C. C. Claiborne, *Official Letter Books of William C. C. Claiborne, 1801-1816*. Dunbar Rowland, ed. (Jackson, Miss.: State Department of Archives and History, 1917), 1:347.

²⁴ Thomas Jefferson to John Dickinson, August 9, 1803, in Jefferson, *Writings*, 10:28-29.

²⁵ James Madison to James Monroe, April 15, 1804; James Madison to James Monroe and Charles Pinckney, July 8, 1804, in *WJM*, 7:141-152, 153-155.

Orleans.²⁶

The Jefferson administration was convinced that the United States already owned West Florida according to the terms of both the retrocession to France and the American purchase. In 1762 France ceded its territory east of the Mississippi River, excluding the island of New Orleans, to Great Britain. At the same time, France ceded New Orleans and the land west of the Mississippi River to Spain. The British had divided Florida into two provinces at the Perdido River. The British cession of the Floridas to Spain in 1783 reunited the old French province of Louisiana. Under the treaty of St. Idefonso, Spain ceded Louisiana as it existed in 1762, which the Americans understood to include territory extending to the Perdido River. The French government did not explicitly say whether or not the Louisiana Purchase included West Florida.²⁷

For the rest of Madison's term as secretary of state and his first term as president the Floridas were the main focus of his Spanish diplomacy. As long as Spain owned territory bordering New Orleans, American use of the Mississippi and a republican political economy were not completely secure. Furthermore, possession of the Floridas by any European power threatened to intrude European politics upon North America, an

²⁶ James Madison to James Monroe, July 29, 1803, *ibid.*, 7:53-54, 57-58.

²⁷ Isaac Joslin Cox, *The West Florida Controversy, 1798-1813: A Study in American Diplomacy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1918), 84-85.

event which would also be hazardous to the republic.

Madison revived the arguments he had used against Spain in the 1780s, that the rise of American power could not be stopped. Madison was unable to understand why Spain did not see that its best interests were to give up the Floridas. "The Spanish Government must understand in fact that the United States can never consider the amiable relations between Spain and them as definitively and permanently secured, without an arrangement on this subject," Madison wrote to Monroe on July 29, 1803. Madison's instructions to Pinckney, written on the same day, are similar in tone, arguing that the United States would eventually possess the Floridas, and Spain would be wise to bow to the inevitable.²⁸ The Floridas revived Madison's twenty-year quarrel with what he saw as Spanish stubbornness. "What is it that Spain dreads?" Madison wrote to Charles Pinckney, using the same language and arguments as his 1785 letter to Lafayette. "She dreads, it is presumed, the growing power of this country, and the direction of it against her possessions within her [the United States] reach. Can she annihilate this power? No. -- Can she sensibly retard its growth? No. -- Does not common prudence then advise her, to conciliate by every proof of friendship and confidence the good will of a nation whose power is formidable to her;

²⁸ James Madison to James Monroe, July 29, 1803, in *WJM*, 7:54; James Madison to Charles Pinckney, July 29, 1803, *Diplomatic Instructions, All Countries*, Vol. 6, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State.

instead of yielding to the impulses of jealousy, and adopting obnoxious precautions, which can have no other effect than to bring on prematurely the whole weight of the Calamity which she fears."²⁹ When France took Spain's side on its West Florida claim, Madison could not understand why France would pursue a policy that "might end in placing the United States on the side of Great Britain."³⁰

Republican fear of executive power left Jefferson and Madison with few alternatives beyond waiting for France and Spain to see reason, which they defined as acceding to American wishes. In November 1803, Congress passed the Mobile Act, which extended American revenue laws to the territory acquired from France and gave the president the power to create a customs district for Mobile, even though that port fell within the disputed area with Spain.³¹ In February 1806 Congress passed the Two Million Dollar Act, which officially provided \$2 million for unspecified diplomatic expenses. In reality, the money was intended to buy the Floridas from Spain. The act passed by a wide margin, but created a rift in the Republican party. John Randolph of Roanoke, hitherto one of Jefferson's staunchest supporters, became one of his sharpest critics, charging that the act was little more than

²⁹ James Madison to Charles Pinckney, October 12, 1803, in *WJM*, 7:74.

³⁰ James Madison to John Armstrong, June 6, 1805, *ibid.*, 7:184.

³¹ DeConde, *Louisiana*, 214-216; Brant, *JM*, 4:192-193.

a bribe and beneath the dignity of a republic.³²

Florida remained an unanswered question well into Madison's presidency, although external events promised to work in Madison's favor. The Spanish Empire collapsed in 1810, and most of Spain's American provinces moved toward independence. West Florida was among them. American settlers dominated the West Florida legislature, and on September 26, 1810, proclaimed the Republic of West Florida. On October 10 the new republic asked to be annexed by the United States. Madison had watched the developments of the summer of 1810 closely. On July 17 the president advised Secretary of State Robert Smith that Governor David Holmes of Mississippi Territory should monitor events. "It would be well for him also to be attentive to the means of having his Militia in a state for any service that may be called for," Madison wrote, believing that European interference was the greatest danger.³³ When the West Florida government asked for annexation, it seemed to give Madison the chance to act without appearing to overstep the bounds of executive authority. Madison wrote on October 19 that he expected the

³² *Ibid.*, 233; Norman K. Risjord. *The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 46-50.

³³ Henry Adams, *History*, 5:306-308; Cox, *West Florida Controversy*, 416-417; James Madison to Robert Smith, July 17, 1810, in James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series*, 3 vols. to date. Robert A. Rutland, J. C. A. Stagg, *et al.*, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984-), 2:419.

West Floridians to call for help from either Great Britain or the United States. After receiving communications from Baton Rouge, Madison issued a secret proclamation on October 27, 1810, informing Congress of his intention to occupy West Florida from the Mississippi to the Perdido.³⁴

Madison hoped that the same circumstances that delivered West Florida into American hands would work in East Florida as well. On January 3, 1811 Madison asked Congress for the power to annex East Florida if the residents of that province asked him to do so. Congress, complying with Madison's request, authorized George Mathews and John McKee to occupy East Florida under certain circumstances, specifically if an insurgent movement overthrew the Spanish government and asked for American intervention; or in response to British interference. In March 1812 Mathews responded to an uprising on Amelia Island by invading it. Madison believed that Mathews had acted prematurely, and disapproved of Mathews's attempts to stir up a revolt, writing that "Mathews has been playing a strange comedy, in the face of common sense, as well as of his instructions." Madison disavowed Mathews's conduct, and had Secretary of State Monroe send official notification.³⁵

³⁴ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, October 19, 1810; Proclamation of October 27, 1810; in *PJM:P*, 2:585, 595-596.

³⁵ Henry Adams, *History*, 6:237-240; Brant, *JM*, 5:442-444; Cox, *West Florida Controversy*, 522-524; Rembert W. Patrick, *Florida Fiasco: Rampant Rebels on the Georgia-Florida Border 1810-1815* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954), 49-50, 68, 120-122; J. C. A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American*

The Florida episode revealed two elements of Madison's diplomacy; that in dealing with European power his version of republican diplomacy limited executive action and tended to be overtaken by events, and that Madison's conception of how nations should act had not moved beyond the belief that nations would act purely in their own interests. Madison defined those interests in terms of acceding to American wishes, leading him to overestimate the diplomatic value of American friendship to France and Spain. Fortune had turned in favor of the United States with the Louisiana Purchase, but was of little help in acquiring the Floridas.

The maritime crisis with Great Britain revived the second issue that shaped Madison's early career. To Madison, British claims to sovereignty of the high seas were as dangerous to republican government in the United States as foreign control of the Mississippi River had been. British claims grew stronger in 1805. That spring the Lords Commissioners of Appeals handed down the *Essex* decision which tightened restrictions under the Rule of 1756, which stated that trade considered illegal in peacetime could not be made legal in wartime, on neutrals plying the French and Spanish colonial

Republic 1783-1830 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 98-100; James Madison to Congress, Jan. 3, 1811, in *PJM:P*, 3:93-94; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, April 24, 1812, in James Morton Smith, ed., *The Republic of Letters: The Correspondence of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison 1776-1826*, 3 vols. (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 1995), 3:1694; James Monroe to George Mathews, April 4, 1812, in *ASP:FR*, 3:572.

trades. The *Essex* decision revised the *Polly* decision handed down by the Admiralty Court in 1800, which permitted a "broken voyage," that is, it allowed neutral participation in the colonial trades if broken by a stop at a neutral port. The *Essex* decision closed that loophole and upheld the doctrine of continuous voyage. A theoretical domination of the ocean was made more real by Lord Nelson's victory over the combined Spanish and French fleets at Trafalgar on October 21, 1805, assuring British naval supremacy for the rest of the war.³⁶

The same day as Trafalgar, James Stephen, a pro-ministry writer who received a seat in the House of Commons for his efforts on behalf of the Orders-in-Council, published *War in Disguise; or the Frauds of the Neutral Flags*, a quasi-official defense of the British crackdown on neutral trade in the West Indies. *War in Disguise* was similar to Sheffield's *Observations on the Commerce of the American States*, in that both works reflected popular and official British anger with the United States, and both portrayed control of the West Indian trade as vital to preserving British naval supremacy. Stephen's thesis was that the so-called neutral trade with the West Indies was in fact French and Spanish trade carried on under American flags.³⁷ Neutrals had always carried at least

³⁶ Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States 1805-1812* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 76-80.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 77-78; James Stephen. *War in Disguise; or the frauds of the Neutral Flags*, 2nd American ed. (New York: I. Riley and Co., 1806), 57.

some of the French and Spanish trade, but by 1805 the United States carried almost all of it. Stephen had a simple solution; Great Britain should seize all ships involved in the French and Spanish colonial trade.³⁸ After Trafalgar, Great Britain seemed to be able to make good on that threat.

The trade that Stephen attacked, and Madison sought to defend, was fraught with ideological tangles, stemming from drastic changes in world politics. Madison's diplomacy, formed in the 1780s and 1790s, presumed the existence of shippers from the colonial powers taking their share of the colonial trade and a bloc of northern European powers acting as a counterweight to Great Britain on the continent. By 1805 the Netherlands had been absorbed into Napoleon's empire, and after Trafalgar non-American neutral shipping disappeared from the Atlantic. The northern powers to whom Americans occasionally appealed for help would provide none. On June 17, 1801, Russia, Denmark, Sweden and Prussia signed an agreement denouncing the British use of paper blockades, but also denying the doctrine that free ships make free goods.³⁹ Madison did not adjust his ideas on diplomacy, and as late as 1806 he hoped that peace between France and Russia would aid

³⁸ Stephen, *War in Disguise*, 103, 148.

³⁹ W.P. Cresson, *The Holy Alliance: The European Background of the Monroe Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1922), 10.

the cause of neutral rights.⁴⁰ As the neutral nations disappeared, the United States assumed more of the world's carrying trade. American freight values jumped from \$6 million in 1790 to over \$40 million on the eve of the Embargo. The value of the re-export trade, the trade at the heart of the British crisis, increased between four and ten times.⁴¹ Madison supported an American shipping industry only large enough to carry American goods to market; most of the new carrying trade was in John Randolph's words a "fungus of war," which put the agricultural mass of the country at the mercy of the port cities of the east coast.⁴²

Jefferson and Madison no doubt cringed upon reading Randolph's remarks, as their position on the carrying trade was not far from his. In 1785 Jefferson wrote John Jay that in a perfect world he would prefer the United States not engage in large-scale shipping while there was land to be tilled. Jefferson realized that Americans had already claimed their share of the ocean and feared the inevitable result would be "frequent wars." In the event of war, Jefferson believed the United States should withdraw from the sea completely.⁴³ Twenty years later Jefferson was still torn over how to handle

⁴⁰ James Madison to John Armstrong, March 14, 1806, James Madison Papers, Library of Congress, 2nd series, reel 25.

⁴¹ North, *Economic Growth*, 28, 44.

⁴² B. Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 112.

⁴³ Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, Aug. 23, 1785, in Jefferson, *Papers*, 8:426-427.

the carrying trade. British diplomat Augustus John Foster wrote that Jefferson, "more than once told me that he wished the United States had never possessed a single ship." "He would," Foster continued, "have laid the American ports open to all the world, let foreigners dispute, if they liked it, which should supply at the cheapest rate the richest agricultural market in the universe."⁴⁴

Madison was not as given as Jefferson was to philosophical speculations, nor did he have Randolph's luxury of saying exactly what he believed at all times. All his career Madison had straddled a line between what he could write in an anonymous newspaper essay and what he could say on the floor of the House of Representatives or in diplomatic instructions. He fully shared Randolph's and Jefferson's suspicions that shipping was gaining at the expense of agriculture, and that shipping was sending American diplomacy and political economy far off course. As in 1780, Madison believed that New England was putting its interest above that of the nation. "In truth, the only obstacles to [a commercial treaty] between the United States and that Nation [Britain] arise wholly from the patronage by the former of the maritime rights and interests of the Eastern States, as a portion of

⁴⁴ Sir Augustus John Foster, *Jeffersonian America: Notes on the United States of America Collected in the Years 1805-6-7 and 11-12* (San Marino, Ca.: The Huntington Library, 1954), 81.

the Confederacy," Madison wrote to William Pinkney in 1808.⁴⁵

Defense of this trade could lead to war, resulting in taxes, debts, armies and navies, all fatal to republican government. Furthermore, the carrying trade was only partially linked to American produce, and a threat to the agrarian base of Madison's republicanism. Abandonment of the West Indian trade meant an equally unrepugnant submission to Great Britain as mistress of the seas. Madison hoped to resolve his ideological quandary, and steer a middle course between war and submission, by asserting the American right to the West Indian trade, and conducting a policy that assumed the American carrying trade was more valuable to Europe than to the United States. Madison returned to the argument at the center of his diplomatic thought, that the West Indies depended on the United States "for the supplies essential to their existence."⁴⁶

Madison wrote Jefferson on September 15, 1805 that the Rule of 1756 "threatens more loss and vexation to neutrals than all the belligerent claims put together." Three weeks later Madison noted that he was working on his refutation of the Rule of 1756.⁴⁷ The fruit of Madison's labors, *An*

⁴⁵ James Madison to William Pinkney, Dec. 5, 1808, in *LOWJM*, 2:427-428.

⁴⁶ James Madison to James Monroe, March 6, 1805, in *WJM*, 7:174-175.

⁴⁷ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, September 14 and October 5, 1805, in James Morton Smith, *ed. Republic of Letters*, 3:1386, 1390.

Examination of the British Doctrine, which subjects to Capture a Neutral Trade, not open in a Time of Peace, appeared in January 1806. The *Examination* served to confirm the link between republican government and the law of nations, which had always been present in Madison's thought.⁴⁸

Madison started by attacking the central thesis of the Rule of 1756, that trade between a colonial port and a foreign port was in principle different from direct trade with the mother country. Madison wrote that "a trade between a colony and a foreign port is, in a like manner, precisely the same with the trade between a foreign port and the parent country; which is only a more considerable, as a colony may be less a considerable, part of the same country or empire."⁴⁹ The counter to the Rule of 1756 was the principle that "free ships make free goods," which Madison based on the law of nations. Madison cited Hugo Grotius as the father of the law of nations and argued that nothing in Grotius's work could justify the Rule of 1756, and most of Grotius's work supported neutral rights.⁵⁰ Vattel concurred "in establishing the general freedom of commerce, with the exception of things relating to the war."⁵¹

Having to his satisfaction demolished British claims

⁴⁸ Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union*, 208-209.

⁴⁹ "Examination," in *WJM*, 7:206.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 209-215.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 230.

according to the law of nations, Madison proceeded to examine the Rule of 1756 according to British practice. Great Britain "cannot surely demure to the example of her own proceedings," Madison wrote. "And it is here, perhaps, more than anywhere else, that the claim ought to shrink from examination."⁵² No precedent for the Rule of 1756 existed before the Seven Years' War, and the Rule of 1756 was not even a fixed feature of British practice. Great Britain opened its West Indian trade to the United States under article 12 of the Jay Treaty (the article rejected by the Senate) and in the Orders-in-Council of June 27, 1805.⁵³ The practice of other nations was no support for current British policy. Madison cited Edward Long's *History of Jamaica*, noting that Spain opened its colonial trade to the Dutch to alleviate a shortage of Spanish ships and sailors.⁵⁴

What was Great Britain's real intention? Madison argued that Great Britain aimed at nothing less than complete domination of the West Indian trade, and the United States was the only remaining obstacle. The British government invented the Rule of 1756 as legal cover for a power grab.⁵⁵ "And thus we arrive at the *true foundation* of the principle which has so

⁵² *Ibid.*, 268.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 272-273.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7:235; Madison's extracts, James Madison Papers, Library of Congress, 2nd series, reel 25.

⁵⁵ "Examination," in *WJM*, 7:299-300.

often varied its attitudes of defense, and when driven from one stand, has been so ready to occupy another," Madison wrote. "Finding no asylum elsewhere, it at length asserts, as its true foundation, a mere superiority of force."⁵⁶ Madison argued nothing "was more disrespectful to neutral nations, or more fatal to the liberty and interests of neutral commerce," than the Rule of 1756. Madison concluded, "if she will not answer for herself all the world will answer for her," he wrote, "that she would not [accept the capture of British ships under laws similar to the Rule of 1756], and what is more, she ought not."⁵⁷

Madison's work did not sway his critics, contemporary or historical. Senator William Plumer of New Hampshire wrote that the *Examination* showed that Madison, "has read many, & consulted more books, upon the law of nations." The book, however, suffered from two defects, "that no end is stated for writing the work [and] no system intimated by which we are to obtain redress for the wrongs committed by Great Britain."⁵⁸ Henry Adams called the rights Madison defended, "worthless unless supported by the stronger force."⁵⁹ The *Examination* revealed that Madison had failed to make the leap from republican theory to diplomatic practice. The *Examination*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 374-375.

⁵⁸ entry for January 22, 1806, in Plumer, *Memorandum*, 388.

⁵⁹ Henry Adams, *History*, 2:327.

seems to rest on the assumption of the diplomacy of the American Revolution, that the United States had justice on its side, and all the United States needed to do was make its claims known to the world. Madison wrote an effective answer to Stephen's theory in *War in Disguise*. He had no effective answer for the reality of Trafalgar.

Great Britain sought to bolster its control of the high seas by declaring French-controlled Europe under a state of blockade on May 16, 1806. To maintain naval supremacy Great Britain needed seamen, prompting the second sore point with the United States, impressment and the right of search. Better pay and milder discipline on American ships led many British sailors to desert. Also, the British did not recognize American nationalization, and included American citizens in its hunt for deserters.⁶⁰

Madison and Jefferson gave James Monroe and Maryland Federalist William Pinkney responsibility for reaching a settlement with Great Britain. Madison hoped to secure the rights asserted in the *Examination* into policy. Madison continued to assume that interest would force Great Britain to open its West Indian trade. The West Indian trade was a "permanent object of the United States," with geographical proximity and economic necessity in the West Indies working in

⁶⁰ B. Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 104-106; Reginald Horsman. *The Causes of the War of 1812* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), 27-29; James Fulton Zimmerman. *Impressment of American Seamen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), 18-21.

the United States's favor.⁶¹ Monroe and Pinkney began negotiations on August 27, 1806, and soon realized that the British government would not concede on the vital issues. On November 11 the envoys informed Madison that there was no chance of a settlement of the impressment issue. The two sides signed a treaty on December 31 that re-established trade relations and ignored impressment. "We are sorry to add that this treaty contains no provision against the impressment of our seamen," the envoys wrote to Madison on January 3, 1807. They hoped an informal agreement would curtail the practice, even if Great Britain did not renounce the right of search. To Monroe and Pinkney the treaty seemed to be the only protection for American commerce in a world torn by Anglo-French war. Napoleon's Berlin Decree of November 21, 1806, declaring Great Britain in a state of blockade, removed any safe haven for American commerce.⁶²

The Jefferson administration took a hard line on impressment. The cabinet met on February 2, 1807 and in response to Monroe and Pinkney's letter of November 11 unanimously agreed to reject any treaty silent on impressment. Madison wrote Monroe and Pinkney the next day with a new set

⁶¹ James Madison to James Monroe and William Pinkney, May 17, 1806, in *WJM*, 7:391-392.

⁶² Henry Adams, *History*, 3:407-409; Horsman, *Causes of the War of 1812*, 76-92; Burton Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis: Commerce, Embargo and the Republican Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 62-65; James Monroe and William Pinkney to James Madison, in *ASP:FR*, 3:137-140, 146.

of instructions, putting repeal of impressment at the top of the list, followed by the rights of colonial trade and a further definition of a legal blockade.⁶³ When the administration received the Monroe-Pinkney Treaty, it was naturally a disappointment. Madison wrote to Monroe and Pinkney on May 20, explaining why Jefferson rejected the treaty. Impressment was the leading issue. The president "laments more especially, that the British Government has not yielded to the just and cogent considerations which forbid the practice of its Cruizers in visiting and impressing the Crews of our vessels, covered by an independent flag, and guarded by the laws of the high seas, which ought to be sacred to all nations," Madison wrote.⁶⁴ The Monroe-Pinkney Treaty might have performed the same function for the Republicans as the Jay Treaty did for the Federalists, to buy time, build up forces, and prepare for a more vigorous defense of American rights. Madison did not assume, as Jay had done, that the United States was in an inferior position. Madison again argued that economically Great Britain needed the United States too much to risk war.⁶⁵

⁶³ Thomas Jefferson. *The Complete Anas of Thomas Jefferson*. Franklin B. Sawvel, ed. (New York: The Roundtable Press, 1903), 251-252; James Madison to James Monroe and William Pinkney, February 3, 1807, in *WJM*, 7:397-404.

⁶⁴ James Madison to James Monroe and William Pinkney, May 20, 1807, in *WJM*, 7:415-416.

⁶⁵ James Madison to James Monroe and William Pinkney, May 20, 1807, *ibid.*, 7:444-445.

Contrary to Madison's hopes, Great Britain was undeterred in its quest for command of the seas. Both Great Britain and France combined to decree neutral shipping out of legal existence. The British Order-in-Council of January 7, 1807 made all trade with French or French-allied ports subject to capture. An Order of November 11, 1807 required that all neutrals obtain British licenses. Napoleon responded with the Milan Decree of December 17, 1807, which subjected to capture any neutral ship with a British license.⁶⁶

The *Chesapeake* affair of June 22, 1807, in which the British frigate *Leopard* attacked and seized four sailors from the unprepared American ship, was the strongest example of British high-handedness on the impressment issue. "The brand seethed and hissed like the glowing olive-stake of Ulysses in the Cyclops' eye, until the whole American people, like Cyclops, roared with pain and stood frantic on the shore, hurling abuse at the enemy, who taunted them from his safe ships," Henry Adams wrote to describe the American reaction.⁶⁷ James Madison did not believe the United States was as helpless as Henry Adams suggested. The *Chesapeake* affair brought out Madison's answer to British pretensions on the high seas. It was the same answer Madison had for the Orders of 1793 and 1794, the mercantile houses of Glasgow and

⁶⁶ Henry Adams, *History*, 3:416, 103; Horsman, *Causes of the War of 1812*, 121.

⁶⁷ Henry Adams, *History*, 4:27.

Edinburgh, and the Townshend Duties and the Stamp Act. On December 22, 1807, Jefferson signed the Embargo Act, which prohibited American ships from clearing out of American ports. Combined with a non-importation act, the Embargo closed American trade to the world.⁶⁸

Madison's efforts to apply republican thought to diplomacy convinced him that the Embargo was the republic's ultimate weapon. It marked a rejection of classical martial virtue in favor of the yeoman virtue of economic independence, which would prevent creating a military organization and consequently an internal threat to civil liberty. It also risked little except a branch of trade that Madison did not believe to be compatible with a yeoman political economy. The Embargo would have the domestic effect of reorienting American political economy back toward agriculture by effectively killing the domestic carrying trade and forcing France and Great Britain to bid for the right to buy American agricultural produce. The Embargo was, however, another example of the gap between theory and practice. In *Federalist* #10 Madison had listed the numerous reasons that caused factions. In explaining the actions of nations, particularly Great Britain, Madison narrowed those reasons down to rational economic interest. He had not appreciated the role of British pride, political anti-Americanism or other factors in Anglo-

⁶⁸ Brant, *JM*, 4:397-402; Ketcham, *JM*, 457; Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis*, 68-71, 103-110.

American diplomacy. By 1807 Great Britain believed it was in a death struggle with Napoleon, and that American actions aided France. No amount of economic data could change that perception. Madison was certainly aware of non-economic factors, and noted that only the "pride of the Cabinet" made Great Britain resist economic pressure.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, such observations did not influence Madison's diplomacy.

From the beginning Madison saw the Embargo as an offensive rather than a defensive measure, although he was careful not to portray it as a war measure. Madison wrote in the *National Intelligencer* on December 23, 1807, that "war cannot be the result" and that the "embargo violates the rights of none." The Embargo was designed to protect Americans from misfortunes on the ocean, "where no harvest is to be reaped but that of danger, of spoliation and of disgrace."⁷⁰ The Embargo was also a weapon that would punish Spain by cutting off its food supply, France by removing American ships from the French colonial trade, and Great Britain by cutting off supplies to its colonies and by not buying its manufactures.⁷¹ Madison completely discounted the possibility of Canada and the maritime provinces acting as alternate

⁶⁹ James Madison to William Pinkney, May 1, 1808, William Pinkney Papers, Princeton University.

⁷⁰ *National Intelligencer*, December 23, 1807.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

suppliers for the British West Indies.⁷²

In his second essay Madison described the Embargo as a sword that "may be drawn at a moment's warning," and discussed its domestic effects. He believed that the only American group vulnerable to the Embargo would be those merchants involved in the Atlantic carrying trade, or those who would dare risk violating the act. "We are certain that the farmer, the planter and the mechanic will approve it from the security it offers to the public interest," Madison wrote, "and if the merchants be honest and enlightened, as we trust they are, they will perceive the indissoluble connection between their solid and permanent prosperity and the general welfare."⁷³ In other words, merchants who dealt primarily in delivering American goods to market would be protected. Those who gambled on John Randolph's "fungus of war" were on their own.

The Embargo ultimately failed as a coercive policy. It had no effect on France, and did little economic damage in Great Britain, serving only to convince the British government that the United States would not fight. The Embargo did far more damage to the American economy and nearly drove New England into revolt. Madison attributed disaffection to the "artificial excitements" stirred up in New England.⁷⁴ Madison

⁷² James Madison to William Pinkney, October 21, 1807, William Pinkney Papers, Princeton University.

⁷³ *National Intelligencer*, December 25, 1807.

⁷⁴ Ketcham, *JM*, 462; North, *Economic Growth*, 55-58; Horsman, *Causes of the War of 1812*, 142-143; Spivak, *Jefferson's*

informed William Pinkney that the Embargo "created a zeal for homespun" and speculated that the United States might encourage a large-scale manufacture of cotton goods.⁷⁵ Madison probably had not acquired a new found love for domestic manufactures, but expected that Pinkney, as minister to Great Britain, would pass along the twenty-year-old threat of American manufactures to the British government. Madison always believed in the Embargo, but its aftermath left him in a weak position as he entered the presidency. Republican government had deployed its mightiest weapon and it had failed. Madison had to find a politically acceptable replacement.

Circumstances forced Madison to accept unpalatable policy and personnel choices. On March 1, 1809 Congress approved the Non-Intercourse Act as a replacement for the repealed Embargo. The act barred French and British ships from American ports after May 20 and allowed the president to revoke the ban if either power changed its policies toward the United States. Madison attributed the act to "aversion to war, the inconveniences by or charged on the embargo, the hope of favorable changes in Europe, the dread of civil convulsions in the East, and the policy of permitting the discontented to be reclaimed to their duty by losses at sea." Madison had little

English Crisis, 200-201; James Madison to William Pinkney, Jan. 3, 1809, in *WJM*, 8:42.

⁷⁵ James Madison to William Pinkney, July 21 and July 3, 1808, William Pinkney Papers, Princeton University.

faith in the act and believed "it seems to be as little satisfactory out of doors, as it was within."⁷⁶ Dissatisfaction with the Embargo and the growing rift in the Republican party forced Madison to alter his plans for the cabinet. Madison had intended to shift Albert Gallatin from the treasury to the state department, but the Smith-Giles-Leib faction in the Senate made it clear that they would vote to reject Gallatin. Madison left Gallatin at the treasury, where he did not need to be reconfirmed, and appointed Robert Smith, brother of Senator Samuel Smith of Maryland, secretary of state.⁷⁷ The first days of the Madison administration revealed that Madison did not have Jefferson's power over Congress or his own party and therefore that his policy options would be more limited.

Like each of his three predecessors in office, Madison pledged to defend American neutrality. "Indulging no passions which trespass on the rights or the repose of other nations, it has been the glory of the United States to cultivate peace by observing justice, and to entitle themselves to the respect of the nations at war, by fulfilling their neutral obligations with the most scrupulous impartiality," Madison said in his first inaugural address.⁷⁸ Privately, Madison considered Great

⁷⁶ Brant, *JM*, 5:38-39; James Madison to William Pinkney, March 17, 1809, in *PJM:P*, 1:56.

⁷⁷ Brant, *JM*, 5:23-25.

⁷⁸ First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1809, in *PJM:P*, 1:16.

Britain the worse threat to the United States and believed that most of the country, especially the South and West, shared his view. Even "the calculating & commercial spirit of N. England" should recognize "the disadvantage of renouncing the trade with all the world beside G.B. for the portion which her single market would afford."⁷⁹

David Erskine offered a republican solution to the Anglo-American crisis. The new British minister to the United States hoped to reach an agreement and was willing to violate his instructions to do so. Foreign Minister George Canning instructed Erskine to promise a repeal of the Orders-in-Council, but only if the United States enforced commercial restrictions against France and formally accepted the Rule of 1756. Erskine knew that the United States would never accept Canning's terms. Two days after Erskine received his instructions Madison observed that the minister "has not yet opened much of his budget to Mr. Smith." Madison detected fear in the British envoy and proof that the Embargo had worked. "Private letters from individuals in England, leave no doubt that a great dread prevailed of our perseverance in the Embargo," Madison wrote to Jefferson.⁸⁰ Madison and Smith agreed with Erskine to reopen trade and offered to relinquish the direct trade between France and its colonies in exchange

⁷⁹ James Madison to Elbridge Gerry, March 14, 1809, *ibid.*, 1:1:44.

⁸⁰ Henry Adams, *History*, 5:71-72; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, April 9, 1809, in *PJM:P*, 1:107.

for a treaty legalizing indirect colonial trade. Erskine agreed to drop the demand for British enforcement of American commercial laws. Erskine and Smith signed a note on April 18 that would act as conditional agreement pending the arrival of a special envoy to negotiate a formal treaty. On April 19 Madison issued a proclamation announcing that Great Britain had agreed to repeal its Orders on June 10, and that trade with Great Britain could resume at that time.⁸¹

"You will see that it [the agreement] puts an end to the two immediate difficulties with G.B. and has the air of a policy in her to come to a thorough adjustment," Madison wrote to his brother-in-law.⁸² For Madison, the note with Erskine provided a full if belated vindication of republican diplomacy's greatest weapon, the Embargo. "It remains now to be seen what course will be taken by France," Madison wrote to William Pinkney, "whether it will be prescribed by her interest & duty, or by her pride & her anger."⁸³ Madison was fully attuned to the role of pride and anger in domestic politics, but strangely deaf to it in diplomacy. He had little doubt that France, if not "bereft of common sense," would pursue the logical course of repealing its decrees. "Besides

⁸¹ Ketcham, *JM*, 492-493; Proclamation of April 19, 1809, in *PJM:P*, 1:125-126.

⁸² James Madison to John G. Jackson, April 21, 1809, in *PJM:P*, 1:128.

⁸³ James Madison to William Pinkney, April 21, 1809, *ibid.*, 1:128.

the general motive to follow the example of G.B. she cannot be insensible to the dangerous tendency of prolonging the commercial suffering of her Allies, particularly Russia," Madison explained to Jefferson, "all of them already weary of such a state of things, after the pretext for enforcing it shall have ceased."⁸⁴

Unlike John Adams at a similar stage in his career, Madison continued to see other nations's interests in terms of American interests. Neither Great Britain nor France followed what Madison believed was the only logical course. The British government received the Erskine agreement on May 21 and rejected it, even though the United States already considered it operational. Canning replaced Erskine with Francis Jackson, who did not share Erskine's sympathy for the United States. Madison was not willing to let go of a republican solution to the Anglo-American conflict without a fight. Madison drafted Robert Smith's October 19, 1809 letter to Jackson, arguing that the British government had not shown sufficient reason for disavowing the treaty. Madison also restated the American case against the Orders-in-Council. Madison wrote to Pinkney in October complaining of Jackson's conduct, especially Jackson's "mean & insolent attempt to defraud the U.S. of the exculpatory explanation dictated by the respect due them, and particularly . . . the insinuation in Jackson's answer that

⁸⁴ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, April 24, 1809, *ibid.*, 1:135.

this Govt. colluded with Mr. E[rskine] in violating his instructions."⁸⁵ "Jackson is proving himself a worthy instrument of his Patron Canning," Madison remarked to Jefferson.⁸⁶ By early November Madison concluded that the United States could no longer negotiate with Jackson. In his Annual Message Madison described the collapse of negotiations and recommended organizing the militia.⁸⁷ Relations with France were no better. On March 23, 1810, Napoleon issued the Rambouillet Decree, subjecting all American ships in French ports to capture.⁸⁸

The Erskine fiasco set Anglo-American diplomacy back to the beginning and left Madison in the same position as a year before, but with the added embarrassment of the failed agreement. Some in Congress had grown tired of commercial diplomacy and settled on war. "But I prefer the troubled ocean of war, demanded by the honor and independence of the country, with all its calamities, and desolations," Henry Clay told the House of Representatives on February 22, 1810, "to the

⁸⁵ B. Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 220-221; Robert Smith to Francis James Jackson, Oct. 19, 1809, in *ASP:FR*, 3:311-314; James Madison to William Pinkney, October 23, 1809, *PJM:P*, 2:27-28.

⁸⁶ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, November 6, 1809, in *PJM:P*, 2:55.

⁸⁷ James Madison's draft of Robert Smith to William Pinkney, ca. November 9, 1809; Annual Message, November 29, 1809, *ibid.*, 2:65-67, 91-93.

⁸⁸ B. Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 244-245.

putrescent pool of ignominious peace."⁸⁹ Madison had not decided on war and believed that most of the country had not either. Madison also ruled out the other extreme of submission to Great Britain. Political considerations ruled out a revival of the Embargo, the president's preferred solution. The legislation labeled Macon's Bill #2 seemed to offer an alternative. The bill barred French and British ships from American ports, like the expired Non-Intercourse Act. Macon's Bill allowed American ships to trade with any nation, but if one belligerent repealed its decrees against neutral shipping the president could re-impose non-intercourse on the other power.⁹⁰ Madison still mourned the loss of the Embargo and was skeptical of lesser measures. "G. Britain may indeed conceive that she now has a compleat interest in perpetuating the actual state of things, which gives her the full enjoyment of our trade, and enables her to cut it off with every other part of the World; at the same time that it increases the chance of such resentments in France at the inequality, as may lead to hostilities with the United States," Madison complained to Pinkney. Madison conceded that the scheme could work if it led France to "turn the tables on G. Britain, by compelling her either to revoke her orders, or to lose the commerce of this

⁸⁹ Speech of February 22, 1810, in Henry Clay. *The Papers of Henry Clay*, 11 vols. James F. Hopkins, Mary M. W. Hargreaves, et al., eds. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1959-1993), 1:449.

⁹⁰ B. Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 239-242; James Madison to William Pinkney, January 23, 1810, in *PJM:P*, 2:195.

country."⁹¹

France offered at the bait in August. Word of Macon's Bill reached Paris by July. Unfounded rumors of war with the United States and hopes of promoting Anglo-American conflict led Napoleon to take the opening Macon's Bill provided, and hint that he might revoke French decrees. On August 5, 1810 the Duke of Cadore informed Minister John Armstrong that France would revoke the Berlin and Milan Decrees as of November 1 if Great Britain repealed its Orders-in-Council, or if the United States reimposed non-intercourse on Great Britain as Macon's Bill required. Napoleon had little to risk and much to gain in offering a reversal of policy. Madison, on the other hand, risked much in accepting the Cadore letter as a statement of French policy.⁹²

Madison's defenders have generally absolved him of the charge of naivete in accepting the Cadore letter without further proof that France intended to repeal its decrees. Irving Brant wrote that, "Madison took a logical position, but with no other evidence to support it," and Clifford Egan argued that Madison did not act out of "ignorance, fear, timidity or wishful thinking."⁹³ Madison did act out of a

⁹¹ James Madison to William Pinkney, May 23, 1810, in *PJM:P*, 2:348.

⁹² Clifford L. Egan. *Neither Peace nor War: Franco-American Relations 1803-1812* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 121-124.

⁹³ Brant, *JM*, 5:214; Egan, *Neither Peace nor War*, 122-123.

certain desperation to preserve what he considered a republican form of diplomacy. Madison accepted the Cadore letter because his political system required that the letter be an accurate representation of French policy. "It promises us, at least an extraction from the dilemma, of a mortifying peace, or a war with both the great belligerents," Madison wrote to Caesar A. Rodney.⁹⁴ French action would at least force the British hand regarding the Rule of 1756 and the "Mock-Blockades." "I do not believe that Congs. will be disposed, or permitted by the Nation to a tame submission," Madison wrote to Jefferson, "the less so as it would be not only perfidious to the other belligerent, but irreconcilable with an honorable neutrality."⁹⁵ Madison's target was always the entire British maritime policy regarding trade, blockades and impressment, which demanded atonement.⁹⁶ Acceptance of the Cadore letter promised a return to the full use of the one weapon the United States had -- its trade. Madison did not think in terms of war and would not for another year. For Madison, the Cadore letter and anticipated British intransigence gave political cover for a return to the Embargo, at least against Great Britain, a policy that Madison

⁹⁴ James Madison to Caesar A. Rodney, September 30, 1810, in *PJM:P*, 2:565.

⁹⁵ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, October 19, 1810, *ibid.*, 2:585.

⁹⁶ James Madison to William Pinkney, October 30, 1810, *ibid.*, 2:604.

always believed was the proper weapon of a republic and only answer to British naval tyranny.

On November 2, 1810, Madison announced that he would reimpose non-intercourse on Great Britain under the terms of Macon's Bill #2. The wait for official French word of repeal became longer and increasingly embarrassing. In his second annual message, Madison told Congress that the government had received no word on the repeal of the Berlin and Milan Decrees, and therefore Great Britain would not repeal its Orders-in-Council.⁹⁷ "On the whole our prospects are far from being very flattering," Madison wrote to Jefferson, "yet a better chance seems to exist than, with the exception of the adjustment with Erskine, has presented itself for closing the scene of rivalry in plundering & insulting us, & turning into a competition for our commerce & friendship."⁹⁸ For Madison's diplomacy to work, he had to believe that the Berlin and Milan Decrees had been repealed; the success of republican diplomacy depended on Napoleon's being a man of his word. The French government continued to seize American ships under municipal regulations, and Madison himself realized that it was "extremely difficult to keep the public mind awake to the distinction between the decrees relating to the trade of the

⁹⁷ Presidential Proclamation, November 2, 1810, *ibid.*, 2:612-613; Second annual message, December 5, 1810, in *WJM*, 8:123-124.

⁹⁸ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, March 18, 1811, *ibid.*, 8:135.

U.S. with England, & those relating to the trade with F. herself."⁹⁹

Not everyone in the government shared Madison's optimism. Robert Smith told the British charge^e that he doubted the French had repealed their decrees, prompting Madison to replace Smith with James Monroe. Smith's firing reopened the rift in the Republican party that his hiring was meant to heal.¹⁰⁰ New England was another source of irritation, showing "much impatience" with the renewal of commercial warfare. "Whether the appeal be to the sword, or interruptions or modifications of customary intercourse," Madison warned the inhabitants of New Haven, "an equal operation on every part of the Community can never happen."¹⁰¹

Most important, the British themselves did not share Madison's faith in the good will of the French government. The foreign minister warned Augustus John Foster, Jackson's replacement in Washington, that "no Extremity can induce His Royal Highness to relinquish the ancient and established Rules of Maritime War, the maintenance of which is indispensable not only to the Commercial Interests, but to the Naval strength,

⁹⁹ Egan, *Neither Peace nor War*, 141; James Madison to Richard Cutts, May 23, 1811, in *PJM:P*, 3:315.

¹⁰⁰ Brant, *JM*, 5:273-275; Ketcham, *JM*, 487-490.

¹⁰¹ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, July 11, 1811 and James Madison to the inhabitants of New Haven, May 24, 1811, in *PJM:P*, 3:329, 317.

and to the National Honor of Great Britain."¹⁰² Foster was no less unyielding than any other minister except Erskine. Madison's meetings with Foster, combined with a deteriorating domestic political situation, produced a belligerent annual message for 1811.¹⁰³ On November 5, 1811, Madison admitted to Congress and to himself that France had not revoked the Berlin and Milan Decrees, and therefore that Great Britain would not repeal its Orders-in-Council. Madison moved on to suggest the option he had been dreading and that he hoped commercial diplomacy would replace. The president recommended raising a regular army and a short-term additional army, purchasing cannon and other ordnance, and increasing the navy.¹⁰⁴

The next seven months were a countdown to war at three different speeds. Henry Adams wrote that Madison "stood midway between the masses of his followers," that is, the Republicans with Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun and Felix Grundy pushing the president to bolder action, and John Randolph of Roanoke

¹⁰² Marquis Wellesley to Augustus John Foster, April 10, 1811, in Bernard Mayo, ed. "Instructions to the British Ministers to the United States, 1791-1812." *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1936*, Vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941), 317-318.

¹⁰³ Brant, *JM*, 5:374; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 78-81; Roger H. Brown, *The Republic in Peril: 1812* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 33-35; Julius W. Pratt, *The Expansionists of 1812* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), 50.

¹⁰⁴ Third annual message, November 5, 1811, in *WJM*, 8:158-160, 162.

trying to block any war measure.¹⁰⁵ Madison held out no hope for a change in British policy. Madison wrote Jefferson on February 7 that "all that we see from G.B. indicated an adherence to her mad policy towards the U.S."¹⁰⁶ Two months later Madison wrote that Great Britain seemed to "prefer war with us, to a repeal of the Orders in Council!" "We have nothing left, therefore, but to make ready for it," Madison concluded."¹⁰⁷

On June 1, 1812, Madison delivered the war message that had been seven months, if not seven years, in coming. Madison declared that the diplomacy of a republic must match its domestic institutions. To accept British tyranny on the high seas was incompatible with independence or republicanism. Madison began with impressment, a "crying enormity" that no nation could tolerate. He moved on to the "pretended blockades, without the presence of an adequate force and sometimes without the probability of applying one," which the British used as an excuse to seize American commerce. "Whether the United States should continue passive under these progressive usurpations and these accumulated wrongs, opposing force to force in defence of their national rights," was the ultimate question, which Madison reluctantly decided could be

¹⁰⁵ Henry Adams, *History*, 6:175.

¹⁰⁶ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, February 7, 1812, in *Republic of Letters*, 3:1687.

¹⁰⁷ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, April 3, 1812, *ibid.*, 3:1691.

answered only with a declaration of war.¹⁰⁸ In the end, Madison concluded that war, even with all of its dangers, was safer for republican government than submission.

Most commentators correctly state that Madison went to war because the dignity of republican government demanded it.¹⁰⁹ Madison differed from the younger Republicans in Congress in that the so-called War Hawks warmly embraced the classical martial tradition, whereas Madison followed the eighteenth-century Opposition fear of war.¹¹⁰ Madison's application of republicanism to diplomacy led him into a disastrous contradiction. Madison made the dismantling of the British maritime program his *sine qua non* and, in doing so, touched on the one sacrosanct issue in British politics. War was almost inevitable. At the same time, Madison's republicanism prevented him from building the military, especially the navy, and denied the United States any real weapon against Great Britain. "In a state of military and psychological unpreparedness," Bradford Perkins wrote, "the United States embarked upon a war to recover the self-respect

¹⁰⁸ Special Message to Congress, June 1, 1812, in *WJM*, 8:192, 194, 199-200.

¹⁰⁹ See especially Roger H. Brown, *Republic in Peril*, 14-15; Ketcham, *JM*, 530-533; Steven Watts, *The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 160.

¹¹⁰ Watts argues that the War Hawks overcame a *classical* fear of war. *Republic Reborn*, 240-246.

destroyed by Republican leaders."¹¹¹

As the Senate debated a declaration of war, Great Britain removed the ostensible cause, repealing the Orders-in-Council on June 16. Repeal was not, however, a disavowal, and Great Britain still claimed the rights it momentarily chose not to exercise. Furthermore, the repeal said nothing about impressment, resolution of which for Madison had always been necessary for a settlement. "Although a repeal of the orders susceptible of explanations meeting the views of this Government had taken place before this pacific advance was made to Great Britain, the advance was declined from an avowed repugnance of impressment during the armistice," Madison told Congress in his fourth annual message, "and without any intimation that the arrangement proposed with respect to seamen would be accepted."¹¹² "On the issue of the war are staked our national sovereignty on the high seas and the security of an important class of our citizens, whose occupation give proper value to those of every other class," Madison said in second inaugural, marking a shift since 1792 in his opinion of sailors. In January Madison endorsed the Seaman's Bill, excluding foreigners from the American merchant marine if Great Britain gave up the right of search, as a basis for settlement, despite the fact that Great Britain had

¹¹¹ B. Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 437.

¹¹² Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 115-119; Fourth Annual Message, in *WJM*, 8:226.

already rejected a similar proposal.¹¹³

Madison hoped to conduct the war in a republican manner. His model was the first years of the American Revolution, which supposed an armed and patriotic citizenry could defeat Great Britain with a few quick thrusts, particularly against Canada. He was quickly disappointed on both counts. By September 1812 Madison concluded that only "high bounties & short enlistments, however objectionable, will fill the ranks."¹¹⁴ Hopes for a successful campaign against Canada, which Madison saw as the weak link of empire and the most convenient target, were dashed by a number of factors. The timidity of General William Hull in the Northwest; squabbling among generals Stephen Van Renssalaer, Daniel Tompkins and Alexander Smyth at Niagara; and the refusal of the militia to cross the border with General Henry Dearborn at Plattsburgh conspired to keep Canada in British hands.¹¹⁵

Madison was not opposed to an early and honorable end to the war, and Russia promised to provide such an ending. On March 8, 1813, Minister Andrei de Daschkov offered his government's services as mediator. "We shall endeavor to turn

¹¹³ Second Inaugural Message, March 4, 1813, in *WJM*, 8:236; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 295-296.

¹¹⁴ James Madison to James Monroe, September 21, 1812, James Monroe Papers, Library of Congress, Series 1, reel 5.

¹¹⁵ Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 4-7, 201-205; Harry L. Coles, *The War of 1812* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 38-39; Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 72-75, 81-84, 86-88.

the good will of Russia to the proper account," Madison wrote to Jefferson two days later."¹¹⁶ Not only did the Russian offer promise the chance to end a war that had already lasted longer than Madison planned, it was also an opportunity to force Great Britain to negotiate over maritime rights. "We are encouraged in this policy by the known friendship of the Emperor Alexander to this country; and the probability that the greater affinity between the Baltic and American ideas of maritime law, than between the former and G.B. will render this interposition as favorable as will be consistent with the character assumed by him," Madison explained to John Nicholas.¹¹⁷ Madison informed Congress that he accepted the mediation on May 25, and nominated Albert Gallatin, John Quincy Adams and James A. Bayard as commissioners. British Foreign Minister Lord Castlereagh suspected that Russia would favor a neutral rights agenda and rejected the mediation, offering instead to negotiate with the United States directly.¹¹⁸

By the time the Madison administration received word of Castlereagh's offer in January 1814, the military balance had

¹¹⁶ Andrei de Daschkov to James Monroe, March 8, 1813, in *ASP:FR*, 3:624; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, March 10, 1813, in James Morton Smith, *ed.*, *Republic of Letters*, 3:1718.

¹¹⁷ Brant, *JM*, 6:155-163; James Madison to John Nicholas, April 2, 1813, in *WJM*, 8:243-244.

¹¹⁸ Message to the special session of Congress, May 25, 1813, in *WJM*, 8:244-247; Henry Adams, *History*, 7:343; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 299-302.

tilted in Great Britain's favor, in Europe and America. The American cause was implicitly linked with Napoleon's success. Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig in October 1813, combined with British victories in Spain spelled the beginning of the end for the French emperor. Allied troops entered Paris on March 31, 1814, freeing thousands of battle-hardened troops for potential use against the United States. General George Prevost crossed into American territory on August 31, but was stopped at Plattsburgh. The British army had better success in other areas, burning Washington on August 27 and occupying eastern Maine on September 1.¹¹⁹

Madisonian diplomacy had previously been impervious to battlefield results. As the Royal Navy took control of the Chesapeake, Madison began to moderate his diplomatic demands. The cabinet met on June 23 and 24 to discuss impressment. The whole cabinet, except for Attorney General Richard Rush, agreed not to insist on the a solution of the issue of impressment as a peace ultimatum. The cabinet also determined not to accept a treaty completely silent on impressment, except for Secretary of War John Armstrong and Secretary of the Navy William Jones. The cabinet agreed to accept a treaty that referred impressment to a separate treaty, except for Rush, who wanted to wait on dispatches from Europe. After dispatches from Gallatin and Bayard arrived, the cabinet met

¹¹⁹ Hickey, *War of 1812*, 158, 182-183, 190-203; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 369-372, 382-386.

on June 27 and agreed to accept a treaty silent on impressment, as long as American diplomats did not surrender American claims on the matter or admit British claims.¹²⁰ Initial dispatches from Ghent, indicating a British hard line, led Madison to the unorthodox step of making negotiations in progress a matter of congressional debate and public record.¹²¹

On February 18, 1815, Madison transmitted the Treaty of Ghent to Congress. By most accounts, that treaty signalled the end of the first party system. Madison himself signed a bill chartering the second Bank of the United States. He advocated a system of internal improvements but vetoed a bill establishing a fund for that purpose on his last day in office.¹²² For Madison, the War of 1812 was a vindication of republican government. "The war has proved moreover that our free Government, like other free governments, though slow in its early movements, acquires in its progress a force proportional to its freedom, and that the union of these states, the guardian of the freedom and safety of all and each is strengthened by every occasion that puts it to the test,"

¹²⁰ Cabinet memorandum, June 23-24, in *LOWJM*, 3:408.

¹²¹ *ASP:FR*, 3:695.

¹²² Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 301; Brant, *JM*, 6:403; Ketcham, *JM*, 604-605; Watts, *Republic Reborn*, 300-301; Seventh annual message, December 5, 1815 and Veto message, March 3, 1817, in *WJM*, 8:342, 386-388.

Madison wrote in his fifth annual message.¹²³ "It was a struggle due to the Independence of the present and to the security of future generations," Madison wrote after the war.¹²⁴

The war was also in Madison's view a vindication of republicanism as applied to diplomacy. Contrary to John Adams, who left office convinced that the world would never adopt American maritime principles, Madison's optimism never dimmed. "If a purification of the Maritime Code ever takes place, the task seems to be reserved for the United States," Madison wrote to Charles J. Ingersoll in 1814. "Under such auspices, truth, justice, humanity, and universal good, will be inculcated with an advantage which must gradually and peaceably enlist the civilized world, against a Code which violates all these obligations," Madison concluded.¹²⁵ Madison wrote in 1827 that the United States would become the world's dominant sea power and would act with more justice than Great Britain.¹²⁶

The public careers of John Adams and James Madison ran on parallel tracks with each ending in a war crisis. Adams's

¹²³ Fifth annual message, December 7, 1813, in *WJM*, 8:274.

¹²⁴ James Madison to Thomas Charlton, June 29, 1815, in *LOWJM*, 2:607.

¹²⁵ James Madison to Charles J. Ingersoll, July 28, 1814, in *WJM*, 8:285.

¹²⁶ James Madison to C.C. Cambreleng, March 8, 1827, in *LOWJM*, 3:567.

ability to combine republican thought with diplomatic practice allowed him to uphold American rights on the ocean without entering a formal war that might have torn the nation apart. Madison's inability to do the same led the United States into a war which it nearly lost, and nearly divided the union. It is perhaps the highest irony that John Adams, who had the most right to condemn Madison as a failure, concluded that despite "a thousand Faults and blunders, his Administration has acquired more glory, and established more Union, than all his three Predecessors, Washington Adams and Jefferson, put together."¹²⁷

¹²⁷ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, February 2, 1817, in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 508.

CHAPTER 8: THE EDUCATION OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

John Quincy Adams, like John Adams and James Madison, received an early introduction to politics, war and diplomacy. At the age of eight he watched the Battle of Bunker Hill from Penn's Hill, near his home. "I saw with my own eyes those fires, and heard Britannia's thunders in the Battle of Bunker's Hill," John Quincy Adams later recalled, "and witnessed the tears of my mother and mingled them with my own, at the fall of [General Joseph] Warren, a dear friend to my father, and a beloved Physician to me."¹ Young Adams later accompanied his father on his diplomatic missions to Europe, "in the Quadruple capacity of Interpreter, secretary, Companion and Domestic."² From early on John Quincy Adams was acquainted with the republican principles of diplomacy, reliance on a balance of power, the idea that free ships make free goods, and the necessity of a political separation from Europe. These principles were at the center of Adams's career as a diplomat during the wars of the French Revolution. He combined his father's notion of a republican *realpolitik* with

¹ John Quincy Adams to Joseph Sturge, March 1846, in *MJQA*, 1:5.

² John Adams to Benjamin Franklin, April 13, 1779, in *PJA*, 8:33.

his mother's sense of Christian and moral duty throughout the course of his diplomatic career.

Both parents trained John Quincy Adams for his career as a republican statesman. Abigail Adams gave her son moral and religious instruction, writing him that "the only sure and permanent foundation of virtue is Religion."³ John Adams gave his son political instruction, complemented by John Quincy Adams's own study. John Quincy Adams served as Francis Dana's secretary in Russia in 1781 and 1782, and spent much time in St. Petersburg's English library, reading Hume, Catherine Macaulay and Adam Smith.⁴ When Adams returned home to attend Harvard, he feared that others might doubt his attachment to republican government, "but I find on the contrary that I am the best republican here."⁵ As an undergraduate and later a law apprentice, Adams studied Vattel, Burlamaqui and

³ Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Oct. 19, 1780 in *AFC*, 3:310; Joseph Illick, "John Quincy Adams: The Maternal Influence," *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 4 no. 2 (Fall 1976), 191; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 283; George Lipsky, *John Quincy Adams: His Theory and Ideas* (New York: Thomas A. Crowell Company, 1950), 75-77; David F. Musto, "The Youth of John Quincy Adams." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 113 no. 4 (August 1969), 270, 280.

⁴ Diary entries for Jan. 27, 1782, Feb. 25, 1782 and March 22, 1782, in John Quincy Adams, *Diary of John Quincy Adams*, 2 vols to date. David Grayson Allen, Robert J. Taylor, *et al.*, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981-), 1:103, 108, 115.

⁵ John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Dec. 30, 1786, in *WJQA*, 1:29.

Montesquieu.⁶

John Quincy Adams devoted his life to what he later called "the cause of Christian improvement," meaning the full use of God-given talents and resources for the moral and material benefit of mankind, linking his view of republicanism and natural law to a specifically Christian purpose.⁷ He viewed all political and economic questions as moral problems. The right to own property, for example, was a natural and moral right. Adams believed that the land belonged to those who cultivated or otherwise improved it and therefore accepted the Puritan doctrine of *vacuum domicilium*. "Their [the Indians'] cultivated fields, their constructed habitations, a space of ample sufficiency for their subsistence, and whatever they had annexed to themselves by personal labor, was undoubtedly by the law of nature theirs," Adams argued at Plymouth in 1802. He denied that hunting conferred title to lands. "Shall the lordly savage not only disdain the virtues and enjoyments of civilization himself, but shall he controul the civilization of a world," Adams asked.⁸ In a republic of

⁶ Diary entries for Oct. 24, 1786, Jan. 6, 1787, and Sept. 22, 1787, in *DJQA*, 2:118, 146, 292.

⁷ Diary entry, Nov. 12, 1842, in *MJQA*, 11:267-268.

⁸ John Quincy Adams, *An Oration, Delivered at Plymouth, December 22, 1802, at the Anniversary Commemoration of the First Landing of our Ancestors, at that Place* (Boston: Russell and Cutler, 1802), 21, 23; Harold John Callanan, "The Political Economy of John Quincy Adams" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1975), 14-15; Greg Russell, *John Quincy Adams and the Public Virtues of Diplomacy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 2-

individuals, Adams believed each individual "lies under the obligation of attending to and promoting that common interest to the utmost of his power, compatibly with the discharge of his more immediate duties of self-preservation and preservation of his kind."⁹

Trade was also a moral obligation. Adams fully endorsed Hume's and Ferguson's view that society passed through four stages of development, but unlike Madison, Adams believed that the fourth stage, commerce, was best suited to republican government. "To commerce considered as the *broker* and *carrier* of agriculture (for Mr. Jefferson's epithet of *handmaid* I do not approve) still higher importance and more extensive protection is due," Adams wrote. Adams tended to distrust merchants as a political class, but as he wrote to his father, "to commerce . . . as holding the great link of human association between the great vehicle of civilization and science, the most distinguished favor and liberal protection ought to be given."¹⁰ Adams's reaction to the Opium War in 1841 reveals the connection he drew between religion and

3; Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians 1620-1675*, 3rd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 110-112.

⁹ Diary entry, Aug. 21, 1809, draft of a letter to his sons, in *MJQA*, 2:12-13.

¹⁰ John Quincy Adams, "Society and Civilization," *American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art and Science*, Vol. 2 no. 1 (July 1845), 81; John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Oct. 14 and 31, 1811, in *WJQA*, 4:243, 267; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 49.

diplomacy, as well as his independence of mind. Adams, usually no friend of Great Britain, argued that it was in the right to force Chinese ports open. Adams believed he saw parallel duties in Vattel's argument that nations should engage in commerce and Jesus's command to love one's neighbor as oneself. Adams argued that the best way to love one's neighbor was to provide for his needs, that is, to engage in trade which might be mutually beneficial. By refusing to trade openly, China was in violation of both Christian and natural law.¹¹ Adams saw American expansion in part as a Christian duty, as seen in his diplomacy at Ghent and after.

Both training and temperament usually made John Quincy Adams's politics, at least in the 1790s, similar to his father's. Adams shared his father's suspicions of the French Revolution, writing that "the National Assembly in tearing the lace from the garb of government, will tear the coat itself into a thousand rags."¹² As "Publicola," Adams argued for a balanced government, as his father did. "Distribute the whole of your power in such a manner as will necessarily prevent any one man, or body of men, or any possible combination of individual interests, from being arbitrary," Adams wrote in his seventh letter, "but do not incumber your own

¹¹ John Quincy Adams, "On the Opium War," Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, Vol. 43 (1909-1910), 307-312.

¹² John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Oct. 19, 1790, in *WJQA*, 1:64.

representatives with shackles prejudicial to your own interests."¹³ In his eighth letter, Adams congratulated the American people for founding their republic "upon an equality really existing among them, and not upon the metaphysical speculation of fanciful politicians, vainly contending against the unalterable course of events, and the established order of nature."¹⁴ Upon reading these essays, James Madison concluded that John Quincy Adams, "may have been made the Editor of his father's doctrines."¹⁵

The Genet affair and the war between Great Britain and France brought Adams's pen back into service in defense of Washington's policy of neutrality and executive control of diplomacy. Writing as "Marcellus" in the Boston *Columbian Centinel*, Adams argued that "to advise us to voluntarily engage in the war, is to aim a dagger at the heart of this country."¹⁶ In his third essay, Adams attacked every possible basis for adhering to the 1778 treaties. The United States signed the treaties with the king, and the French themselves declared that the French king no longer existed. Furthermore, the French no longer controlled their West Indian islands. On moral grounds, the United States was not obliged to aid French

¹³ "Publicola," Letter VII, July 2, 1791, *ibid.*, 1:92-93.

¹⁴ "Publicola," Letter VIII, July 9, 1791, *ibid.*, 1:98.

¹⁵ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, July 13, 1791, in *PJM*, 14:46.

¹⁶ "Marcellus," #2, May 4, 1793, in *WJQA*, 1:142.

tyranny there. The most important argument was that France was at war with almost every major power in Europe, and the United States should not be dragged along by the 1778 treaties.¹⁷ Six months later, Adams wrote as "Columbus" and defended the works of Grotius, Vattel and Pufendorf, whom Genet claimed to have read but forgotten. Adams further argued, contrary to Madison's "Helvidius," for executive primacy in foreign affairs. "But the Constitution has not said, that the President shall perform no function which in its consequence might be productive of war," Adams wrote. "Such a provision would have been tantamount to a declaration that the President should have no powers at all."¹⁸

From 1794 to 1801 Adams served as a participant in the making of Federalist diplomacy, first as Washington's minister to the Netherlands, then as John Adams's minister to Prussia. In both positions, Adams acted unofficially as his father's eyes in Europe and sent as many reports to his father as to the secretary of state.¹⁹ As a diplomat, Adams took a part in implementing Washington's system of neutrality, which if adhered to, would "place the United States among the most

¹⁷ "Marcellus," #3, May 11, 1793, *ibid.*, 1:142-146.

¹⁸ "Columbus" #3, Dec. 7, 11 and 13, 1793 *ibid.*, 1:165, 175.

¹⁹ Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 38-41, 50-52, 58-62, 90-92.

powerful and opulent nations on earth."²⁰

When France became the greater threat to American neutrality, Adams supported his father's policies and choice of weapons. "Let us put on the shield and the helmet, and even draw the sword," Adams wrote to William Vans Murray, "but never cease to hold out the olive branch, and carefully keep the odium of aggression upon the enemies shoulders."²¹ "France is forcing upon us a navy," Adams wrote several weeks later, "and I wish that all or nearly all of our regular public force may take that direction."²² Adams did not share Madison's faith that the value of American trade would protect it without a naval force and criticized the Republicans for wanting to keep American commerce "altogether defenceless." "A naval establishment they fear will strengthen the Executive, an object of great terror to them," Adams continued.²³

The successful conclusion of the Quasi-War and the unsuccessful conclusion of John Adams's bid for re-election led John Quincy Adams to draw some lessons from his experience in Federalist diplomacy. John Quincy Adams, like his father, believed that the American reputation in Europe rested on the

²⁰ John Quincy Adams to Sylvanus Bourne, Dec. 24, 1795, in *WJQA*, 1:467.

²¹ John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, June 7, 1797, *ibid.*, 2:301.

²² John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, July 22, 1798, *ibid.*, 2:344.

²³ John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, April 11, 1798, *ibid.*, 2:344.

strength of the American navy. "At any rate we must have ample experience to prove that between England & France, we must expect to be in friendship with both, only when . . . we are in a better state for resistance against injustice at sea," Adams wrote to Rufus King.²⁴ Unlike his father, John Quincy Adams never believed that commercial relations would substitute for political relations. Commercial contacts inevitably brought political contacts, not only with Great Britain and France, but with all the naval powers of Europe. The only way to manage this contact was to be in a position to prevent both French and British attempts to draw the United States into war.²⁵ For John Quincy Adams there was no agonizing period of adjustment between republican theory and diplomatic practice, as the two had been intertwined from his youth.

John Quincy Adams entered the United States Senate in 1803 as a committed Federalist. He later recalled he shared Federalist dislike of Thomas Jefferson, "aggravated by a deep sense of his injustice and a profound conviction of his perfidity in his personal relations with my father."²⁶ By the

²⁴ John Quincy Adams to Rufus King, Feb. 8, 1800, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 134.

²⁵ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Jan. 31, 1798, in *WJQA*, 2:251.

²⁶ Robert R. Thompson, "John Quincy Adams, Apostate: From 'Outrageous Federalist' to 'Republican Exile,' 1801-1809," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 11 no. 2 (Summer 1991), 161; John Quincy Adams, "Reply to the Appeal of the Massachusetts Federalists," 1829, in Henry Adams, ed.

end of John Quincy Adams's senatorial term his conflicts with Federalist leaders over Louisiana and relations with Great Britain drove him from the party. "I never was converted, never pretended to be converted, from the Federal to the Republican Party," Adams wrote in 1829. "I changed no opinion; I denounced no associate."²⁷ The Federalists had retreated into sectionalism, and followed Francophobia to Anglophilia. The Federalism of 1808 was incompatible with Adams's creed, the Federalism of 1793.²⁸

"It seems as if there was something providential in the turn of all those events," Adams wrote of the Louisiana Purchase in 1837.²⁹ "The great service of Mr. Jefferson's administration was the acquisition of Louisiana, and this was rather the effect of good fortune than of design," Adams wrote in 1829.³⁰ Adams's support for the Louisiana Purchase flew in the face of the growing anti-expansionist trend in New England Federalism. While nationalist-minded Federalists such as John Adams and Alexander Hamilton supported the purchase, the

Documents Relating to New-England Federalism (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1877), 153-154.

²⁷ "Reply to the Appeal of the Massachusetts Federalists," 1829, in Henry Adams, *ed.*, *New-England Federalism*, 139.

²⁸ Thompson, "John Quincy Adams, Apostate," 183.

²⁹ Diary entry, April 25, 1837, in *MJQA*, 9:351.

³⁰ John Quincy Adams, *Parties in the United States*. Charles True Adams, *ed.* (New York: Greenberg, 1941), 36-37; see also John Quincy Adams, *The Lives of James Madison and James Monroe* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Geo. H. Derby and Co., 1850), 83.

leaders of New England Federalism feared the power of the slave South and the rise of the West.³¹ John Quincy Adams saw the Louisiana question in terms of national power and downplayed the sectional conflict. "There is no real opposition of interests between any one part of this union and another," Adams wrote in 1809.³²

Adams did object to Jefferson's policy regarding the organization and government of the new territory. "I believed that the annexation of Louisiana to the Union transcended the constitutional powers of Congress, and that it required the express consent of the people of Louisiana," Adams wrote in 1829, separating the power to purchase territory from the power to govern the inhabitants of that territory.³³ On November 25, 1803, Adams moved an amendment to the Constitution specifically giving Congress the authority to purchase and govern new territories. "We must amend the constitution before we can legislate for that country -- And it is our duty to amend it without delay," Adams argued in the Senate.³⁴ Adams opposed the Louisiana Government Bill as a

³¹ James M. Banner, Jr., *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts 1789-1815* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 110-114.

³² Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 119-120; John Quincy Adams, *American Principles. A Review of the Works of Fisher Ames, compiled by a number of his Friends* (Boston: Everett and Munroe, 1809), 37.

³³ Russell, *JQA and Public Virtues*, 35-36; John Quincy Adams, "Reply," in *New-England Federalism*, 156.

violation of the fundamental principles of republican government. "All the power in a republican government is derived from the *people*," Adams argued on February 18, 1804. "The people of that country have given us no power or authority to us to legislate for them."³⁵ "I considered that France could cede only her right of property to the territory, and that the right of sovereignty inherent in the people of the country, when the jurisdiction of France had ceased by the cession, could be ceded only by some act of their own, and acquired by some act of the people of the United States," Adams wrote in 1811.³⁶ Adams objected to the Two Million Dollar Act as simply bad policy. "West Florida I consider as our own -- we have bo't & paid for it," Adams told the Senate. "Our Country will never be content to purchase the same land twice -- They ought not."³⁷ The distinction between the right to purchase territory and the right to govern it would reemerge in Adams's response to the Texas question in the 1830s and 1840s.

Louisiana opened the rift between Adams and the main line of New England Federalism; maritime issues made the rift unbridgeable. Throughout the first decade of the nineteenth

³⁴ Amendment to the Constitution, Nov. 25, 1803, in *WJQA*, 3:20-21; Speech of Dec. 5, 1803, in Plumer, *Memorandum*, 73.

³⁵ Speech of Feb. 18, 1804, *ibid.*, 143-144.

³⁶ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Aug. 31, 1811, in *WJQA*, 4:204.

³⁷ Speech of Feb. 3, 1806, in Plumer, *Memorandum*, 413.

century, the Essex Junto was willing to hide from Napoleon behind the Royal Navy and to ignore British depredations on American shipping. In 1808 Adams visited his law mentor, Theophilus Parsons. "The only protection of our liberties, he thinks, is the British navy," Adams noted in his diary.³⁸ Adams completely agreed with Madison's attacks on the Rule of 1756, and called the *Examination of the British Doctrine* an "unanswerable vindication of the neutral cause." "To abandon the right to this colonial trade therefore is to sacrifice not only one of the best rights of an independent nation, but the peculiar and most precious interests of New-England," Adams argued in his review of Fisher Ames's works.³⁹ In response to the *Chesapeake* affair, Adams offered a resolution condemning the attack. Massachusetts Federalism did not share Adams's public rage, and Adams later recalled that the *Chesapeake* resolutions were his "unpardonable offense to Federalism."⁴⁰

Adams's preferred solution was to build up the navy, as his father had done in 1798. "Had Mr. Jefferson partaken the opinions, and preserved the system of policy respecting a navy, of his immediate predecessor, he probably never would have been compelled to resort to embargoes and non-intercourse

³⁸ Diary entry, May 10, 1808, in *MJQA*, 1:534.

³⁹ John Quincy Adams, *American Principles*, 18-19.

⁴⁰ Motion of July 16, 1807, in *WJQA*, 3:161-162; John Quincy Adams, *Parties in the United States*, 66-67.

against British orders in council," Adams wrote in 1829.⁴¹ Even with an embargo, Adams believed that Jefferson should have increased the navy and allowed merchant ships to arm.⁴² Adams did not believe the Embargo to be the ultimate republican weapon of coercion, as Madison did, but as a measure of defense supported it on those grounds. "The Embargo was the only shelter from the Tempest -- the last refuge of a violated Peace," Adams wrote to Harrison Gray Otis.⁴³ Adams always understood the Embargo as a defensive measure, and its greatest use was to take American property off the high seas, and out of harm's way. In December 1808 Adams believed the Embargo should be repealed, and replaced with other measures, both because the Embargo had succeeded in protecting commercial and naval resources and because it was creating a rift between New England and the union.⁴⁴ The Embargo completed Adams's journey out of the Federalist Party. He met with the Republican caucus on January 23, 1808. In response, the Massachusetts legislature elected James Lloyd a year ahead

⁴¹ John Quincy Adams, "Reply," in *New-England Federalism*, 328.

⁴² John Quincy Adams to Ezekiel Bacon, Nov. 17, 1808, in *WJQA*, 3:249.

⁴³ John Quincy Adams, *A Letter to the Hon. Harrison Gray Otis, a Member of the Senate of Massachusetts, on the Present State of our National Affairs; with Remarks on Mr. Pickering's Letter to the Governor of the Commonwealth* (Newburyport, Mass.: W. & J. Gilman, 1808), 11.

⁴⁴ John Quincy Adams to James Sullivan, Jan. 10, 1808; John Quincy Adams to Ezekiel Bacon, Dec. 21, 1808, in *WJQA*, 3:186, 279.

of schedule to fill Adams seat. Adams resigned on June 8, 1808.⁴⁵

After leaving the Senate, Adams was not long out of office. In 1809 Madison appointed him minister to Russia in place of William Short, whom the Senate had rejected. On the eve of Adams's departure he speculated that the mission was "perhaps the most important of any that I have ever in the course of my life have been engaged in."⁴⁶ Relations with Russia would concern trade, maritime rights and American neutrality generally. All were issues Adams believed to be at the heart of republican diplomacy. Secretary of State Robert Smith issued Adams the instructions intended for Short, directing the new minister to seek a commercial treaty with Russia and secure Russian protection for American shipping.⁴⁷ Although in 1781 Adams had described the Russian government as "entirely despotical," and upon his return observed that Russia "has undergone perhaps the least change of any [nation] in Europe since I saw it," he continued, "that change has been for the better" and described Czar Alexander as, "a character highly distinguished among the sovereigns of the world."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 143-149.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 159; Diary entry, Aug. 5, 1809, in *MJQA*, 2:4

⁴⁷ James Madison to William Short, Sept. 28, 1808, in *WJQA*, 3:322-328.

⁴⁸ John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Sept. 10, 1783; John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Feb. 14, 1810, in *WJQA*, 1:10, 3:398.

Moreover, Russia sought closer relations with the United States. Adams wrote the secretary of war that "the disposition of the Emperor of Russia affords a happy contrast with those of France and England."⁴⁹ Adams met frequently with Count Rumiantzev, Chancellor of the Empire, who assured Adams of Russia's good intentions. "Our attachment to the United States," Rumiantzev told Adams, "*is obstinate -- more obstinate than you are aware of.*"⁵⁰ Given the Russian attitude, Adams reported to Secretary of State Monroe in 1811 that he fully expected to sign a commercial treaty.⁵¹

Treaty or no treaty, trade between the United States and Russia boomed in the years before the War of 1812. Boston merchants plunged into Indian trade in Russian North America, to the point where Russian officials stepped in to control trade within Russian territory. Adams tried to find out the extent of Russia's claim in North America, but Russian evasiveness ended negotiations on that subject.⁵² Trade with Russia itself increased as Great Britain and France tried to

⁴⁹ John Quincy Adams to William Eustis, Feb. 28, 1810, *ibid.*, 3:403.

⁵⁰ Diary entry, Oct. 9, 1810, in *MJQA*, 2:180.

⁵¹ John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, April 29, 1811, in *WJQA*, 4:62-63.

⁵² David W. McFadden, "John Quincy Adams, American Commercial Diplomacy, and Russia, 1809-1825," *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 66 no. 4 (July 1985), 615-616; John C. Hildt, *Early Diplomatic Negotiations of the United States with Russia* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1906), 48-52; Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 172-175; *MJQA*, 2:178-185.

close off all neutral trade. By June 1811 Russia was glutted with American goods, as American ships often had no place else to go. "American vessels are pouring in on us in floods," Adams told his father. In July 1811 Adams reported to Secretary Monroe that some 200 ships had put in at Russian ports, with more expected. Adams believed that the unsettled political situation between Russia and Great Britain, Russia and France, and Great Britain and the United States would prevent a formal agreement, although that same political instability encouraged American trade with Russia. In October Adams told an American diplomat in London that 130 ships had called at Kronstadt alone. Trade continued despite the 60-day embargo passed by Congress on April 4, 1812, as Adams told his brother that 40 ships had called at Kronstadt by July of 1812.⁵³

As important as Russian-American relations were in their own right, they were only a part of a larger political situation, shaped by Franco-British conflict. Adams's mission was to observe and report on that war, just as he had in the 1790s as minister to the Netherlands and Prussia. Just as in the 1790s, Adams hoped to keep the United States out of the war. "To the policy of *neutrality* we have greater reason than

⁵³ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, June 25 and July 11, 1811; John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, July 22 and Aug. 9, 1811, in *WJQA*, 4:117-118, 142, 148-152, 170-174; John Quincy Adams to Jonathan Russell, Oct. 23, 1811; John Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, July 4, 1812, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reels 136 and 139; Hickey, *War of 1812*, 39.

ever to adhere," he wrote to his brother. "The only object for which we could engage in war would be commerce, and the moment war would take place our commerce would be annihilated."⁵⁴ Adams told Benjamin Waterhouse, "the general policy of all the American states since the acknowledgement of their independence has been peace with all the world, and seclusion from the political system of Europe."⁵⁵

From 1809 to the eve of the War of 1812 Adams entertained the hope that the United States could avoid war. He did not believe that Napoleon could enforce his Continental System without Russian cooperation, comparing the effort to an attempt to "exclude the air from a bottle by hermetically sealing up the mouth, while there was a great hole in the side."⁵⁶ When Napoleon appeared to repeal the Berlin and Milan Decrees in 1810, Adams warned against a possible French trap intended to provoke "war with England, which England most richly deserves, but which on our part would more than ever be impolitic at this time."⁵⁷ Great Britain and France were playing into each other's hands. "The more they [the British] continue the war, the more universally will they establish the

⁵⁴ Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 175; John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, May 13, 1811, in *WJQA*, 4:69.

⁵⁵ John Quincy Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Aug. 28, 1811, *ibid.*, 4:197.

⁵⁶ Diary entry, Dec. 30, 1809, in *MJQA*, 2:91-92.

⁵⁷ John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, April 29, 1811, in *WJQA*, 4:65.

control of France over the continent of Europe," Adams wrote his father in 1810. "On the other hand the demonstration is equally plain, that the longer France and her dependencies adhere to what they call the continental system," Adams continued, "the more easily will England . . . secure to herself the monopoly of commerce throughout the world."⁵⁸ Adams believed that Great Britain and France would ultimately have to permit American commerce in Europe, for their own survival. "Their necessities will do more for the restoration of our rights than we could do by the exertion of our own forces," he argued, in an uncharacteristically Madisonian tone.⁵⁹

Adams was leery of war not because he shared the traditional Whig fear of armies and taxes but because the United States was woefully unprepared to protect the commerce that such a war would be waged to defend. The Republicans had already thrown away the navy, the weapon Adams considered best suited to a republic. "The prospect of a war with England has been so long approaching us," Adams remarked in 1811, "that we ought to have been better prepared for it than we are."⁶⁰ In March of 1812 he wrote his mother that the United States would

⁵⁸ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Sept. 2, 1810, *ibid.*, 3:482.

⁵⁹ John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Jan. 1, 1812, *ibid.*, 4:286.

⁶⁰ John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, July 31, 1811, *ibid.*, 4:160-161.

be fully justified in declaring war against Great Britain to defend its rights. "But before we resort to force for maintaining them, we must be in possession of the force itself," he continued, "and really with our army of five or six thousand men, and our navy of ten or twelve frigates, to talk of maintaining by *force* any right whatsoever against such a power as Great Britain is too ridiculous."⁶¹

When Adams heard that Great Britain had repealed the Orders-in-Council that applied to American shipping, he continued to hope that "we shall not be compelled to plunge into the fatal vortex of European Wars."⁶² Adams's hopes were dashed on August 6, 1812, as he noted without further comment in his diary that the United States had declared war on Great Britain on June 18. Although Adams had not wanted war, he supported the war when it came. As he told Count Rumiantzev, the United States probably would not have declared war had Congress known about the British repeal, "yet war once being declared, there were other points of collision upon which an accommodation became essential for the restoration of peace; upon which the chief of these, the impressment of seamen from our merchant vessels, it appeared the British government would listen to nothing."⁶³ "Our war is the sailor's war," Adams

⁶¹ John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, March 30, 1812, *ibid.*, 4:302.

⁶² John Quincy Adams to Jonathan Russell, July 28, 1812, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 136.

told his mother. Like Madison, Adams drew on the classical martial tradition at the crucial moment. "There are great and glorious qualities in the human character which as they can unfold themselves only in times of difficulty and danger seem to make war from time to time a necessary evil among men," Adams wrote. "A nation long at peace seldom fails to become degraded. Symptoms of this spirit of corruption were very visible in our country."⁶⁴ Adams had not been a War Hawk, once war came he determined to make the best of it.

While Adams watched the coming of the American war with Great Britain from afar, he had a much closer view of the approach of hostilities between France and Russia. After Russia's persistent refusal to enforce the Continental System, Napoleon declared war on June 22, 1812, and marched a 600,000-man army toward Russia. On June 29 Adams reported the outbreak of war in Poland. Napoleon's army took Smolensk in August and entered Moscow on September 14. Napoleon found a deserted city, and soon after the French arrived the Muscovites who remained behind set the city on fire. Napoleon waited for the czar to treat but gave up on October 19 and began his retreat. At no point did Russia consider the United States an ally of France, *de facto* or otherwise. At the moment of greatest danger to Russia, the czar offered to mediate between Great

⁶³ Diary entries, Aug. 6 and Dec. 7, 1812, in *MJQA*, 2:396, 428-429.

⁶⁴ John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Feb. 18, 1813, in *WJQA*, 4:436-437.

Britain and the United States.⁶⁵ By October Adams believed the tide had turned against Napoleon, writing that Napoleon was "hemmed in between four Russian armies over whose bodies he must either advance or retreat; two thousand miles distant from his capitol; having lost one half of the forces with which he commenced the war."⁶⁶ "Russia has henceforth nothing to fear from France," Adams reported to Monroe as Napoleon approached the Russian frontier. "She must henceforth be the predominating power on the continent of Europe."⁶⁷

In 1813 Albert Gallatin and James A. Bayard joined Adams in St. Petersburg as peace commissioners under the proposed Russian mediation. For months the trio waited for a British response. In January 1814 Madison learned that Great Britain rejected mediation but would engage in direct talks. Madison accepted and added Massachusetts Republican and diplomat Jonathan Russell and House Speaker Henry Clay to the peace commission.⁶⁸ Secretary Monroe instructed the commissioners to reach some settlement on impressment and to make an attempt to

⁶⁵ Charles Bruenig, *The Age of Revolution and Reaction, 1789-1850*, 2nd. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1977), 110-112; Hildt, *Early Diplomatic Negotiations*, 58-60; John Quincy Adams to John Adams, June 29, 1812; John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, Sept. 30, 1812, in *WJQA*, 4:360, 389-391.

⁶⁶ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Oct. 4, 1812, *ibid.*, 4:395.

⁶⁷ John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, Dec. 16, 1812, *ibid.*, 4:418.

⁶⁸ Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 299-302, 369-374.

acquire Canada. The British, however, sought to press their military advantage. Lord Castlereagh appointed a second-rate set of delegates -- admiralty lawyer Dr. William Adams, Vice-Admiral Lord Gambier, and colonial official Henry Goulburn -- but he issued an ambitious set of instructions. Castlereagh ordered his negotiators to avoid any formal statement on impressment, to seek an adjustment of the Canadian boundary in Britain's favor, to expel the United States from the North Atlantic fisheries, and to make some arrangement for the northwestern Indians, possibly establishing a buffer state.⁶⁹

"Between Castlereagh's ideas and those of Madison no relation existed," Henry Adams wrote.⁷⁰ John Quincy Adams learned how wide was the division on the first meeting between the British and American commissioners at Ghent in August 1814. Adams hoped to address maritime issues, and the British did list impressment as a topic for discussion. The British, however, were more interested in an Indian buffer state and the Canadian boundary. The British attempted to put the United States on the defensive, arguing that the American invasion of Canada indicated that territorial expansion was the real object of the war.⁷¹ Adams had previously written to his

⁶⁹ Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams: England and the United States 1812-1823* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 55-69.

⁷⁰ Henry Adams, *History*, 9:10.

⁷¹ Protocols of the Conference of August 8-9, 1814; The British Commissioners to the American Commissioners, Sept. 2, 1814, Albert Gallatin Papers, New York University, reel

brother that "the acquisition of Canada . . . was not and could not be an object of this war," and in a meeting with Goulburn on September 1 Adams ignored his instructions and denied that the United States wished to annex Canada.⁷² Adams did generally approve of the course of American expansion, arguing that the United States had a "moral and religious duty to settle cultivate and improve" the Indian territory of the old Northwest. His colleagues generally agreed, although Clay and Russell refused to call it a religious duty.⁷³ Such fundamental conflicts with the British convinced Adams that the conference would break up without a settlement. "I have never for an instant believed that peace would be practicable by the negotiation here," Adams wrote to William H. Crawford, "Mr. Clay is the only one among us who has occasionally thought it might be."⁷⁴

Emboldened by the burning of Washington and the surrender of Nantucket and parts of Maine, the British ministry came to believe that a settlement on the basis of *uti possedetis* would secure Canada better than an Indian buffer state could. On October 18, Castlereagh ordered the British commissioners to

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⁷² John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Nov. 24, 1812, in *WJQA*, 4:407; Diary entry, Sept. 1, 1814, in *MJQA*, 3:24-29.

⁷³ Diary entry, Sept. 25, 1814, *ibid.*, 3:41-42.

⁷⁴ John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Aug. 23 and Sept. 23, 1814; John Quincy Adams to William H. Crawford, Oct. 5, 1814, in *WJQA*, 5:90-92, 143-145, 152.

retain Fort Niagara and the northern and eastern portions of Maine.⁷⁵ With the Indian issue gone, the Americans hoped merely to retain their territory and rights under the 1783 peace treaty. Gallatin and Adams each wrote draft treaties that would renew the 1783 articles granting American access to the North Atlantic fisheries in return for allowing British navigation of the Mississippi, to which Clay objected. "He is willing to leave the fisheries as a nest egg for another war," Adams wrote in his diary, adding that Clay believed "that a renewal of the British right to navigate the Mississippi would be giving them a privilege far more important than we would secure in return."⁷⁶ Adams himself lobbied for New England's interest in the fisheries. The British would not object so strenuously, Adams argued, if the fisheries were unimportant. Adams was alone. Gallatin and Clay were ready to give up the fisheries, and even Massachusetts resident Jonathan Russell would not demand them. The British government, having decided that the American war was more trouble than it was worth, spared Adams the choice between peace and the fisheries. On December 22 the British commissioners agreed to a peace that was silent on the major issues, and the two sides signed a treaty on December 24, 1814.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ B. Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams*, 105-106.

⁷⁶ Diary entry, Dec. 10, 1814, in *MJQA*, 3:99.

⁷⁷ Diary entries, Dec. 13, 22 and 24, 1814, *ibid.*, 3:113-114, 120-122, 127.

"We have obtained nothing but peace, and we have made great sacrifices to obtain it," Adams wrote to his wife. "But our honor remains unsullied; our territory remains entire."⁷⁸ The treaty said nothing about the major issues, including impressment, the ostensible cause of the war. Adams, however, never expected a formal settlement of impressment. As he explained to his father in February 1814, the only solution was "to leave the situation where it was, saying nothing about it [impressment]." Adams was also not surprised that the two sides could reach no agreement on the fisheries. If Massachusetts objected to the lack of an explicit guarantee for the fisheries, she had only herself to blame. "Had Massachusetts been true to herself and to the Union," he wrote two days after signing the treaty, "Great Britain would not have dared to hinge the question of peace . . . upon the privileges of Massachusetts fishermen."⁷⁹

Like his father, John Quincy Adams followed a successful peace mission with an appointment to Great Britain. And like his father, John Quincy Adams accomplished very little. Adams's main goals were to resolve the issues, such as impressment and the fisheries, left undone at Ghent. The changed political situation in Europe made those issues less urgent. "The Political atmosphere both in Europe and America

⁷⁸ John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Jan. 3, 1815, in *WJQA*, 5:261.

⁷⁹ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Feb. 17 and Dec. 26, 1814, *ibid.*, 5:22, 253.

for the first time within my remembrance presents the aspect of almost total calm," Adams wrote his mother.⁸⁰ Before arriving in London, Adams reported to Monroe that as he expected no new maritime war, that the impressment issue "may be suffered to slumber until the occasion shall rise when real interests will again be affected by them." Adams discussed the issue with Castlereagh in May 1815, but dropped it, telling Castlereagh that "it was not the disposition of the American Government or nation to apply the force of arms in the maintenance of any abstract principle."⁸¹ Adams periodically raised the question of the fisheries as well, but did not expect any movement on that issue either.⁸²

Two tours as a diplomat and one term in the Senate proved to Adams that the survival of the American republic depended above all on a separation from European politics. This belief led Adams to support a hybrid of Federalist and Republican diplomacy. Adams did not believe the war was a vindication of Republican policy, but rather hoped that the United States had been "cured of a reliance on embargoes" and argued that "an efficient revenue and a growing navy" alone could guarantee

⁸⁰ Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 227-228; John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Nov. 7, 1815, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 142.

⁸¹ John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, Feb. 23, 1815, in *WJQA*, 5:282; Diary entry, May 29, 1815, in *MJQA*, 3:202-203.

⁸² John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, Sept. 19, 1815, in *WJQA*, 5:377-388.

peace.⁸³ He would have none of the self-congratulation that followed the War of 1812. The war had improved the American standing in Europe, but Adams hoped that Americans would also remember "how much we suffered by want of adequate preparation for war before it was undertaken, how much for the want of a more efficient naval force; how much by the miserable condition of our army; how much by our unreasonable reliance on militia soldiers and militia officers, how much by our undigested and unsuitable system of finances; and above all, by disaffection, by disunion [in New England]."⁸⁴

As a Republican, Adams cheered expansion, which would remove European colonies as neighbors. He went beyond Madison by pronouncing American expansion a divine command. Adams had no fear of a decline in New England's influence, as the new territories "are rapidly peopling with Yankees." "The relative proportion of power between the different members of this Union is as insignificant, as the same question between the North End and the South End [of Boston]," Adams wrote to his father.⁸⁵ For John Quincy Adams, union was the measure of republican government. "*Union* is to me what *balance* is to

⁸³ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Aug. 31, 1815, *ibid.*, 5:361.

⁸⁴ John Quincy Adams to Joseph Hall, Sept. 9, 1815, *ibid.*, 5:375.

⁸⁵ John Quincy Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Oct. 24, 1813; John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Aug. 31, 1811, *ibid.*, 4:526, 209.

you," Adams wrote to his father in 1811.⁸⁶ The battle of the revolutionary generation over balanced government had been won; the battle to preserve the union, if the Hartford Convention was any indication, was far from settled. For Adams, union was the main goal of expansion and diplomacy, and the bedrock of republican government. "The whole continent of North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one *nation*, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs," Adams wrote in 1811. "For the common happiness of them all, for their peace and prosperity, I believe it indispensable that they should all be associated in one Federal Union."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Oct. 31, 1811, *ibid.*, 4:267.

⁸⁷ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Aug. 31, 1811, *ibid.*, 4:209.

CHAPTER 9: REPUBLICS AND EMPIRES

When John Quincy Adams took office as secretary of state in 1817, he entered a political and diplomatic world far different from the one he had left in 1809. The great struggle of his father's generation, to establish the republic, was over. After the War of 1812 the survival of republican government seemed assured.¹ Adams's generation faced the task of preserving the republic, and to Adams that meant the wise use rather than the limitation of government power. Adams did not share the revolutionary generation's fear of power and blurred the distinction between liberty and power. "Individual liberty is individual power," Adams wrote in 1822, "and as the power of a community is a mass compounded of individual power, the nation which enjoys the most freedom must necessarily in proportion be the most powerful nation."² Adams's unionism found domestic expression in his *Report upon Weights and Measures*, where he linked a uniform system to the general improvement of mankind.³ Adams believed that a

¹ Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 302; Watts, *Republic Reborn*, 316-321.

² Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 60-63, 69-70; John Quincy Adams to James Lloyd, Oct. 1, 1822, in *WJQA*, 7:312.

government that could use power abroad should also do so at home. In 1821 he chided Attorney General William Wirt, and Virginia Republicans generally, for opposing the creation of a national bank or a system of internal improvements, while at the same time approving the Louisiana Purchase, which Adams believed was "in substance a dissolution and reconstruction of the whole Union."⁴

Union also formed the core of Adams's conception of a republican foreign policy. Adams further departed from the world of the founders by calling for a continental union, removing any restrictions on the size of a republic. Unlike Jefferson, Adams believed that Americans should not only spread republican institutions to the whole continent, but that the political jurisdiction of the United States must follow.⁵ The main diplomatic enemy of the union, and therefore of republican government, was European colonization, a monarchical practice. The non-colonization principle enunciated in the Monroe Doctrine was therefore the best expression of the republican diplomacy that Adams pursued as secretary of state and president. Adams opposed colonization on three levels; removing the European empires in North

³ John Quincy Adams, *Report upon Weights and Measures* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1821), 134.

⁴ Diary entry, Nov. 21, 1821, in *MJQA*, 5:401.

⁵ Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson. *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 159-160.

America that blocked American expansion, preventing the introduction of European politics among the newly-independent nations of Spanish America, and attacking the maritime pretensions of Great Britain, which Adams considered to be the colonization of the seas.

"The great European question of the last twenty-five years has been solved, at least for the present," Adams observed soon after taking office, "but another cannot fail to offer itself."⁶ The passing of the problem of revolutionary France brought the new problem of reassembling Europe on monarchical principles. In 1814 Talleyrand, staying one step ahead of political change, put forth the principle of legitimacy, a presumption in favor of governments of long standing. Legitimacy was the fundamental principle of the Quadruple Alliance between Great Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria, and the Holy Alliance, which did not include Great Britain. The Quadruple Alliance was a political alliance formed to preserve the territorial boundaries set at the Congress of Vienna. The Holy Alliance, dominated by Russia, Prussia and Austria, was a personal league of monarchs pledged to defend the principles of Christianity, but posited that the cause of Christianity could be served only by absolute monarchies. At the Congress of Troppau in 1820 the Holy Alliance claimed the right to interfere with the internal

⁶ John Quincy Adams to John Adams Smith, Oct. 8, 1817, in *WJQA*, 6:212.

politics of other nations, an assertion which began to alienate Great Britain from the rest of the Quadruple Alliance.⁷

A presumption in favor of established governments over new experiments was not alien to American thought. Indeed, it was a fundamental article of British and American conservatism, forming the basis for Burke's critique of the French Revolution, not to mention similar critiques from Alexander Hamilton, John Adams and John Quincy Adams.⁸ Americans across the political spectrum, however, had no sympathy for the pretensions of the Holy Alliance. The Holy Alliance was a constant editorial target in newspapers ranging from the *Daily National Intelligencer*, the voice of official Republicanism, to the *North American Review*, a leading journal of New England Federalism.⁹ Adams noted the gulf between American and European political principles on the eve of his departure from London. "There is already in all the governments of Europe a strong prejudice against us as

⁷ W. Alison Phillips, *The Confederation of Europe: A Study of the European Alliance, 1813-1823 as an Experiment in the International Organization of Peace*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman's, Green and Co., Limited, 1920), 88-89, 207-210; Harold Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning 1822-1827: England, the Neo-Holy Alliance, and the New World* (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1925), 4-5.

⁸ Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*. 7th rev. ed. (Chicago: Regnery Books, 1986), 64-70.

⁹ Edward Howland Tatum, Jr., *The United States and Europe 1815-1823: A Study in the Background of the Monroe Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), 29-34.

Republicans, and as the primary causes of the propagation of those principles," Adams wrote, "which still make the throne of every European monarch rock under him as within the throes of an earthquake."¹⁰

The new questions in European politics affected American foreign policy most directly in the problem of the collapse of the Spanish Empire and eventually the Spanish government, which encouraged other powers on both sides of the Atlantic to seek their own advantage. Adams observed the opening stages of the Spanish American revolutions from St. Petersburg, and told the Russian foreign minister that all of the colonial systems in North America were doomed.¹¹ Adams did not mourn their loss, and in 1822 told Stratford Canning, the British minister to the United States, that "the whole system of modern colonization was an abuse of government, and that it was time that it should come to an end."¹² Adams objected to the American Colonization Society's request that the government purchase land in Africa on the grounds that, "the plan obviously imports the engrafting of a colonial establishment upon the Constitution of the United States, and thereby an accession of power to the National Government, transcending

¹⁰ John Quincy Adams to William Plumer, Jan. 17, 1817, in *WJQA*, 6:141-142.

¹¹ Diary entry, Jan. 23, 1811, in *MJQA*, 2:217.

¹² Diary entry, Nov. 25, 1822, *ibid.*, 6:104.

all other powers."¹³

Adams believed the Spanish colonial establishment to be the immediate problem. The questions of the Floridas and the boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase were unresolved when Adams took office, and Adams considered settlement vital to the preservation of the union and republicanism. Foreign possession of the Floridas, either by Spain or another power, threatened the safety of American commerce coming out of New Orleans. More generally, the Florida question had the potential of dragging the United States into European wars. Negotiation of the Adams-Onis Treaty with Spain consumed most of Adams's first two years as secretary of state to the point where "almost all other business runs in arrear."¹⁴ Don Luis de Onis, the Spanish minister to the United States, had started negotiations with Secretary Monroe in 1815, demanding that the United States return West Florida and prevent American citizens from aiding rebel movements in the Floridas. Monroe rejected Onis's terms. By January 1817 Onis was willing to cede the Floridas in exchange for an equivalent consideration west of the Mississippi.¹⁵

Adams began negotiations with Onis in December 1817, and the two diplomats moved in opposite directions. Onis hoped to

¹³ Diary entry, March 12, 1819, *ibid.*, 4:292-293.

¹⁴ Diary entry, Feb. 12, 1819, *ibid.*, 4:253.

¹⁵ Don Luis de Onis to James Monroe, Dec. 30, 1815 and Jan. 16, 1817; James Monroe to Don Luis de Onis, Jan. 19, 1816, in *ASP:FR*, 4:422-426, 438.

use the Floridas as a bargaining chip, and keep the western boundary of the United States as close to the Mississippi as possible. Adams assumed a Florida cession was almost inevitable, and pushed the border farther and farther west. Onís denied that the Louisiana Purchase included West Florida to the Perdido River but was prepared to back away from the Mississippi, suggesting a boundary at the Mermento River, a few miles west of the Mississippi, northward to the Missouri. Adams countered on January 16, 1818, demanding a cession of the Floridas and a boundary at the Colorado River of Texas (about 50 miles west of modern-day Houston) to its source, and northward along the Rocky Mountains. Onís responded on January 24 by giving up the Floridas and moving the western boundary between the Mermento and Calcasieu Rivers, within the state of Louisiana.¹⁶ Early negotiations led Adams to believe there would be no quick settlement.¹⁷ In April, Onís sought further orders from his government. Adams instructed George W. Erving, the United States minister to Spain, to warn Spain that the offer of the Colorado would not last indefinitely. Adams wrote that "the impression upon the public opinion of this country, of our unquestionable right to the Rio Bravo as the western

¹⁶ Don Luis de Onís to John Quincy Adams, Dec. 29, 1817, Jan. 5, 8 and 14, 1818; John Quincy Adams to Don Luis de Onís, Jan. 16, 1818, *ASP:FR*, 4:452-456; William Earl Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 73-74.

¹⁷ John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, March 9, 1818, in *WJQA*, 6:301.

boundary, is from day to day becoming stronger."¹⁸

Andrew Jackson broke the logjam. In January 1818 Jackson urged decisive action against the Seminoles in East Florida. Jackson's orders did not explicitly prohibit him from pursuing Seminole raiding parties into Spanish territory, and in March he led 5000 troops against the Seminoles. Jackson captured St. Marks and executed two Britons, Robert C. Armbrister and Alexander Arbuthnot, whom Jackson accused of aiding Seminole attacks on American territory. Jackson then marched on Pensacola, and seized the seaport on May 24.¹⁹ Adams noted in his diary that Jackson's dispatches from St. Marks arrived on May 4. Adams did not immediately approve of Jackson's actions. "Crawford some time ago proposed to send Jackson to give no quarter to any white man found with the Indians," Adams observed. "I objected to it then, and this day avowed that I was not prepared for such a mode of warfare."²⁰

Six weeks later Monroe and the cabinet learned of the fall of Pensacola, which Adams feared "makes many difficulties for the Administration."²¹ Onis lodged a formal protest on July 8. The same day Adams met with Baron Hyde de Neuville, the French minister and unofficial intermediary between Adams

¹⁸ John Quincy Adams to George W. Erving, April 20, 1818, *ibid.*, 6:306-307.

¹⁹ Weeks, *JQA and American Empire*, 109-112.

²⁰ Diary entry, May 4, 1818, in *MJQA*, 4:87.

²¹ Diary entry, June 18, 1818, *ibid.*, 4:102.

and Onis. Adams told Hyde de Neuville that he expected Monroe would approve Jackson's conduct. Two days later Hyde de Neuville told Adams that Spain was prepared to cede the Floridas if the United States assumed American shipping claims against Spain. The French minister urged Adams to accept the Sabine River as the western boundary, which Adams rejected.²² Adams met Onis on July 11, and saw that Onis was "more tractable on the subject of Pensacola." Onis proposed to give up the Floridas entirely and let mutual shipping claims cancel each other out if the United States accepted a boundary from the Mermento and Calcasieu Rivers north to the Missouri and along the Missouri to its source. Adams, sensing his advantage, rejected the new boundary and for the first time suggested a line running to the Pacific, which would safeguard the American claim to the Columbia River. On July 16, Adams proposed through Hyde de Neuville a line from the Trinity River to the Red River, along the Red to the source of the Rio Grande, along the mountains and then to the Pacific.²³

Adams could not exploit Spain's weakened position if Monroe disavowed Jackson's campaign. "The President and all of the members of the Cabinet, except myself, are of the opinion that Jackson acted not only without, but against, his

²² Don Luis de Onis to John Quincy Adams, July 8, 1818, *ASP:FR*, 4:496-497; Diary entries, July 8 and 10, 1818, in *MJQA*, 4:105-106.

²³ Diary entries, July 11 and 16, 1818, in *MJQA*, 4:106-107, 110; Weeks, *JQA and American Empire*, 119-122.

instructions," Adams wrote in his diary for July 15. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun seemed "personally offended." The constitutional question hung on the power of the president to conduct hostilities without a declaration of war. "There is no doubt that *defensive* acts of hostility may be authorized by the Executive," Adams argued, "but Jackson was authorized to cross the Spanish line in pursuit of the Indian enemy." Hostilities were directed against the Seminoles, not Spain. In Adams's mind, the power to repel sudden attacks included the right to pursue the enemy across international borders.²⁴ On July 21 Adams told Monroe that a disavowal would be a confession of weakness, a dangerous abdication of power, and an injustice to Jackson.²⁵ Adams carried the day, and in his note to Onis of July 23 threw the blame onto Spain for failing to control the Indians within its territories.²⁶

Adams took the same argument to the Spanish government, and from there to the rest of Europe. Adams's instructions to George W. Erving of November 28, 1818, which Samuel Flagg Bemis called "the greatest state paper of John Quincy Adams's career," completed the transformation of Jackson's creative reading of his orders into an act of self-defense.²⁷ Adams

²⁴ Diary entry, July 15, 1818, in *MJQA*, 4:108; Weeks, *JQA and American Empire*, 113-116.

²⁵ Diary entry, July 18, 1818, in *MJQA*, 4:115.

²⁶ John Quincy Adams to Don Luis de Onis, July 23, 1818, in *WJQA*, 6:383-394.

²⁷ Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 326.

told Erving to remind the Spanish foreign minister that Spain was responsible for sheltering hostile Indians, giving Jackson no choice but to seize St. Marks and Pensacola. Adams further warned Spain that "the right of the United States can as little compound with impotence as with perfidity," and that the United States would continue to act in defense of its own borders, with or without Spain's cooperation.²⁸ Adams's vigorous, if not ruthless, defense of Jackson demonstrated the gap between his republicanism and that of the previous generation. Unlike Madison in response to Mathews's 1812 raid on East Florida, Adams did not shy away from the use of power, which he believed was necessary for the survival of the republic.²⁹ To disown Jackson would be a dereliction of duty by not taking a vital action.

Adams completed negotiations with Onis on February 22, 1819, when the two signed a treaty that ceded the Floridas to the United States, and set the boundary between American and Spanish territory at the Sabine to the Red River, along the Red to 100 degrees west, north to the Arkansas River to its source, north to 42 degrees north, and west to the Pacific, trading Texas for Oregon.³⁰ "The acquisition of the Floridas

²⁸ John Quincy Adams to George W. Erving, Nov. 28, 1818, in *WJQA*, 6:476-480, 486-487, 502; Weeks, *JQA and American Empire*, 139-146.

²⁹ Madison did approve of Jackson's raid and Adams's defense of it. James Madison to James Monroe, Feb. 13, 1819, in *WJM*, 8:421.

³⁰ Weeks, *JQA and American Empire*, 2-4.

has long been an object of earnest desire to this country," Adams wrote on the day of signature. "The acknowledgement of a definite boundary to the South Sea forms a great epocha in our history."³¹ A year later Adams remarked to Ninian Edwards of Illinois that he was "the last man in the Administration to agree to accept the Sabine for the western boundary." He did not see the treaty as an effort that benefitted one section over another but as an advancement of the interests of the whole union.³² It was James Monroe who dropped Texas, for fear that the East would come to resent the growth of the South and West.³³

After Adams removed one colonial threat to the growth of the union, two colonial neighbors, Great Britain and Russia, remained. The Convention of 1818 temporarily settled the territorial question with Great Britain by fixing the boundary at 49 degrees north from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, and opened the territory to both countries. Conflict flared up only once, when Stratford Canning asserted a British claim to the Columbia River in January 1821. Adams denied the claim and after a heated debate snapped, "keep what is yours, but leave the rest of this continent to us."³⁴ In a

³¹ Diary entry, Feb. 22, 1819, in *MJQA*, 4:275.

³² Diary entry, March 31, 1820, *ibid.*, 5:54.

³³ James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, May 23, 1820, in *Writings of Monroe*, 6:127-128.

³⁴ B. Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams*, 162-167; Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 293-296; Diary entry, Jan. 27, 1821, in

sense, Adams was speaking not only to Canning, but to all of Europe.

Russian pretensions in North America were a more immediate problem than British claims. Czar Alexander issued a *ukase* on September 16, 1821, claiming 51 degrees north as the southern boundary of Russian North America, and asserted an exclusive maritime right along the coast to a distance of 100 Italian miles (115 English miles). A second *ukase* of September 25 confirmed the Russian-American Company's exclusive right to trade north of 51 degrees. Russian minister Pierre de Poletica sent a copy of the *ukase* to Adams on February 11, 1822. Adams responded with a note on March 30 rejecting any Russian claims south of the settlements at 57 degrees. Poletica left for Russia in April, and promised to present Adams's complaints to the czar.³⁵

Non-colonization efforts aimed at Russia were subsidiary to the main colonial issue of Monroe's presidency, the emergence of the Spanish American republics. After the War of 1812 Americans increasingly turned their political and economic attention to the newly-independent Spanish American

MJQA, 5:253.

³⁵ Hildt, *Early Negotiations*, 159-162; Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 494; Howard I. Kushner, *Conflict on the Northwest Coast: American-Russian Rivalry in the Pacific Northwest, 1790-1867* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), 32-34, 46-50; Norman E. Saul, *Distant Friends: The United States & Russia, 1763-1867* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 96-99; John Quincy Adams to Pierre de Poletica, March 30, 1822, in *WJQA*, 7:214-216.

nations. The United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata (modern-day Argentina) emerged first, forming an independent government in 1810 and declaring independence in 1816. South American ports opened a new field for economic endeavor, potentially supplanting other colonial and European markets. Baltimore was the center of the new trade, earning fortunes for the city's merchants, and owing to the questionable legality of that trade, for the city's admiralty lawyers.³⁶

Trade was the most tangible manifestation of American sympathy with the republican cause in Spanish America. As secretary of state, Adams had to confront the question of to what extent should the United States involve itself in efforts to establish republics abroad. "There is nothing in Adams's attitude toward the new states of South America down to 1823 that indicates a burning sympathy with them, or even much confidence in their ability to establish the free institutions of self-government," Dexter Perkins wrote.³⁷ This statement

³⁶ Frederic L. Paxson, *The Independence of the South American Republics: A Study in Recognition and Foreign Policy*, 2nd. ed. (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach, 1916), 53-56; Arthur P. Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1941), 115-123; Laura Bornholdt, *Baltimore and Early Pan-Americanism: A Study in the Background of the Monroe Doctrine* (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1949), 3-4.

³⁷ Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine 1823-1826* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), 102; see also James E. Lewis, Jr. "We Shall Have Good Neighbors: The American Union and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1994), 309.

was only partially correct. Adams certainly believed that the Spanish Americans were poor candidates for republican government and saw no similarities to the American Revolution. "Ours was a War of freemen, for Political Independence," Adams wrote to his brother in 1818. "Theirs is a war of Slaves against their Masters."³⁸ Five years later his opinion was unchanged, as seen in a paragraph he excised from the official instructions to Richard C. Anderson as minister to Colombia. "The revolution of the Spanish colonies was not caused by the oppression under which they had been held, however great it had been," Adams wrote. "Accustomed to the combined weight of military and ecclesiastical despotism, secluded from all intercourse with the rest of the world, subdued in mind and body, with a people heterogeneously composed of European adventurers, of creole natives of the country but of Spanish descent, of aboriginal Indians and of African slaves," the Spanish Americans did not act from a "spirit of freedom."³⁹ Adams also discounted the possibility of any permanent economic gain from Spanish America, as the new nations most wanted manufactured goods which the British could supply and the United States did not.⁴⁰

If Adams had no confidence that the Spanish Americans

³⁸ John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, April 14, 1818, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 145.

³⁹ John Quincy Adams to Richard C. Anderson, May 27, 1823, in *WJQA*, 7:442-443.

⁴⁰ Diary entry, June 20, 1822, in *MJQA*, 6:25.

could sustain republicanism as an internal system, he sympathized with and encouraged their efforts to establish a republican external system, that is, a system of non-colonization and separation from European politics. "I am satisfied that the cause of the South Americans, as far as it consists in the assertion of independence against Spain is *just*," Adams wrote to the president in 1818. "But the justice of a cause, however it may enlist individual feelings in its favor, is not sufficient to justify third parties in siding with it."⁴¹ For Adams, whose career began in reaction to the French Revolution, American response to the Spanish American revolutions had a frighteningly familiar pattern. Adams wrote to William Eustis in 1817 that "it is an after piece to the french revolution in its *republican* phase: and Buenos Ayres has taken the place of liberty, equality and fraternity."⁴² "And now, as at the early stage of the French Revolution," Adams wrote to his father four days later, "we have ardent spirits who are for rushing into the conflict, without looking to the consequences."⁴³

Henry Clay was the most ardent spirit, and championed the cause of the Spanish Americans in Congress, trying to push the

⁴¹ John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, Aug. 24, 1818, in *WJQA*, 6:442-443.

⁴² John Quincy Adams to William Eustis, Dec. 17, 1817, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 146.

⁴³ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Dec. 21, 1817, in *WJQA*, 6:275-276.

administration into recognizing the government of La Plata at Buenos Aires. Adams always found it difficult to concede purity of motive to his opponents, and in Clay's case the problem was compounded by the fact that Adams and Clay had not gotten along at Ghent. After Congress defeated Clay's motion demanding the recognition of Buenos Aires, Adams dismissed Clay's efforts as merely a pretext for Clay to create a personal following by picking a fight with Monroe. Without mentioning Clay by name, Adams informed his mother that a party, a party leader and an excuse for opposition, "all were found, and found out each other; but the political atmosphere was calm and the attempts to blow up a gale were not successful."⁴⁴ Clay was undaunted in his efforts to change American policy toward Spanish America. On May 19, 1821, Clay attended a public dinner in Lexington, Kentucky, and called for an alliance among American nations as a "sort of a counterpoise" to the Holy Alliance.⁴⁵

Clay believed that the Spanish Americans could form republics and assumed a natural affinity between republics. Adams was more skeptical of the Spanish American revolutions and believed republican government was best served by remaining neutral between Spain and its colonies and by

⁴⁴ George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1952), 270-271; Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 244-245; John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, May 25, 1818, in *WJQA*, 6:338-339.

⁴⁵ Henry Clay, "Toast and Response at Public Dinner," May 19, 1821, in *Clay Papers*, 3:80.

keeping European nations out, particularly Great Britain and the Russian-led Holy Alliance. Meddling in South American politics would be as dangerous as meddling in European politics. Adams believed that the United States "have been neutral, with a leaning inclination on the side of liberty and South America."⁴⁶ Yet that leaning was not to drag the United States into war. In 1820 the Colombian agent Manuel Torres attempted to buy arms from the United States government. The cabinet met on March 29, 1820. According to Adams, Calhoun and Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson wished to make the sale if it were possible, with Secretary of the Treasury William H. Crawford leaning in the same direction. Adams argued that the sale was beyond the president's power. Furthermore, it was an open act of war and a direct violation of the neutrality on which American safety depended. "It was of the utmost importance to adhere inflexibly to that system [of neutrality]," Adams concluded. "Between it and that of mingling in every European national war I saw no middle term; and if once we departed from it, I saw no other prospect for this nation than a career of washing their blood-stained hands in blood."⁴⁷

As much as Adams hoped to keep out of war with Europe, he

⁴⁶ John Quincy Adams to George Washington Campbell, June 3, 1819, in William R. Manning, ed. *Diplomatic Correspondence Concerning the Independence of the Latin-American Nations*, 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1925), 1:107.

⁴⁷ Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 337; *MJQA*, 5:46-47.

hoped as much to keep European powers out of Spanish America. On July 23, 1818, Adams talked Monroe out of endorsing a British proposal to mediate between Spain and its colonies.⁴⁸ In 1819 Calhoun was reluctant to act in regard to South America without British cooperation. Adams responded with an argument he used again in 1821 and 1823. He cautioned against following British policy too closely and argued "that we should carefully preserve the advantage of taking the lead in advancing to the recognition of the South American Governments and, while using persuasion with England to move in concert with us, take care to let her know that we will act independently for ourselves."⁴⁹

On July 4, 1821, Adams delivered what he called his "answer to Edinburgh and Lexington," to the *Edinburgh Review's* call for the United States to enter into European politics on the side of liberty against the Holy Alliance and to Clay's call for an inter-American alliance.⁵⁰ Most of the address was standard Independence Day fare: the history of political and religious tyranny in Europe, a listing of the British acts of oppression and the heroic American struggle against them. Toward the end, Adams noted the republican system his father

⁴⁸ Lipsky, *JQA*, 301-303, 307-308; Diary entry, July 25, 1818, in *MJQA*, 4:118.

⁴⁹ Diary entry, Jan. 2, 1819, *ibid.*, 4:207.

⁵⁰ John Quincy Adams to Robert Walsh, July 10, 1821, in *WJQA*, 7:117; Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 356-358.

had helped establish in 1776, consisting of republican governments in the states and reciprocal trade abroad without political obligations. The United States had, to its credit, adhered to the same republican system since 1776. "She has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when the conflict has been for principles to which she clings, as to the last drop that visits the heart," Adams told the assembled crowd. He then delivered the vital portion of his address:

Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled there will her heart, her benediction and her prayers be. But she does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will recommend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even 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 ambition which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom ... She might become the dictatress of the world. She would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit.⁵¹

In his address, Adams restated the century-old Opposition Whig fear of continental engagements, which now included South America as well as Europe. To enlist with Mexico or Colombia would be as harmful to liberty as an alliance with revolutionary France would have been. That the United States

⁵¹ John Quincy Adams, *Address delivered at the request of a Committee of the Citizens of Washington; on the occasion of the reading of the Declaration of Independence, on the Fourth of July, 1821* (Washington, D.C.: Davis and Force, 1821), 29.

should plunge into any war in which it was not a direct party would have "the most pernicious tendency to this country, and the more pernicious because it flatters our ambition."⁵²

By the end of 1821 the tide in Colombia, Mexico, Peru and La Plata had turned almost completely to the rebel cause. By early 1822 the greatest danger was not Spanish reconquest, but interference by other powers. Once Spain was out of the contest, Great Britain, France and Russia might enter. On March 8, 1822, Monroe announced that the United States would recognize the governments established in La Plata, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Mexico. Adams informed the Spanish minister on April 6, writing that the United States "has 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, have maintained and established it against all the resistance which had been or could be brought to oppose it." Adams stressed that recognition was not intended as an act of hostility to Spain.⁵³

In 1822 the Monroe administration had decided that the

⁵² John Quincy Adams to Robert Walsh, July 10, 1821, in *WJQA*, 7:117.

⁵³ Charles C. Griffin, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire, 1810-1822: A Study in the Relations of the United States with Spain and with the Rebel Spanish Colonies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 268-270; Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 371-374; John Quincy Adams to Don Joaquin de Anduaga, April 6, 1822, in *WJQA*, 7:218.

maintenance of a republican hemispheric system, that is, a system of independent nations, depended on limiting European interference with the new nations. Adams believed such a system was complementary to a domestic system of continental union. Yet the revolt of the Spanish American colonies was incomplete. Cuba remained loyal to Spain. Cuba was also a target of American expansion and had assumed the role in American diplomacy previously played by New Orleans and the Floridas as the territory the United States could not allow to be transferred to another European power. The British seemed the most likely to challenge the United States for the island, as Foreign Minister George Canning believed Cuba was vital to preserving Great Britain's Caribbean interests.⁵⁴ "The transfer of Cuba to Great Britain would be an event unpropitious to the interests of this Union," Adams instructed Hugh Nelson, minister to Spain, adding that possession of Cuba may one day be vital to preserving the union. "You will not conceal from the Spanish government the repugnance of the United States to the transfer of the island of Cuba by Spain to any other power."⁵⁵

By the spring of 1823 the elements that produced the Monroe Doctrine as a statement of a republican system of

⁵⁴ John A. Logan, Jr. *No Transfer: An American Security Principle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 140-142, 150-152; D. Perkins, *Monroe Doctrine*, 53-54; Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 422-423.

⁵⁵ John Quincy Adams to Hugh Nelson, April 28, 1823, *WJQA*, 7:372-373, 379, 381.

diplomacy were all in place. Russian pretensions in the northwest and the possible transfer of Cuba from Spain to another power formed the main threats to the union and therefore to the domestic system of republican government. The recognition and appointment of ministers to the new republics allowed Adams to spell out the republican system in hemispheric and maritime affairs. "With relation to *Europe*, there is perceived to be only one object, in which the interests of the United States can be the same as those of the South American nations, and that is that they all should be governed by republican institutions, politically and commercially independent of Europe," Adams wrote to Caesar A. Rodney, minister to La Plata. Consciously or not, Adams followed Thomas Paine in thinking that South America, like Europe, could not be at peace if too thickly planted with kingdoms. Buenos Aires, Adams believed, was particularly susceptible to European influence.⁵⁶ Adams outlined the differences between American and European systems in his instructions to Richard C. Anderson, minister to Colombia. The United States approved of the South American revolts as expressions of natural right, whereas European nations had supported the principle of legitimacy and sought the restoration of Spanish power. Adams also took the opportunity to introduce what he considered the maritime expression of

⁵⁶ John Quincy Adams to Caesar A. Rodney, May 17, 1823, *ibid.*, 7:426, 428-429.

republicanism, a system of neutral rights. "The armed neutrality of the American war is a memorable example of the testimony by almost all the civilized nations of the world to the principle, that the protection of all property, excepting contraband of war, on board of neutral vessels of neutral force, is of *natural* right," Adams wrote.⁵⁷

British alienation from the Holy Alliance provided a wider opportunity for Adams to push for neutral rights. At the Congress of Verona in 1822, the Holy Alliance demanded that Ferdinand VII of Spain be restored to absolute power, and in 1823 France invaded Spain. To Canning the invasion was the last straw, and Great Britain broke with the Holy Alliance.⁵⁸ In Washington Stratford Canning met with Adams on June 20, 1823, and observed that Great Britain and the United States were pursuing similar policies regarding Spanish America and suggested a formal alliance. It was a day similar to July 11, 1818, when Onis revealed he was willing to cede the Floridas. Adams's opponent showed his hand and gave Adams the chance to push for more than he expected to achieve. Adams, of course, restated the United States's traditional policy of non-interference in the affairs of Europe. He did suggest that the time may be ripe for agreement on the outstanding maritime issues. "My belief was," Adams wrote in his diary, "that upon

⁵⁷ John Quincy Adams to Richard C. Anderson, May 27, 1823, *ibid.*, 7:452, 482.

⁵⁸ Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 396-397.

all the maritime questions except impressment Great Britain would now maintain our principles."⁵⁹

Adams had attempted without success to resolve the impressment question while minister to Great Britain. Richard Rush, his successor, frankly hoped that the United States would drop the issue and wait for Great Britain to raise it.⁶⁰ When Stratford Canning suggested joint operations in suppressing the slave trade, which would involve the United States accepting British doctrines on the right of search, Adams replied that the United States had just fought a war over that very principle and would certainly not accept it in peacetime.⁶¹ "Search at sea, as practiced in war, is the exercise of *force* by the armed man of a country at war over the unarmed man of a nation at peace," Adams wrote to Stratford Canning in 1823.⁶²

Adams held fast against impressment and the right of search, but for the first six years as secretary of state he put neutral rights on hold, as he expected a war with Spain over territorial issues that would be fought on land and sea.

⁵⁹ Diary entry, June 20, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:151-153; John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, June 24, 1823, in *WJQA*, 7:489-498.

⁶⁰ Richard Rush to William H. Crawford, Nov. 24, 1818, William H. Crawford Papers, Library of Congress.

⁶¹ John Quincy Adams to Stratford Canning, Aug. 15, 1821, in *WJQA*, 7:173.

⁶² John Quincy Adams to Stratford Canning, June 24, 1823, *ibid.*, 7:514.

Adams wrote Rush on November 6, 1817 that "there is no nation on the globe, which in contracting conventional engagements to enlarge the rights of maritime neutrality would make so great and real a sacrifice of their particular interests to the principle of general justice, and progressive civilization, as this."⁶³ By early 1823 there were no border issues between the United States and Spain, and any power that wished to conquer South America would have to go through the Royal Navy. Adams was therefore free to reassert traditional American doctrines of neutral rights. On July 24, Adams observed that "I have been deeply engaged in preparing instructions to R. Rush on maritime, belligerent, and natural law," and four days later Adams discussed his draft with the president.⁶⁴ Adams's treaty project was the child of the Model Treaty, establishing the principle that free ships make free goods and limiting the list of contraband goods to articles of war. The draft included a new principle, the limitation of privateering. John Adams had relied on privateers during the American Revolution, but by 1823 the United States had a navy of consequence and a broad-based political commitment to maintain it.⁶⁵ Adams enclosed the treaty project in his July 28 instructions to

⁶³ John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, Nov. 6, 1817, *ibid.*, 6:242, 244-245.

⁶⁴ Diary entries, July 24 and 28, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:164.

⁶⁵ Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 436-439, 579-585; draft in Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 462.

Rush and noted how much the world had changed since 1817, not to mention 1805. Both Great Britain and the United States would benefit from the establishment of neutral rights. "Maritime war itself, and all the questions connected with it, *must* be affected by the downfall of the colonial system," Adams wrote. "Of what use, for example, will her too celebrated rule of war of 1756 ever again be to her, when all the ex-colonies of Europe and the colonies yet existing, her own included, are open to foreign commerce and shipping *in time of peace?*"⁶⁶ The end of the monarchical system of colonization, Adams believed, could put an end to anti-republican maritime restrictions.

"I appealed to the primitive policy of this country as exemplified in the first treaty with Prussia [in 1785]," Adams told Monroe and Calhoun on July 28. "I said the seed was first sown and had borne a single plant, which the fury of the revolutionary tempest had since swept away. I thought the present a moment eminently auspicious for sowing the same seed a second time." "My plan involves nothing less than a revolution in the laws of war -- a great amelioration in the condition of man," Adams confided in his diary. "Is it the dream of a visionary, or is it the great and practicable conception of a benefactor of mankind? I believe it the latter; and I believe this to be the proper time for proposing

⁶⁶ John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, July 28, 1823, in *ASP:FR*, 5:531.

it to the world."⁶⁷ Certainly Adams had spent too many years in diplomacy to be considered a "visionary." Yet unlike his father, Adams had not completely given up on reforming the world, or at least improving it somewhat. Adams's neutral rights project was the fruit of his republican vision of diplomacy, his keen observational skills in spotting the small opening Stratford Canning had given him, and his ability to adapt to a new diplomatic world.

Adams did not limit his neutral rights project to Great Britain but also made it central to his diplomacy with Russia, and hoped to link maritime issues and continental non-colonization. On July 17 Adams met with Baron von Tuyll, Poletica's replacement as Russian minister to the United States, and "told him specially that we should contest the right of Russia to *any* territorial establishment on this continent, and that we should assume distinctly that the American continents are no longer subjects for *any* new European colonial establishments."⁶⁸ Adams instructed both Rush at London and Henry Middleton at St. Petersburg to oppose the Russian claim of 51 degrees.⁶⁹

After Adams sent his neutral rights project to Rush, he drafted instructions to Middleton proposing the same

⁶⁷ Diary entry, July 28, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:164-165.

⁶⁸ Diary entry, July 17, 1823, *ibid.*, 6:163.

⁶⁹ John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush; John Quincy Adams to Henry Middleton, July 22, 1823, in *ASP:FR*, 5:731, 436-437.

convention. In doing so, Adams linked the three aspects of his republican diplomacy -- continental union, separation from Europe, and freedom of the seas -- all expressions of non-colonization -- into one system. Adams completed a draft on August 7, in which he relied on an appeal to the ostensible principles of the Holy Alliance, linking freedom of trade and neutral rights as extensions of Christian principles. "Perhaps the execution of this great design will depend on the Single Will of the Emperor Alexander, and if one Act of his Life, more than another could redeem with never-ending glory the pledge given to mankind in the Holy Alliance," Adams wrote, "it would be that the eyes of all posterity should look to him as the Sovereign who first gave effect to the total abolition of privateering, and private war at sea."⁷⁰ Monroe dealt the project what Adams considered a crippling blow on August 9, when the president asked Adams to remove all references to the Holy Alliance. "I accordingly struck it out, and thereby gave up what I considered the mainspring of the argument to the Emperor," Adams wrote in his diary. "'I relied upon its operation incomparably more than anything else."⁷¹

Adams's grand scheme of the summer of 1823 represented

⁷⁰ Diary entry, Aug. 3, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:168; Draft of John Quincy Adams to Henry Middleton, Aug. 7, 1823 (filed under Aug. 13), Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 462.

⁷¹ Diary entry, Aug. 9, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:170; Draft of Aug. 13 shows passages marked for removal, Adams Family Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, reel 462.

nothing less than a triple play of republican diplomacy, an attempt to secure all three aspects of non-colonization. He intended to use the stated principles of the Holy Alliance and traditional Russian-American accord on maritime issues to bring an agreement on the northwest boundary. Similarly, Adams used a new-found Anglo-American agreement on South America and mutual interest regarding Russia's North American claims to introduce a neutral rights project. By August 1823, Adams had already enunciated the principles of the Monroe Doctrine.

As Adams dealt with Russia and Great Britain over American issues, a European issue, the Greek revolt, introduced itself into American politics. The revolt against Turkey began in 1821, and it was difficult for an American generation raised on the Greek classics not to feel sympathy. Throughout 1821 and 1822, pro-Greek organizations sprang up around the country. Rush met with Greek agent Andreas Luriottis in London on February 24, 1823, and sent a note describing the meeting to Adams. The cabinet first discussed the Greek question on August 15. Albert Gallatin had suggested sending a token naval force of one corvette, one frigate and one schooner in support of the Greeks. Crawford and Calhoun leaned in favor of the proposal.⁷²

Adams had opposed intervention in the South American

⁷² Myrtle Cline, *American Attitudes toward the Greek War for Independence 1821-1828* (Atlanta, 1930), 20-27, 156-158; Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 266-267; Diary entry, Aug. 15, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:173.

revolts, an event far closer and more important to the United States. He was less likely to favor entering European politics on behalf of the Greeks. "But, while cheering with their best wishes the cause of the Greeks," Adams wrote Luriottis, "the United States are forbidden by the duties of their situation from taking part in the war, to which their relation is one of neutrality."⁷³ Adams could scarcely believe that Gallatin was serious about military involvement. "Mr. Gallatin still builds castles in the air of popularity, and, being under no responsibility for consequences, patronizes the Greek cause for the sake of raising his own reputation," Adams wrote in November.⁷⁴

British foreign secretary George Canning had embraced non-interference, as it applied to South America. To a certain extent, Canning supported the idea of legitimacy; he considered himself a disciple of Burke and he hoped that the Spanish Americans would establish monarchies instead of republics. His sympathy did not extend to the reestablishment of absolutism in Europe or America. Canning turned to the United States and hoped to have better luck reaching an agreement with Rush in London than Canning's cousin had with Adams in Washington. On August 20, Canning proposed a joint five-point declaration to Rush, stating that: 1) Spain had no

⁷³ John Quincy Adams to Andreas Luriottis, Aug. 18, 1823, in *ASP:FR*, 5:257.

⁷⁴ Diary entry, Nov. 24, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:199.

hope of recovering its colonies, 2)the recognition of the new states was a matter of "time and circumstances," 3)neither side would interfere to prevent a settlement between Spain and its former colonies, 4)neither the United States or Great Britain aimed at acquiring territory, and 5)neither power favored the transfer of any Spanish colonies to another power. Rush replied that he did not have the authority to agree on the spot and wrote for instructions. The delay seemed to put Canning off, and by August 31 he was noticeably cooler on the idea of a joint declaration.⁷⁵ Rush's dispatches arrived at Washington in October. Monroe sought the wisdom of his elders, Jefferson and Madison, and both former presidents advised Monroe to accept Canning's offer.⁷⁶

Canning's proposals for Spanish America soon merged with the increasing possibility of a Russian threat to Spanish American independence. Baron von Tuvill gave Adams an official note on October 16, informing the secretary of state that the political principles of Russia and the Holy Alliance dictated that Russia could not receive the minister Colombia had sent

⁷⁵ Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 35, 110-112; Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 377; B. Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams*, 316-317; Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 437-444; J. Fred Rippey, *Rivalry of the United States and Great Britain over Latin America (1808-1830)* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929), 113-115.

⁷⁶ Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 477-480.

or receive diplomats from any of the new republics.⁷⁷ On the same day Adams assured Tully that the United States would maintain a neutral course as long as European nations did the same. Adams added that he could not predict what would happen if any European power violated that neutrality. Adams met with the president on November 5, and Monroe directed Adams to meet with Tully to find out what the minister meant by "political principles." Adams raised the question on November 8, and Tully replied that "he understood them as having reference to the right of Supremacy of Spain over her Colonies."⁷⁸

The confluence of Russian and British communications demonstrated how diplomatic realism might coincide with republican principles. For Adams, the two messages offered a chance to revive the project that Monroe's caution had curtailed in August, that of issuing a statement of republican diplomatic principles to the world. Calhoun inclined toward accepting Canning's proposal, even if that meant giving up any future claims on Texas and Cuba. Adams rejected that reasoning on the grounds that Texas or Cuba may one day ask to join the union.⁷⁹ Adams favored answering the British offer and Russian pretensions at the same time. "I remarked that the

⁷⁷ Baron von Tully to John Quincy Adams, October 4/16, 1823, in Worthington C. Ford, ed "Some Original Documents on the Genesis of the Monroe Doctrine," Massachusetts Historical Society *Proceedings*, (January 1902), 400.

⁷⁸ Adams's Account of his Conversation with Baron von Tully," in Ford, "Some Original Documents," 395, 397-398.

⁷⁹ Diary entry, Nov. 7, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:177-178.

communication recently received from the Russian minister, Baron Tuyl, afforded as I thought, a very suitable and convenient opportunity for us to take our stand against the Holy Alliance, and at the same time to decline the overture of Great Britain," Adams noted in his diary. "It would be more candid, as well as more dignified, to avow our principles explicitly to Russia and France, than to come in as a cock-boat in the wake of a British man-of-war."⁸⁰

Adams's naval metaphor should be taken literally as well as figuratively. Adams had already discussed British policy with Stratford Canning in June, and nothing in George Canning's proposal was particularly new. Furthermore, George Canning presumably knew Adams's price for any kind of agreement was a neutral rights project. Canning's proposal to Rush did not mention neutral rights, and Adams doubtless feared that following British policy on the recognition and disposition of the Spanish American republics might trap the United States behind a British attempt to impose its view of maritime law on Spanish America. Acceptance of the British offer was incompatible with the republican diplomacy Adams pursued.

Over the next month, Adams inserted his republican conception of diplomacy into three sets of documents -- the response to Tuyl, instructions to Rush, and the president's annual message. In each case Adams hoped to throw Russia and

⁸⁰ Diary entry, Nov. 7, 1823, *ibid.*, 6:179.

Great Britain on the defensive, and force those powers to live up to the principles they had already espoused. Adams's first note to Tuylt stressed the duty of Christian nations to each other and regretted Russia's refusal to receive the Colombian minister. Calhoun objected to the reference to Christian nations and the Colombian "Minister of Peace" as "sarcastic." Adams responded that "all the point of my note was in those two words as my object was to put the emperor in the wrong in the face of the world as much as possible." Monroe agreed with Calhoun and had the offending words struck out.⁸¹

The Russian problem took a turn for the worse when Tuylt showed Adams a dispatch dated August 30 from Count Nesselrode, the Russian foreign minister. Nesselrode offered a ringing defense of the French invasion of Spain and of the principle of legitimacy against revolution.⁸² Adams declared that the note "beard[ed] us to our faces on the monarchical principles of the Holy Alliance," and demanded a response "to be pleaded before the whole of mankind."⁸³ Adams proposed to answer Nesselrode in kind, defending the republican system of the Western Hemisphere and warning Europe against any attempt to restore South America to Spanish rule, or put it under any

⁸¹ John Quincy Adams to Baron Von Tuylt, Nov. 15, 1823, in Ford, "Some Original Documents," 378-379; Diary entry, Nov. 7, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:179.

⁸² Count Nesselrode to Baron von Tuylt, Aug. 30, 1823, in Ford, "Some Original Documents," 402-405.

⁸³ Diary entry, Nov. 25, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:201.

other European power. As usual, Adams wanted to make a bolder statement than Monroe. Adams's draft stated that the United States government was a republic in which government rested on the consent of the people, and that each nation was the sole judge of its own government. "The first of these principles may be designated, as the principle of *Liberty* -- the second as the principle of National *Independence* -- They are both Principles of *Peace* and of Good Will to Men." Attorney General William Wirt called Adams's statement "a hornet of a paragraph," and Adams himself was not surprised when the president struck it out.⁸⁴ "I had much confidence in the effect of that paragraph," Adams wrote two days later, "first as persuasion to the Emperor Alexander, and, if that failed, as our manifesto to the world."⁸⁵

The instructions to Rush were a less complicated matter. On November 15 Monroe received dispatches from Rush indicating that Canning had lost interest in a joint statement. The president then agreed with Adams to reject the offer.⁸⁶ Adams wrote to Rush on November 29 approving his conduct in negotiating with Canning. Adams also registered agreement with all of Canning's points while observing that the United States had already recognized the new governments, whereas Great

⁸⁴ Draft of John Quincy Adams to Baron von Tüyl, Nov. 25, 1823, in Ford, "Some Original Documents," 405-407; Diary entry, Nov. 25, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:199-200, 203.

⁸⁵ Diary entry, Nov. 27, 1823, *ibid.*, 6:211.

⁸⁶ Ammon, *Monroe*, 482-483.

Britain had not. The next day, Adams instructed Rush to consider any meeting of the Holy Alliance to decide the fate of the American republics as an act of hostility toward the United States and to advise Great Britain to act likewise.⁸⁷

When Monroe presented a draft of his annual message, it was Adams's turn to act as a calming influence. Monroe had written a stinging attack on the French invasion of Spain and called for Congress to appropriate money for a minister to Greece. "This message would be a summons to arms -- to arms against all Europe and for objects of policy exclusively European, -- Greece and Spain," Adams told the cabinet on November 21. Adams observed that Europe had been in turmoil for the last thirty years, "and we had looked on safe in our distance beyond an intervening ocean, and avowing a total forbearance to interfere in any of the combinations of European politics." Adams believed that Monroe's draft would "at once buckle on the harness and throw down the gauntlet."⁸⁸

The final message, as delivered to Congress on December 2, 1823, owed much to Adams. Monroe scaled down his earlier draft to express support for Greece and Spain, while restating the American position of non-interference, observing that "the political system of the allied powers is essentially different

⁸⁷ John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, Nov. 29 and 30, 1823, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 1:210-212, 215-216.

⁸⁸ Ammon, *Monroe*, 484-485; Diary entry, Nov. 21, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:194-195.

in this respect from that of America."⁸⁹ Adams's most direct contribution was the passage on non-colonization in North America. Adams prepared a sketch on foreign affairs for Monroe to use in the message and wrote that "the American Continents by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European Powers." The exact same wording appeared in Monroe's message.⁹⁰

Adams intended his contribution to Monroe's message as a statement of republican principle aimed at both Great Britain and Russia. He wrote a secret dispatch to Rush on December 8 explaining the message. "The concurrence of these sentiments with those of the British Government as exhibited in the proposals of Mr. Canning, will be obvious to you. It will now remain for Great Britain to make hers equally public," Adams wrote. "The moral effect on the councils of the Allies, to deter them from any interposition of force between Spain and America will be complete. It is hoped that nothing more will be necessary."⁹¹ Eight years later, Adams acknowledged that

⁸⁹ James Monroe, annual message, Dec. 2, 1823, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 2:217-218.

⁹⁰ Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 366; "Mr. Adams' Sketch," Nov. 1823, James Monroe Papers, New York Public Library; Message of Dec. 2, 1823, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 2:209.

⁹¹ Edward P. Crapol, "John Quincy Adams and the Monroe Doctrine: Some New Evidence," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 48 no. 3 (August 1979), 416-417; John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, Dec. 8, 1823, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 146.

the passage on non-colonization "was my own work." Adams hoped to convince Alexander to give up his claims below 51 degrees "by presenting a principle which he would consider as bearing chiefly on Great Britain," and presenting a warning to the British, thereby preventing American policy from being tied too closely to Great Britain.⁹² Adams acted to preserve the three-pronged system of republican diplomacy he had formulated in July and August of 1823. That meant asking European nations to uphold the principles they espoused which coincided with American goals while the United States maintain an independent course.

In 1831 Adams remarked that "with the Emperor of Russia, [the message] was completely successful." On April 17, 1824, Henry Middleton signed a treaty with Nesselrode setting 54 degrees 40 minutes as the southern boundary of Russian North America.⁹³ Success was less tangible with Great Britain. In October 1823 Canning turned to France and sponsored the Polignac Memorandum, in which France considered Spanish recovery of its colonies hopeless and renounced any desire for territorial gain. When Canning read Monroe's message in January 1824, he did not approve of Monroe's emphasis on republican ideology, nor of any American bid to become leader

⁹² John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, Sept. 17, 1831, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 150.

⁹³ John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, Sept. 17, 1831, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 150; Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 523-526; Kushner, *Conflict on the Northwest Coast*, 59-60.

of the Western Hemisphere. But whatever Monroe's motives, Canning was satisfied that American policy in the Spanish American republics matched his own. The neutral rights project died when Canning showed no interest in negotiations.⁹⁴

Monroe partially co-opted the Greek issue by his expression of sympathy. Daniel Webster's motion in the House of Representatives calling for the president to send a minister to Greece failed in January 1824. Adams believed that the Greek issue had replaced South America as a vehicle to "perplex and embarrass the Administration."⁹⁵ Adams summed up his feeling on the Greeks, and the operation of his entire political system, during a chance meeting in his office on May 10, 1824. That day William Thornton of the Patent Office called looking for subscribers to a fund for the Greeks. Adams refused on the grounds that such an act would be a violation of the neutrality that as secretary of state he meant to protect. At the same time, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri came in and introduced the Reverend Salmon Giddings of St. Louis, who was raising money to build a Presbyterian church. Adams contributed to the church fund. Adams revealed to his three visitors the same republican system he had shown in his public statements: neutrality in the affairs of Europe

⁹⁴ Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 442-444; Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 114-118, 127-129.

⁹⁵ Irving H. Bartlett, *Daniel Webster* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 100-103; Diary entry, Jan. 17, 1824, in *MJQA*, 6:233.

and the moral improvement of mankind at home.⁹⁶

Moral improvement through the use of government to strengthen the union was the central goal of Adams's presidency. Like his father, Adams intended to act as a president above party, as a republicanized Patriot King. He was hamstrung by his second-place finish to Andrew Jackson in the Electoral College and by the popular belief that he owed his election by the House of Representatives to a "corrupt bargain" with fourth-place finisher and House Speaker Henry Clay, in which, contrary to Adams's professed political principles, Clay traded his support for an appointment as secretary of state.⁹⁷ Clay had made his decision for Adams long before the final vote, believing that Jackson's election would be dangerous both for the country and to Clay's own political position as spokesman for the West. Most of the political differences between Clay and Adams had disappeared. The two had always supported a system of internal improvements and tariffs. Clay's object was political, seeing the American System as a vehicle for giving each section a stake in the well-being of the others, thereby preserving the union. Adams's purpose, on the other hand, was the moral uplift of the American citizenry, a goal to which Clay had no pretensions. Diplomatic differences that began at Ghent and

⁹⁶ Diary entry, May 10, 1824, *ibid.*, 6:324-325.

⁹⁷ Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party*, 130, 134; Mary M. W. Hargreaves, *The Presidency of John Quincy Adams* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 37-40.

continued throughout the Monroe administration evaporated on December 2, 1823, when Clay told Adams that the paragraphs on foreign affairs, Adams's work, were the best part of Monroe's message. All that remained in 1824 were two men with vastly different personalities who both wanted to be president. Clay was willing to serve as secretary of state, as it seemed the most direct route to the White House.⁹⁸

Adams as president intended to carry out the three aspects of non-colonization -- continental union, separation from Europe, and freedom of the seas. With Florida in American hands and Spain almost completely removed as a neighbor, the preservation of the union was strictly a domestic matter. In his first annual message Adams pledged himself to a system of internal improvements, scientific explorations, and the creation of a national university. Adams told Congress that "liberty is power" and "that the nation blessed with the most liberty must in proportion to numbers be the most powerful nation on earth." Unlike his father, Adams believed that liberty was cumulative and that power "shall be exercised to ends of beneficence, to improve the condition of himself and

⁹⁸ Bemis, *JQA and Union*, 33; Callanan, "Political Economy of JQA," 4-5, 295; Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 336-337, 340-341; Hargreaves, *Presidency of JQA*, 33-37; D. Howe, *Political Culture of the American Whigs*, 138; Lipsky, *JQA*, 146; Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991), 225-232, 253-254; Diary entry, Dec. 2, 1823, in *MJQA*, 6:224.

his fellow man."⁹⁹ To Adams's opponents, the president was proposing a use of federal power in domestic affairs far beyond anything the Constitution authorized. By early 1826 old Republicans such as William Branch Giles and John Randolph of Roanoke joined forces with Jacksonians and Crawfordites led by Martin Van Buren to form an opposition better organized than pro-Adams forces.¹⁰⁰ Adams himself refused to engage in politicking in his own defense. "I see no reason sufficient to justify a departure from the principle which I entered upon the Administration, of removing no public officer for merely preferring another candidate for the Presidency," Adams wrote in 1826.¹⁰¹ A year later, Adams wrote that using his office to promote his own re-election "would be to establish a Government of party, and it would disqualify many of the most distinguished worthies of the land." "Such a system would be repugnant to every feeling of my soul," Adams concluded.¹⁰²

Adams in many ways had the reverse of Madison's difficulties. Adams was able to fit republicanism into diplomacy, but in domestic affairs he attempted to force political reality into a theoretical system. Adams also missed

⁹⁹ Hargreaves, *Presidency of JQA*, 166; John Quincy Adams, annual message, Dec. 6, 1825, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 2:316.

¹⁰⁰ Risjord, *Old Republicans*, 259-261.

¹⁰¹ Diary entry, Oct. 28, 1826, in *MJQA*, 7:163-164.

¹⁰² John Quincy Adams to George Sullivan, Sept. 22, 1827, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 149.

or chose to ignore the legitimization of party politics that began during his senatorial career and continued during his absence in Europe. After 1800 the Federalist party accepted and tried to use Jeffersonian tactics, such as political clubs and mass meetings. Adams, by remaining aloof from party politics, ruined any chance he had of passing his domestic program.¹⁰³

The role of the other two legs of the republican triad, separation from Europe and freedom of the seas, is best seen in Adams's attempted participation in the Panama Congress of 1826. The Congress was the grand scheme of Simon Bolivar, who envisioned an "Amphyctionic Assembly," representing a confederation modelled on the league of Greek city states in the fifth century B. C. On December 7, 1824 Bolivar issued a circular letter to all of the Spanish American republics for a Congress to be held on October 1, 1825. Originally the United States was not included, but the Mexican and Colombian governments sent out feelers in the spring of 1825, and Colombia made a formal offer later in the year. The conference was expanded to include Great Britain and the Netherlands, since both owned Caribbean territories and had financial ties to many of the new republics.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution in American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 29-35, 45; Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 66.

¹⁰⁴ Bemis, *JQA and Foreign Policy*, 544; Hargreaves, *Presidency of JQA*, 148; Whitaker, *United States and Latin*

That Adams was willing to consider sending a delegate to the Congress is evidence of the influence of Clay on the president. Adams met with Clay on April 23, 1825, and Clay informed him that the Mexican minister had proposed that the United States be represented at the Panama Congress. Clay urged acceptance. That day an agenda for the Congress appeared in the *National Journal*. Adams believed the Congress was "of great importance" and was particularly interested in the project of codifying "American principles of maritime, belligerent and neutral law," which was "of infinite magnitude." "This is a grain of mustard seed," the president observed.¹⁰⁵ Four days later Clay reported on his conversation with Pablo Obregon, the Mexican minister, and Jose Maria Salazar, the Colombian minister. "Mr. Clay continues earnest in the desire that a Minister should be appointed to this Congress," Adams noted, but Secretary of War James Barbour "urges many objections against it."¹⁰⁶ On May 7 Barbour came around to favor the mission, and Adams directed Clay to inform Obregon and Salazar that the United States would accept a formal invitation to the Congress.¹⁰⁷

Adams briefly mentioned that the United States would

America, 571-573; Joseph B. Lockey, *Pan-Americanism: Its Beginnings* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), 312-313.

¹⁰⁵ Remini, *Clay*, 276; Diary entry, April 23, 1825, in *MJQA*, 6:531.

¹⁰⁶ Diary entry, April 27, 1825, *ibid.*, 6:536-537.

¹⁰⁷ Diary entry, May 7, 1825, *ibid.*, 6:542.

attend the Panama Congress in his first annual message.¹⁰⁸ On December 26 Adams sent a message to the Senate nominating Richard C. Anderson, the minister to Colombia and a Clay adherent, and John Sergeant, a prominent Philadelphia Federalist attorney, as ministers to the Panama Congress. Adams explained that the possibility of a maritime rights convention establishing that free ships make free goods and defining legal blockades was of the utmost importance and could be more efficiently done at the Panama Congress than by approaching each nation individually. Adams also hoped to use the "moral influence" of the United States to advance the cause of religious liberty.¹⁰⁹ The same coalition of Jackson, Crawford and Calhoun supporters that opposed Adams on internal improvements opposed him on foreign affairs. In January 1826 Martin Van Buren submitted a resolution in the Senate denying the president the right to nominate ministers to such a conference. The Senate defeated Van Buren's motion on March 14.¹¹⁰

On March 15 Adams transmitted the documents relating to the mission to the House of Representatives, along with a message defending the mission. Adams stated that "the corner stone of all our future relations with them [Latin American

¹⁰⁸ John Quincy Adams, annual message, Dec. 6, 1825, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 2:302.

¹⁰⁹ John Quincy Adams, message of Dec. 26, 1825, *ibid.*, 2:319.

¹¹⁰ Hargreaves, *Presidency of JQA*, 149-152.

nations] was *disinterestedness*." He denied that any alliance was in the works and stated that the American role at the Congress was "merely consultative" and that there would be no agreement unless approved by the proper branches of the government. Adams's most difficult task was to square American participation in the Panama Congress with Washington's recommendations against permanent alliances in the Farewell Address. Adams argued that his policy was no different. Washington had drawn a line between Europe and America in 1796, as had Monroe in 1823. In 1796 the United States was the only independent nation in the Western Hemisphere. In 1826 the United States was the most powerful of a group of independent nations. Adams would make no political commitments but believed the new nations had more in common with the United States than either had with Europe.¹¹¹

Clay issued instructions to Anderson and Sergeant on May 8, 1826. If the decision to attend the conference belonged to Clay, the instructions belonged to Adams. Left completely to himself, Clay might have called for closer political ties with the new nations. The instructions embodied the republican diplomatic system Adams had devised in the summer of 1823 and had inserted into Monroe's message of December 2, 1823. The first general instruction was that the United States should maintain its neutrality. "All notion is rejected of an

¹¹¹ John Quincy Adams, message of March 15, 1826, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 2:331, 336-338.

Amphyctionic Council, invested with power finally, to decide controversies between the American States, or to regulate, in any respect, their conduct," Clay wrote. The idea of a "counterpoise" to the Holy Alliance was officially dead. Clay added that "no intention has been entertained to change the present pacific and neutral policy of the United States."¹¹²

Much of the instructions were dedicated to the American doctrine of neutral rights, which Adams considered vital to a republican conception of diplomacy and believed he had saved by rejecting Canning's offer of a joint statement on South America. Getting nations at war to agree on a system of neutral rights was no easier in 1826 than it had been at the height of the Napoleonic wars. An Englishman, Lord Thomas Cochrane, headed Chile's navy, and brought with him British notions of maritime law. In 1825 Brazil and Argentina went to war over possession of the Banda Oriental (modern-day Uruguay) and proclaimed blockades that the United States considered illegal.¹¹³ Clay directed Anderson and Sergeant to treat with all nations attending on maritime topics, even if the Congress as a whole did not. The envoys were to propose "to abolish war against private property," and to propose a definition of

¹¹² Henry Clay to Richard C. Anderson and John Sergeant, May 8, 1826, in Clay, *Papers*, 5:314, 316.

¹¹³ Edward Baxter Billingsley, *In Defense of Neutral Rights: The United States Navy and the Wars of Independence in Chile and Peru* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 93-96; H.S. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 157-158.

blockade suitable to neutral powers. Clay enclosed Adams's neutral rights project of July 28, 1823, which "proved abortive" with Great Britain, but might be useful at Panama.¹¹⁴

Clay next turned to non-colonization and the problem of Cuba. He reiterated the statement in the Monroe Doctrine that the Americas were closed off from future colonization, but that the United States would not disturb existing colonies. Cuba and Puerto Rico provided the most tempting targets for other powers, European and American. The United States would prefer that Cuba were independent and able to maintain that status. The United States would not, however, enter into any agreement to defend Cuban independence, nor would the United States look favorably on Cuba's annexation by Mexico or Colombia, since neither nation could hold the island, and it would most likely pass to a European power. Clay also instructed Anderson and Sergeant to convince other nations to renounce designs on Cuba and Puerto Rico.¹¹⁵

The American ministers never reached the Panama Congress. Anderson died on June 24 at Cartegena, and Sergeant refused to travel during malaria season. The Congress itself lasted from June 22 to July 15, with Mexico, Central America, Peru and Colombia in attendance, and concluded a treaty of

¹¹⁴ Henry Clay to Richard C. Anderson and John Sergeant, May 8, 1826, in Clay, *Papers*, 5:315, 322-324.

¹¹⁵ Henry Clay to Richard C. Anderson and John Sergeant, May 8, 1826, *ibid.*, 5:330-335.

confederation, organization of a joint military, and provisions for future meetings. The Congress voted to reconvene at Tacabaya, Mexico in 1827, after the signatory nations ratified the treaties. Joel R. Poinsett, the American minister to Mexico, replaced Anderson, and he and Sergeant arrived at Tacabaya in January 1827. The Congress never reconvened, as only Colombia ratified the first agreement. The British, represented by Edward Dawkins, were hard at work counteracting American influence at Panama, particularly opposing any American attempt at a neutral rights project. Dawkins work was done for him, as Mexico and Colombia were angered by the American position on Cuba, and opposed the United States on neutral rights. Dawkins reported to Canning that American influence in Spanish America was minimal.¹¹⁶

Despite the failure to attend the Panama Congress, Adams did not believe relations with South America had been harmed. Adams informed Richard Rush that the United States would continue to pursue a policy of "kindness, moderation and forbearance."¹¹⁷ American failure to keep British maritime principles out of the Western Hemisphere, however, was a bitter blow and was symbolized by American diplomacy with Brazil. Brazilian-American relations had been tense throughout

¹¹⁶ Hargreaves, *Presidency of JQA*, 157-158; Rippey, *Rivalry*, 227-228, 240-246; Temperley, *Foreign Policy of Canning*, 179-186; Whitaker, *United States and Latin America*, 581-583.

¹¹⁷ John Quincy Adams to Richard Rush, Aug. 16, 1827, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 149.

Adams's presidency, owing to American objections to Brazil's blockade of Argentina. In 1827, Commodore James Biddle, commanding the American squadron off the coast of Brazil, approached the Brazilian government about accepting American rules concerning blockades. Biddle reported to Navy Secretary Samuel Southard that Brazil seemed receptive until Great Britain intimidated Brazil into accepting British rules. The truth was that Great Britain simply accepted the Brazilian blockade as legal.¹¹⁸

Southard passed Biddle's report, Anglophobia and all, to the president in December 1827. Adams accepted Biddle's interpretation. "Cannon law is the law of Great Britain towards other nations," Adams complained. "Belligerent, she tramples on neutral rights; neutral, she maintains them at the cannon's mouth; and the Brazilian courts have been awed into submission."¹¹⁹ One of Adams's last acts as president was to request the publication of Clay's instructions to Anderson and Sergeant, for the use of future administrations.¹²⁰

John Quincy Adams spent most of his career in diplomacy, either as a minister abroad or as secretary of state, and in

¹¹⁸ Richard Carl Froelich, "The United States Navy and Diplomatic Relations with Brazil, 1822-1871" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Kent State University, 1971), 59-60; David F. Long, *Sailor-Diplomat: A Biography of Commodore James Biddle, 1783-1848* (Annapolis, Md.: United States Naval Institute Press, 1983), 136.

¹¹⁹ Diary entry, Dec. 19, 1827, in *MJQA*, 7:385.

¹²⁰ John Quincy Adams, message of March 3, 1829, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 2:431.

those capacities was quite successful in finding an effective foreign policy suitable to republican government based on a continental union and opposition to political and commercial colonization. He also found that the skills of a diplomat did not necessarily translate into success as president, especially when that president showed no skill or taste for the political dealings required to pass a legislative program. Adams's own sense of republican theory doomed his project for internal improvements. In foreign affairs, Adams was the victim of events in South America beyond his control, perhaps revealing the limits of the ability of the United States to shape the world around them. Adams was at his best in a crisis, but his presidency was the quietest of any since 1789. Unlike John Adams and James Madison, John Quincy Adams did not leave the presidency with any sense of accomplishment and was not ready to retire. "The cause of the Union and of improvement will remain," Adams wrote in his diary a few days before leaving office, "and I will have duties to it and to my country yet to discharge."¹²¹

¹²¹ Diary entry, Feb. 28, 1829, in *MJQA*, 8:100-101.

CHAPTER 10: AN OPPOSITION WHIG

John Quincy Adams spent two years in what was at best a fitful retirement, dividing his time between Washington and Quincy, not ready to retire but having no office. In the fall of 1830 he accepted the National Republican nomination to represent the Plymouth district in Congress, winning election on November 1, 1830.¹ He joined the Whig party as it emerged out of the wreckage of the National Republican and Anti-Masonic parties, and for the rest of his life, except for the month-long Harrison administration, was a member of the opposition. By the outbreak of the Mexican War, Adams was the last remaining statesman with any direct personal connection to the American Revolution, and the republican thought that produced it. The republicanism that Adams learned from his father and from English Opposition thought taught him to view domestic and foreign policies as parts of a whole, either efforts to preserve liberty or conspiracies against it. Adams saw the political attempt of the slave South to preserve and extend slavery as the driving force behind Democratic expansionism, and interpreted it within the framework of

¹ Leonard L. Richards, *The Life and Times of Congressman John Quincy Adams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 7-8.

Opposition thought.²

The idea of an organized slave power was only one of the conspiracy theories in an age awash in reactions to supposed conspiracies, among the more prominent being anti-Masonry and nativism. Anti-Masons and nativists saw secret societies from abroad plotting behind closed doors to undermine American republicanism.³ Adams's view of a slave power conspiracy had more in common with Opposition attacks on Robert Walpole in the 1720s and Republican criticism of Hamilton in the 1790s. Adams perceived, a domestic conspiracy whose basic aims were in plain view, the Opposition model of executive corruption. Adams drew on Opposition thought to make sense of a series of seemingly unconnected events.⁴ His depiction of the conspiracy came from overzealously connecting events that did not necessarily have any connection, but appeared to come from the same source. Just as Walpole attempted to create a patronage machine out of the fiscal revolution of the early-eighteenth century, and Hamilton embarked on a similar program in America in the 1790s, slave state congressmen generally acted in concert to protect and augment the political power of slaveholders and their allies. Adams saw the rapid and cheap

² *Ibid.*, 54.

³ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 15-23.

⁴ Gordon S. Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 39 no. 3 (July 1982), 421.

sale of public lands as the bribe the slave states offered the West and the fuel of executive corruption. The need to acquire more slave lands, and discourage measures that might benefit the North, drove Democratic foreign policy.

John Adams had never thought deeply about slavery. James Madison had taken great pains not to think about the implications of slavery for republican government during his political career, although the question tortured him in retirement.⁵ John Quincy Adams could also ignore slavery until the Missouri Compromise showed that slavery and territorial expansion were inextricably linked. "I take it for granted that the present question [of Missouri] is a mere preamble," Adams wrote in January 1820, "a title-page to a great and tragic volume."⁶ "Slavery is the great and foul stain upon the North American Union," Adams wrote in his diary several weeks later, after a conversation with Calhoun about Missouri, and speculated that "a dissolution, at least temporary, of the Union" might be necessary to abolish slavery. He recognized that he was engaging in speculation and seemed to be willing to let a future generation solve the problem.⁷ In discussing the Adams-Onis Treaty with Ninian Edwards of Illinois, Adams

⁵ Drew R. McCoy, *The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 253-322.

⁶ Diary entry, Jan. 10, 1820, in *MJQA*, 4:502; Richards, *Congressman JQA*, 100-103.

⁷ Diary entry, Feb. 24, 1820, in *MJQA*, 4:531.

said that if he viewed expansion only "as an Eastern man, I should be disinclined to have either Texas or Florida without a restriction of excluding slavery from them." Adams did not consider himself an eastern man, but a man of the whole nation, pledged to defend the interests of all sections. Loyalty to the union outweighed any anti-slavery feeling Adams had in the 1820s.⁸ Adams was not firmly identified with any side of the slavery question and in 1827 remarked that during the election of 1824, "I was misrepresented at the South as a restrictionist and in the Northwest as a slaveholder."⁹

Adams had no love for Andrew Jackson but did not believe that Jackson could erect a tyranny. Adams thought, with Madison, that the United States, "is too extensive, its component interests too various, its institutions too complicated and the law as well as the establishment of liberty too universal to admit to establishment of any despotism."¹⁰ Adams did believe that Jackson would oppose tariffs and internal improvements.¹¹ Initially, Adams believed the conflict was not slavery against freedom but confederation against union. Adams met with Supreme Court Justice Smith

⁸ Diary entry, March 31, 1820, *ibid.*, 5:54.

⁹ John Quincy Adams to Edward Everett, April 11, 1827, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 148.

¹⁰ John Quincy Adams to Charles Hammond, April 13, 1829, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 149.

¹¹ John Quincy Adams to Henry Clay, April 21, 1829, in Clay, *Papers*, 8:33.

Thompson in 1831 and both believed "that the leading system of the present Administration is to resolve the Government of this Union into the national imbecility of the old Confederation."¹²

The South Carolina legislature, guided by Vice-President Calhoun, led the way by declaring the Tariff of 1828 null and void. Calhoun argued that the tariff was unconstitutional because it favored one particular branch of the economy rather than because it raised a revenue. Justifying state nullification of federal laws, Calhoun agreed with William Blackstone that absolute sovereignty existed somewhere in society and Calhoun placed that sovereignty with the states.¹³ Adams attacked nullification on both fronts. He denied that absolute sovereignty could exist in a free government, calling the idea the "most pernicious of political errors." "The doctrine that Sovereign must necessarily be unlimited power is to my mind so glaringly incompatible with *any* consistent theory of human rights," Adams wrote to John Marshall.¹⁴

In a July 4, 1831 oration at Quincy, his first public

¹² Diary entry, Jan. 30, 1831, in *MJQA*, 8:304.

¹³ William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 136-140, 161-162, 171, 173-176; John Niven, *John C. Calhoun and the Price of Union: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 158.

¹⁴ John Quincy Adams to Ambrose Spencer, Sept. 14, 1831; John Quincy Adams to John Marshall, Sept. 17, 1831, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 150.

statement since election to the House of Representatives, Adams defended the basis of his republican system, the union, against the attacks of the South Carolina nullifiers. Adams denied that the states were the fundamental political units of the nation, arguing that "union preceded their independence." Taking the Declaration of Independence as the nation's founding document, Adams noted that the Declaration referred to the United Colonies, rather than to each individual colony.¹⁵ Adams, echoing Federalist thought of the 1780s, stated that the Articles of Confederation were doomed from the start because they were based on a false notion of state sovereignty and did not rest on the authority of the people.¹⁶ Adams continually recurred to the theory that the Declaration of Independence was the foundation of the union. He argued in 1837 that the Declaration of Independence did not make the states independent or sovereign.¹⁷ In 1839 Adams stated that before the adoption of the Constitution, "a confederacy had been substituted in place of a government and state sovereignty had usurped the constituent sovereignty of the

¹⁵ John Quincy Adams, *An Oration Addressed to the Citizens of the Town of Quincy, on the Fourth of July, 1831* (Boston: Richardson, Lord and Holbrook, 1831), 6-7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21, 23; Wood, *Creation*, 306-307, 532-533.

¹⁷ John Quincy Adams, *An Oration Delivered before the Inhabitants of the Town of Newburyport, at their Request, on the Sixty-First Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence* (Newburyport, Mass.: Morss and Brewster, 1837), 15.

people."¹⁸

For Adams, the preservation of a protective tariff, which the nullifiers denounced, was tied to his defense of the union. On May 23, 1832, Adams issued a report on the tariff as chairman of the House of Representatives's Committee on Manufactures. Adams justified the protective tariff as a form of national defense. "The common defence must be provided for against commercial rivalry as against warlike invasion," Adams wrote, "for the spirit of traffic, armed with power, as the experience of mankind has proved, is more insatiate and more grasping than all the Alexanders or Caesars that ambition has inflicted on the race of man."¹⁹ Adams further argued that Congress had approved the idea of protective duties, with the commercial discrimination laws of 1789 and similar acts through the War of 1812. He pointed out that southern congressmen were then at the forefront in supporting a protective system.²⁰ Adams saw the tariff as part of a general system of national improvement, which was connected to the conduct of foreign policy. He noted that the development of the steamboat added to the value of the land gained in the Louisiana Purchase, and that canals and railroads made

¹⁸ John Quincy Adams, *Jubilee of the Constitution*, 38-39.

¹⁹ Callanan, "Political Economy of JQA," 141; John Quincy Adams, "Report on Manufactures," May 23, 1832, *Register of Debates in Congress*, 29 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1825-1837), 22nd Congress, 1st session, Part 3, Vol. 3, Appendix, 81-82.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 82-85.

westward movement possible. "Upon every part of this inheritance there are obstacles to be removed, and capacities of improvement to be exercised," Adams wrote. "The principle of undertaking and accomplishing these improvements by the labor and the fiscal resources of the people of the Union, has been assumed time after time, by the Congress of the United States."²¹

President Jackson, unlike Adams, separated the political theory and goal of nullification, opposing the idea that states could override federal laws, but favoring a reduction of the tariff. In his fourth annual message, delivered on December 4, 1832, Jackson called for a lower tariff, attacking the idea that one branch of industry deserved permanent special protection. Jackson also supported the quick sale of public lands. On December 10, 1832, Jackson issued a proclamation denouncing nullification.²² Adams could not see how anyone could oppose both nullification and the tariff and attributed the "glaring inconsistencies of principle between the message of this year and the proclamation" to personal conflict between Jackson and Calhoun.²³ The nullification crisis was resolved by the passage in March 1833 of the Force Bill, allowing the president to suppress insurrection in South

²¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

²² Fourth Annual Message, Dec. 4, 1832; Proclamation, Dec. 10, 1832, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 2:598-601, 640-656.

²³ Diary entry, Dec. 24, 1832, in *MJQA*, 8:510.

Carolina, and a lower tariff, removing the reasons for nullification.²⁴

Adams could not quite separate nullification from slavery. In 1830 Adams observed that the "South Carolinians are attempting to govern the Union as they govern their slaves, and there are too many indications that, abetted as they are by all the slave-driving interest of the Union, the free portion of the population will cower before them and to their insolence."²⁵ Jackson's vigorous use of the presidential veto convinced Adams that "the overseer ascendancy is complete."²⁶ The cruel irony, which Adams himself began to see, was that the union which Adams defended was "the only thing that can maintain their system of slavery." A union that protected all interests would naturally protect the South.²⁷ "Slavery is, in all probability, the wedge which will ultimately split up this Union," Adams wrote in 1833.²⁸

The nature and motives of the Jacksonian coalition, and the threat Adams believed they posed to republican government, soon became clear. Upon reading Martin Van Buren's letter to the Democratic convention in 1835, Adams observed that the

²⁴ Donald B. Cole, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 172-175.

²⁵ Diary entry, June 1, 1830, in *MJQA*, 8:229-230.

²⁶ Diary entry, June 6, 1830, *ibid.*, 8:231.

²⁷ Diary entry, Jan. 10, 1831, *ibid.*, 8:269-270.

²⁸ Diary entry, Oct. 14, 1833, *ibid.*, 9:23.

"democracy of the country is supported chiefly, if not entirely, by slavery." A few days later Adams met with a Wareham, Massachusetts, minister, and noted that the southern slaveholders bought the support of the West by supporting the rapid sale of public lands. "This is the under current," Adams argued, "with the tide of democracy at the surface."²⁹ Adams repeated this thesis to Robert Walsh, editor of the *National Gazette*, complaining that "State rights and negro Slavery and agrarian rapacity, controul the current of our public Affairs for the present and for an indefinite futurity." Adams directed Walsh to reread Jackson's annual message of 1832.³⁰

Adams was in the mainstream of Whig thought on economic development, supporting the bank, internal improvements, tariffs and domestic manufactures. In 1837 Adams wrote that a "divorce of Bank and State," made as much sense as a "divorce of Army and Fire-Arms."³¹ As president, Adams planned to use the gradual sale of public lands to pay for internal improvements, a goal he shared with Henry Clay.³² "The Sable

²⁹ Diary entries, Aug. 18 and 25, 1835, *ibid.*, 9:255, 259.

³⁰ John Quincy Adams to Robert Walsh, April 16, 1836, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 152.

³¹ D. Howe, *Political Culture of American Whigs*, 18-19, 45; John Quincy Adams to Alexander H. Everett, Nov. 7, 1837, in Andrew C. McLaughlin, ed. "Letters of John Quincy Adams to Alexander Hamilton Everett, 1811-1837," 2 parts. *American Historical Review*, Vol. 11 nos. 1 and 2 (October 1905-January-1906), 2:354.

³² John Quincy Adams to Charles W. Upham, Feb. 2, 1837, in "Ten Unpublished Letters," 382; Remini, *Clay*, 380-381, 521-522; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay* (Boston:

Genius of the South, saw the signs of his own inevitable downfall in the unparalleled progress of the general welfare of the North," Adams wrote in 1837, "and fell to cursing the tariff, and internal improvements, and raised the standard of Free trade, Nullification, and State Rights."³³ The capstone of slavery's political power was the so-called Pinckney Gag of May 18, 1836, a rule sponsored by Henry Laurens Pinckney of South Carolina and made permanent in 1840, that prohibited the House of Representatives from admitting anti-slavery petitions. Adams believed that the struggle over the right of petition, "is merely the *symptom* of a deep seated disease, preying on the vitals of this union -- and that disease is Slavery."³⁴

The Texan declaration of independence and quest for annexation to the United States brought out the diplomatic implications of the Jacksonian coalition. Adams himself had tried to buy Texas in 1827, believing that the Mexican government considered the territory worthless and hoping to move the border with Mexico farther away from New Orleans. In 1832 Adams believed that Texas would fill up with Americans and come into the union the same way West Florida had. The

Little, Brown and Company, 1937), 253-254.

³³ John Quincy Adams to Charles W. Upham, Feb. 2, 1837, in "Ten Unpublished Letters," 383.

³⁴ Bemis, *JQA and Union*, 340; Richards, *Congressman JQA*, 120-121; John Quincy Adams to John Greenleaf Whittier, Jan. 26, 1837, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 153.

problem was that most of the American settlers were slaveholders and Mexico had abolished slavery.³⁵ In May 1836 Adams struck up a correspondence with Benjamin Lundy, a Philadelphia Quaker and editor of the abolitionist newspaper *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, who had assembled the diplomatic pieces of the Slave Power conspiracy to annex Texas. Lundy argued in *The Origins and True Causes of the Texas Insurrection* that a combination of slave traders, squatters, and northern land speculators plotted to use Texas as a bulwark for slavery. "From the commencement of their settlement in that Province, we must bear in mind, the most of them anticipated its eventual separation from the government of Mexico, and attachment to the Northern Union," Lundy wrote. "This was early [on] resolved [by] them, . . . unless indeed other measures could be adopted for the perpetuation of slavery. A full and complete understanding existed between them and the advocates of the system in this country and elsewhere."³⁶ Lundy further explored the conspiracy theory in *The War in Texas*. "*The slaveholding Interest is now paramount in the Executive branch of our national government; and its influence operates indirectly, yet powerfully, through that medium, in favor of the Grand Scheme of Oppression and*

³⁵ Hargreaves, *Presidency of JQA*, 116; Diary entry, Jan. 31, 1832, in *MJQA*, 8:465.

³⁶ Benjamin Lundy, *The Origins and True Causes of the Texas Insurrection, Commenced in the Year 1835* (Philadelphia: National Gazette, 1836), 8-9.

Tyrannical Usurpation," Lundy wrote, restating a century-old Opposition fear of executive power."³⁷

Lundy did not tell Adams anything he did not already know or at least suspect. Yet Lundy did help crystalize Adams's thinking on the nature of the slave power and connect his critique of Democratic foreign policy with the Opposition Whig tradition.³⁸ Armed with Lundy's first pamphlet, Adams made his first speech on Texas in the House of Representatives on May 25, 1836. "The war now raging in Texas is a Mexican civil war, and a war for the re-establishment of slavery where it was abolished," Adams argued. "It is not a servile war, but a war between slavery and emancipation." he continued.³⁹ The American desire for Texas meant war, Adams warned, certainly with Mexico, probably with Great Britain, and possibly with France. Annexation of Texas would stretch American boundaries to a militarily indefensible extent. To preserve Texas, the United States would need to conquer Cuba and Puerto Rico as well, which would bring war with a Great Britain determined to wipe out slavery in the West Indies.⁴⁰ "Mr. Chairman, are you ready for all these wars?" Adams asked. "A Mexican war? a war

³⁷ Benjamin Lundy, *The War in Texas: Instigated by Slaveholders, Land Speculators, &c. for the re-establishment of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Republic of Mexico* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1836), 3.

³⁸ Bemis, *JQA and Union*, 354-357.

³⁹ John Quincy Adams, Speech of May 25, 1836, *Register of Debates*, 24th Congress, 1st Session, part 4, 4041.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4043-4045.

with Great Britain, if not with France? a general Indian war? a servile war? and as an inevitable consequence of them all, a civil war?"⁴¹ One of the central tenets of Opposition Whig thought was that wars of conquest abroad led to tyranny at home. "I see no alternative but that the whole Mexican Confederation is destined to be overrun by our Land jobbers and Slave makers," Adams wrote to Lundy in 1836.⁴² Adams held the same view a year later, writing that he did not "see where our encroachments will stop, short of Cape Horn -- but what is to become of our *Liberties*?"⁴³ Adams believed that the cause of Texas was the cause of tyranny, not liberty. "[The Texans] are fighting for the establishment and perpetuation of slavery, and that is the cause of the South Carolinian sympathy with them," Adams wrote in December 1836.⁴⁴

Andrew Jackson knew that Texas was a hornet's nest of political difficulties, and in his message of December 21, 1836, the president did not advise the immediate annexation of Texas. Adams was surprised, to say the least.⁴⁵ Martin Van

41 *Ibid.*, 4046.

42 John Quincy Adams to Benjamin Lundy, June 27, 1836, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 152.

43 John Quincy Adams to Timothy Pitkin, April 22, 1837, in "Ten Unpublished Letters," 388.

44 Diary entry, Dec. 24, 1836, in *MJQA*, 9:333.

45 John M. Belohlavek, *"Let the Eagle Soar!" The Foreign Policy of Andrew Jackson* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 233-235; Andrew Jackson, message of Dec. 21, 1836, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 3:265-269; Diary entry, Dec. 22, 1836, in *MJQA*, 9:330-331.

Buren was too shrewd a politician to pick a dangerous fight and tried to steer a middle course by opposing the annexation of Texas and supporting the gag rule. When Adams met with Secretary of State John Forsyth on September 16, 1837, Forsyth assured Adams that the administration had made no offer to buy Texas from Mexico.⁴⁶ Two days later Adams moved a resolution "that the power of annexing a people of any independent State to this Union is a power not delegated by the Constitution of the United States to their Congress, or to any department of their Government, but reserved to the people." The chair ruled the resolution out of order.⁴⁷

Despite Van Buren's coolness on Texas, southern state legislatures and congressmen pushed for annexation. Waddy Thompson, a South Carolina Whig, opposed the admission of Iowa, or any other northern territory, "while northern fanatics were pouring in petitions against the annexation to this Union of the great and glorious republic of Texas." Adams "objected to the peculiar glory of Texas, which consisted of having made a land of freemen a land of slaves."⁴⁸ Adams addressed the question of Texas in a long speech "cut up by the rules of the House into dribblets of a quarter hour a day,"

⁴⁶ Major L. Wilson, *The Presidency of Martin Van Buren* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984), 149-152; Diary entry, Sept. 16, 1837, in *MJQA*, 9:377-378.

⁴⁷ Diary entry, Sept. 18, 1837, in *MJQA*, 9:378; *Congressional Globe*, 109 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Blair and Rives, 1833-1873), 25th Congress, 1st Session, 38.

⁴⁸ Diary entry, June 6, 1838, in *MJQA*, 10:11-12.

which lasted from June 16 to July 7, 1838.⁴⁹ Adams attacked the gag on anti-slavery petitions, which "had been carried at the dictation of the slaveholders" and "was bringing upon the House the deepest obloquy." The gag made a proper debate over Texas impossible.⁵⁰ Adams did not discount the possibility of future expansion, and took great pains to defend his own attempts to purchase Texas as secretary of state and president, denying that he had given up anything more than a questionable claim on Mexican territory.⁵¹ On June 28 Adams restated his constitutional objections to annexation, but added that an amendment to the Constitution and a popular referendum in Texas and the United States would remove that difficulty. Slavery, however, was the bar to expansion. On those grounds, Adams could not submit to a union with Texas, "not with a People who have converted freemen into slaves; not so long as slavery exists in Texas."⁵²

By the late 1830s Adams completed the Opposition Whig framework for interpreting the Slave Power's drive for expansion, which Adams would use to explain American politics until his death. A succession of slaveholding (or in Van

⁴⁹ John Quincy Adams to Abbot Lawrence, June 27, 1838, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 153.

⁵⁰ June 22 and 26, in John Quincy Adams, *Speech by John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, upon the Right of the People, Men and Women, to Petition* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1838), 54, 63.

⁵¹ June 21, 1838, *ibid.*, 44-45.

⁵² June 28, 1838, *ibid.*, 68-69.

Buren's case, slavedriven) presidents stood in the place of Robert Walpole. The farmers of the South and West, whether slaveholders or not, who demanded the sale of public lands, played the part of Walpole's army of placemen. Adams reversed the Jeffersonian formula of political virtue, writing that he did not share Jefferson's "fancies that the tobacco-planters of the James were the chosen people of God."⁵³ "The continuance of the present administration will, if accomplished, open wide all the flood-gates of corruption," Adams wrote late in Martin Van Buren's term.⁵⁴ The main victim of the slave power was New England, and Adams warned his son that "*New England* will ere long need sound heads and stout hearts to save her from being made the foot-ball of the South."⁵⁵

Adams's fight against the annexation of Texas placed him in the front rank of antislavery crusaders in Congress, but he did not consider himself an abolitionist. In 1837 Adams wrote in his diary that "the abolitionists generally are constantly urging me to indiscrete movements, which would ruin me and weaken and not strengthen them."⁵⁶ The chief indiscreet

⁵³ John Quincy Adams, "Reply to the Address of the Thirteen Federalists," in Henry Adams, *ed.*, *New-England Federalism*, 153.

⁵⁴ Diary entry, July 25, 1840, in *MJQA*, 10:342.

⁵⁵ John Quincy Adams to Charles Francis Adams, April 7, 1841, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 154.

⁵⁶ Diary entry, Sept. 1, 1837, in *MJQA*, 8:365.

measure in Adams mind was the abolitionist demand for the end of slavery in the District of Columbia as a prelude to a general emancipation. Adams sympathized in principle but believed that "the undertaking [is] of such tremendous magnitude, difficulty and danger, that I shrink from the contemplation of it, and much more from any personal agency in promoting it."⁵⁷ Adams was recognized as an ally, if not a full member of the abolitionist camp. Adams friend and colleague Joshua R. Giddings, an Ohio Whig, noted that Adams's "views as stated would compare with those of the Abolitionists generally, except that he declared himself not prepared to vote for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia."⁵⁸

Adams hoped that the Whig victory of 1840 would halt the progress of slave-driven expansion. That hope faded with the death of President William H. Harrison, when in Thurlow Weed's words, "the Whig party was demoralized by Tylerism."⁵⁹ "Tyler is a political sectarian, of the slave-driving, Jeffersonian school, principled against all improvement, with all the interests and passions and vices of slavery rooted in his

⁵⁷ John Quincy Adams to Charles Hammond, March 31, 1837, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 153.

⁵⁸ Journal entry, Jan. 21, 1839, in George W. Julian, *The Life of Joshua R. Giddings* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1892), 61.

⁵⁹ Thurlow Weed, *The Autobiography of Thurlow Weed*. Harriet A. Weed, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1883), 468.

moral and political considerations," Adams wrote on April 4, 1841. A few weeks later Adams added, "I feel an utter distrust of the principles of John Tyler, a Virginia nullifier, now acting as President of the United States, and no confidence in the principles or belief in the sincerity of the Secretary of State."⁶⁰ Daniel Webster, Adams's most prominent constituent, earned Adams's undying hatred for remaining in office and by implication acting as a tool of the slave power. In 1843 Adams denounced Webster as "a heartless traitor to the cause of human freedom."⁶¹

Despite Tyler's nominal identification as a Whig, Adams expected that Tyler, like his Democratic predecessors, would attempt to annex Texas and act his part as an agent of the slaveholders. On September 17, 1842, Adams delivered a speech at Braintree in which he gave the fullest outline to date of the Slave Power conspiracy. Nullification was the bedrock of Tyler's political creed, Adams believed, as nullification opposed a strong central government which might curb the power of the south. In truth, Tyler opposed Calhoun against nullification. Tyler did oppose tariffs and the Bank of the United States, positions Adams saw as tantamount to nullification. "Nullification, portentous and fatal as it is to the prospects and welfare of this Union, is not the only

⁶⁰ Diary entries, April 4 and May 21, 1841, in *MJQA*, 10:456-457, 469.

⁶¹ Diary entry, June 17, 1843, *ibid.*, 11:383-384.

interest of Southern domination, wielded by the Executive at Washington," Adams continued. The other instruments included an aggressive foreign policy that demanded Mexican territory from the Rio del Norte to San Francisco. This policy had begun with Jackson, and was "worthy of Machiavell[i]."62

Texas was the focal point of the slave power's foreign policy. "The Texas Land and Liberty jobbers had spread the contagion of their land-jobbing -- Stock-jobbing -- Slave-jobbing -- Rights of Man-jobbing, were all hand in hand sweeping over the land like a hurricane," Adams argued. "The controlling object of this whole system of policy was, and yet is, to obtain a nursery for the slave-holding States, to break down forever the ascendent power of the free States, and to fortify, beyond all possibility of reversal, the institution of slavery," Adams continued. The public lands and internal improvements were to be sacrificed to the Slave Power, and Adams again referred to Jackson's annual message of 1832 as the foundation of the slave power's economic policy.63

There was little new argument in Adams's address; most of the arguments had appeared in his own writings or in Benjamin Lundy's pamphlets. Adams did advance one argument he had never

62 John Quincy Adams, *Address of John Quincy Adams to his Constituents of the Twelfth Congressional District, at Braintree, September 17, 1842* (Boston: J.H. Eastburn, 1842), 9-10; Norma Lois Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 19-20.

63 John Quincy Adams, *Address at Braintree*, 12, 16, 22-23.

made before, against naval spending. Adams attacked Tyler's annual message for 1841, which called for a larger navy. By lumping the navy with the army and other supposed instruments of tyranny, Adams picked up on the Republican attacks on Federalist policy in the 1790s.⁶⁴ Adams later referred to the steam frigates as "infernal machines."⁶⁵

By mid-1842 Tyler added San Francisco to his territorial ambitions. He and Webster devised a plan to gain British support for a Mexican cession by giving up the American claim to Oregon north of the Columbia River. Tyler also appointed Waddy Thompson of South Carolina, a strong proponent of the annexation of Texas, as minister to Mexico. The administration's plans were presumably revealed on October 19, 1842, when Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones seized Monterey upon hearing a rumor that the United States and Mexico were at war. Jones withdrew the next day, when he learned the rumor was unfounded.⁶⁶

Adams attempted to call on the president to submit the papers and communications related to the raid to the House of Representatives, but was blocked by administration supporters.⁶⁷ Adams, disposed as he was to think in terms of

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 35-36; John Tyler, message of Dec. 7, 1841, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 4:88.

⁶⁵ Diary entry, March 8, 1844, in *MJQA*, 11:528.

⁶⁶ Peterson, *Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*, 137-139.

⁶⁷ Diary entries, Jan. 30 and 31, 1842, in *MJQA*, 11:304-305.

whole systems, saw administration policy as shown by Jones's raid, Democratic agitation with Great Britain over the right of search, and Senator Lewis Linn's bill to occupy the mouth of the Columbia, as parts of a system to dismember Mexico and extend slavery. Adams cornered Daniel Webster at the state department on March 25, 1843, and asked if Waddy Thompson had been instructed to buy San Francisco. When Webster responded that he could not say, Adams believed he had his answer.⁶⁸ Mexican weakness only encouraged "the inflexible perseverance of rapacity of our South and West, under the spur of slavery, to plunder and dismember her."⁶⁹ Jones never would have attacked a country that could fight back, and Webster and Thompson showed a similar contempt for Mexico. "The spirit of encroachment upon Mexico is stimulated and nourished by this settled and too well founded conviction of her helpless weakness," Adams wrote in his diary, "in conflict with the gigantic energy of our national avarice and ambition."⁷⁰ Adams spent several weeks sifting through Anthony Butler's dispatches from Mexico, plumbing the depths of the Slave Power drive for expansion. "But Jackson was so sharp-set for Texas from the first year of his Administration he set his twin

⁶⁸ Diary entry, March 25, 1843, in *MJQA*, 11:345-346; David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon and the Mexican War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 108-109.

⁶⁹ Diary entry, April 1, 1843, in *MJQA*, 11:351.

⁷⁰ Diary entry, April 4, 1843, *ibid.*, 11:353.

engines to work," Adams observed on March 29, "of negotiating to buy Texas with one hand, and instigating the people of that province to revolt against Mexico with other."⁷¹ After completing his labors, Adams concluded that Texas policy had run on the same track since 1829.⁷²

As Adams confined most of his observations to his diary no one could confront him with his own conduct regarding Florida. If one substituted Jackson for Jones, Pensacola for Monterey and Spain for Mexico, Adams's own actions might fall into the same category as those he criticized in the 1840s. There is no evidence to suggest that Adams renounced his own expansionism, however. In 1844 Adams wrote that "the Florida treaty was the most important incident in my life, and the most successful negotiation ever consummated by the Government of this Union."⁷³

On April 22, 1844, Tyler sent a Texas annexation treaty to the Senate. It was the capstone of slave power diplomacy, and Adams feared that "with it went the freedom of the human race." Even when the Senate rejected the treaty on June 8, Adams believed the danger had not passed.⁷⁴ Adams observed to William Henry Seward that "the rapacious passion of national

⁷¹ Diary entry, March 29, 1843, *ibid.*, 11:349.

⁷² Diary entry, April 10, 1843, *ibid.*, 11:358.

⁷³ Diary entry, Sept. 27, 1844, *ibid.*, 12:78.

⁷⁴ Diary entry, April 22, 1844, *ibid.*, 12:13-14; Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 144-149.

aggrandizement sharpened by the whetstone of the land and stock jobber, is even now plunging us into a desperate war for slavery, the issue of which can be no other than the dissolution of the Union, and an imperial race of Caesars, under the name of Democracy."⁷⁵ Adams was convinced that Texas was a prelude to greater conquests, including all of Mexico and the West Indies, creating "a maritime, colonizing, slave-tainted monarchy," and "a military government with a large army and navy."⁷⁶ Adams combined the primal Opposition Whig fear of executive power with his fear of democracy, reversing Madison's fear of the 1790s, that the executive would use foreign policy to combine with the Senate against the people at large.

Adams laid out the Slave Power conspiracy most fully to his constituents. He addressed the Boston Whig Young Men's Club on October 7, 1844, and argued that a "virtuous senate" rejected the Texas treaty, placing the upper house in its traditional role as a break on runaway democracy.⁷⁷ On October 30, Adams pointed out the stages of the conspiracy. The first stage was the preponderance of slaveholders in the White House, the cabinet, the military and the Congress. This information, Adams said, was available to anyone with a copy

⁷⁵ John Quincy Adams to William Henry Seward, May 10, 1844, Adams Family Papers, Letterbook, reel 154.

⁷⁶ Diary entries, June 10 and 14, 1844, in *MJQA*, 12:49, 57.

⁷⁷ *Niles' National Register*, Oct. 19, 1844.

of the annual Blue Book. The second stage was the gag on anti-slavery petitions, approved in 1836, made a standing rule in 1840 and repealed in 1844. The third was the drive for Texas. The Slave Power openly coveted Texas, schemed to acquire it, and would force the nation into a war to defend slavery.⁷⁸ When Congress brought Texas into the union by a joint-resolution, Adams saw the move "as the apoplexy of the Constitution."⁷⁹

James K. Polk came into office pledging to annex Texas and all of Oregon. Yet that program would entail war with both Great Britain and Mexico. Adams expected Polk to sell out the free states through a compromise on Oregon and a tariff agreement with Great Britain. Adams had not completely renounced expansion. "I believe slavery to be a sin before God, and that is the reason we should refuse to annex Texas to the Union," he said in 1838.⁸⁰ Expansion into Oregon, as it was unfettered by slavery, was little short of a divine command. Throughout his career Adams believed that land belonged to its cultivators, as shown in his 1802 oration at Plymouth and his diplomacy at Ghent. He repeated the same argument in an 1843 essay on the New England Confederacy of

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Nov. 9, 1844.

⁷⁹ Diary entry, Feb. 28, 1844, in *MJQA*, 12:174; Peterson, *Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*, 256-257.

⁸⁰ June 28, 1838, in John Quincy Adams, *Speech on the Right of Petition*, 68.

1643.⁸¹

As secretary of state and president Adams had been willing to settle for an extension of the boundary at 49 degrees from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, but twenty years of American migration led Adams to claim the whole Oregon territory. On January 27, 1845, Adams argued that the time had come to end the joint occupancy agreement. Adams believed that Polk never should have offered to settle at 49 degrees or accept if the British offered the same line.⁸² In 1846 Adams cited Biblical authority, specifically Genesis 1:26-28 and the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. "Now, that general authority given to man to increase, multiply and replenish the earth, and *subdue*, it," Adams argued on the floor of the House of Representatives, "was a grant from the Creator to man as man, it was a grant to every individual in the human race in his individual capacity."⁸³

Adams suspected that Polk was far more interested in acquiring more slave lands from Mexico than in asserting American claims to all of Oregon. "It is evident that the Oregon question will be settled by a repeal of the corn laws

⁸¹ John Quincy Adams, "The New England Confederacy of MDCXLIII" [1843] (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, 3rd Series, Vol. 9, 1846), 196-197.

⁸² Diary entries, Dec. 6 and 14, 1845, March 25, 1846, in *MJQA*, 12:218-21, 254-255; *Congressional Globe*, 28th Congress, 2nd Session, 202.

⁸³ Speech of Feb. 9, 1846, *Congressional Globe*, 29th Congress, 1st Session, 340-341.

and the sacrifice of the American tariff," Adams wrote in his diary on February 20, 1846, "a bargain, both sides of which will be for the benefit of England, and to our disadvantage; a purchase of peace, the value of which can only be tested by the lapse of time."⁸⁴ The British government soon repealed the Corn Laws and lowered duties on imported grain. Congress followed with the Walker Tariff, reducing duties on manufactured goods. The southerners, Whig and Democrat, who clamored for Texas were not interested in Oregon, and in June, Polk signed an agreement with Great Britain making 49 degrees the boundary between British and American territory.⁸⁵

Polk needed a settlement with Great Britain to have a free hand in pursuing an aggressive policy with Mexico. By early 1846 Polk's attempts to purchase territory from Mexico had failed. He sent General Zachary Taylor into the disputed territory between the Rio Nueces and the Rio Grande. Polk and the cabinet hoped that American financial claims against the Mexican government were enough cause for war. In May word of conflict between Mexican and American troops along the Rio Grande reached Washington, allowing Polk to ask for war and blame it on Mexico. ⁸⁶ It was the result Adams had long

⁸⁴ Diary entry, Feb. 20, 1846, *ibid.*, 12:248.

⁸⁵ Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 418-419; Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 72-73, 80-88.

⁸⁶ Paul H. Bergeron, *The Presidency of James K. Polk* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 74-77;

expected. Adams wrote one of his last letters to Albert Gallatin, who was one of the last living Americans in a position to appreciate Adams's Opposition-based conspiracy theory. "But the design, and the purpose to dismember Mexico, and to annex to the United States not only Texas, but several of her adjoining Provinces on this side of the Continent, and the Californias on the other side, has in my opinion been what my old Colleague Caleb Cushing calls 'a fixed fact' at least from the year 1830 and has been pursued by means which gave to Mexico from that time ample cause of War, in self-defence, against the United States," Adams wrote. Adams further argued that Polk had sent Taylor as a provocative act, and had usurped the war-making power.⁸⁷

Adams himself was never reconciled to the war. The last vote he ever cast in the House of Representatives was on February 21, 1848, two days before his death, against a resolution thanking various generals for their services in the campaign of 1847.⁸⁸ By all accounts Adams died resigned to his fate. His final thoughts on republicanism and diplomacy are unrecorded, yet doubtless he believed that his system of Christian improvement was in ruins, and that domestic liberty would fall victim to tools of diplomacy. According to

Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 373-377.

⁸⁷ John Quincy Adams to Albert Gallatin, Dec. 26, 1847, Adams Family papers, Letterbook, reel 155.

⁸⁸ Bemis, *JQA and Union*, 534-535.

Opposition thought, if the process of decay was visible it had already gone too far to be reversed. The republic, at least Adams's version of it, to which he had devoted his life had met the fate of all republics, and preceded him to the grave.

CONCLUSION

To view the world as a republican was to see politics as a whole entity, not one divided into foreign and domestic spheres. Republican ideology posited that the tools of foreign policy could easily turn against domestic liberties and that a government embracing tyrannies abroad could similarly introduce tyranny at home. John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams agreed that both foreign and domestic policy were to be judged by whether they promoted or subverted liberty; by whether they kept the republic or destroyed it. Agreement on the desirability of a republic did not necessarily bring agreement on the precise nature of a republican foreign policy. The stream of thought upon which Americans drew, a two-hundred year span of writers that included political economists, constitutional and natural law theorists, and English polemicists, was far too broad to produce a single republican model for diplomacy. The lives and experiences of the three figures in this study helped produce different versions of republican diplomacy. There were, of course, common themes to the diplomatic careers of John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams.

One belief common to all three was that a nation's

interests and diplomacy reflected the nature of its government and society. Americans sought limited government and the freedom to trade without restrictions. All three figures in this study concluded that Americans were not on a permanent basis a Spartan people, although they praised and demanded such martial virtue in times of crisis. Both John Adams and James Madison ultimately discounted martial virtue as the foundation of the republic and believed a balanced government could at least simulate virtue. The Physiocrats and the Scottish political economists provided a framework for constructing a republic with economic activity at its center. John Adams and James Madison disagreed on whether the United States should pursue manufactures and shipping as well as agriculture. That disagreement went to the heart of what they believed a republican diplomacy entailed. John Quincy Adams represented a brand of republicanism arising after the War of 1812 which held that government policy could promote public virtue through guiding economic development and undertaking internal improvements. The Erie Canal project, for example, was a product of that view.¹ Adams's diplomacy as secretary of state and president, as well as his positions in Congress, reflect a similar commitment to self-defense through improvement at home and through advancement of American maritime principles abroad.

¹ Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress 1817-1862* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 24-25.

Natural law theorists such as Grotius and Vattel, writing from the perspective of small nations, provided a moral and legal justification for American foreign policy goals and an analog to domestic constitutional arrangements. The law of nations, by emphasizing neutral rights and advocating a balance of power among nations that would limit war, was compatible with the idea of a limited government. The most concrete example of a republican foreign policy goal taken from the law of nations was the principle that "free ships make free goods," which combined personal liberty, economic freedom and limited government into one policy. John Adams placed "free ships make free goods" at the center of American diplomacy in the Model Treaty. As president, both John Adams and James Madison waged wars in defense of that principle. In 1823, John Quincy Adams used "free ships make free goods" as the glue that unified his British and Russian diplomacy. As president, Adams saw the Panama Congress as the opportunity to codify freedom of the seas into the international law of the Western Hemisphere.

The law of nations provided a legal and moral justification for American foreign policy goals, but neither Grotius's *Rights of War and Peace* nor Vattel's *Law of Nations* nor Madison's *Examination of the British Doctrine* supplied a method for achieving those goals. For a guide to diplomacy as well as politics, John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams turned to the Opposition Whig school, chiefly Lord

Bolingbroke, Trenchard and Gordon and James Burgh. Fortunately for Americans, the ideology they embraced was compatible with a realistic view of foreign policy. The Opposition Whigs emphasized that human imperfection required balances of power within governments and among nations. Just as Opposition Whig thinkers provided a guide to detecting and preventing domestic corruption and tyranny, they showed the way to a diplomacy consistent with liberty.

The first rule of Opposition Whig diplomacy Americans adopted was that political and physical separation from the hazards of continental European politics was essential to liberty. Bolingbroke and "Cato," as contemporary critics of Walpole's foreign policy, warned against Walpole's engagements on the European continent, dictated in part by the Hanoverian connection, where Great Britain had no essential interests. The American situation was somewhat different, with a relatively weak United States trying to keep European nations from interfering in American politics. The principle that separation preserved republican government can be seen most obviously in the Declaration of Independence and was the central assumption of John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams in their diplomacy. In 1823, John Quincy Adams's contribution to the Monroe Doctrine restated the principle of separation from Europe to apply to a hemisphere full of independent republics.

A rule related to physical separation was that separation

should be enforced by methods not dangerous to domestic liberty. Opposition Whigs believed that the navy was the constitutionally safest form of defense. It could not overthrow the government, as could a standing army. A navy also paid for itself by protecting overseas commerce, a valuable source of economic power and a training ground for sailors. An army created a set of people with an interest separate from the common good, drained the public treasury and provided a source of executive patronage and corruption.

Reliance on the navy was not as widely accepted in the United States as was a reliance on physical separation from Europe. Many American statesmen believed that economic power could play the strategic role of a navy. Opposition Whigs in Britain did not address economic coercion as a means of foreign policy, but suggested the idea by emphasizing the role the American colonies played in insuring British wealth. The careers of John Adams and James Madison, both of which concluded with maritime crises, are instructive on this point. In 1776 Adams believed that the economic power of America, both as a market for manufactures and a supplier of staple goods, could substitute, at least temporarily, for a substantial navy. By the 1780s Adams gave up on economic coercion as an effective policy. During the Quasi-War, Adams waged a naval war in defense of commerce, particularly the American carrying trade, in a manner he believed was consistent with republican ideology and the lessons he had

learned as a diplomat.

Madison, on the other hand, went beyond Opposition thought to lump a navy with a standing army as a threat to liberty. Madison believed that a large domestic carrying trade was inconsistent with a primarily agrarian republic. He saw American economic power as its own defense and framed the commercial discrimination bills of the 1790s and the Embargo of 1807 to achieve American goals without recourse to military force. Madison's version of republican diplomacy forced him to believe that American commerce was more powerful than it was in reality.

A third rule, tied to the proper weapons of foreign policy, was that the power of the executive, while necessary for balance within a government and for administration, was to be tightly controlled. John Adams believed in a strong executive, more so than Madison, but Adams was also careful to conduct himself as a republicanized version of Bolingbroke's Patriot King. Adams, in defense of his own administration, pointed out that he had preserved the republic by refusing to follow measures Hamilton pressed on him. Madison was more fearful of executive power than Adams, and Madison's writings throughout the 1790s are a variation on the Opposition Whig thesis that executive tyranny could result from an unrestrained power to conduct foreign relations. As president, Madison may have come close to violating his own rules while attempting to acquire the Floridas, but his circumspection may

be evidence that he was no more comfortable with his own use of executive power than he was with that of John Adams. John Quincy Adams, as secretary of state and president, did not seem to hold Opposition Whig fears of executive power. As a member of Congress, however, Adams attacked Andrew Jackson and the Democrats in the same terms as the Opposition criticized Walpole.

The Whig party to which John Quincy Adams belonged made frequent reference to the Opposition Whigs in the 1830s and 1840s in defense of its political positions.² Generations after Adams's death, however, saw the founding generation itself as the source of ancient authority. In his 1931 article "The Permanent Bases of American Foreign Policy," former presidential candidate John W. Davis wrote that "the first [base] in point of time, if not in point of importance, is to abstain as far as possible from any participation in foreign questions in general and European questions in particular." In support of his argument, Davis cited John Adams, John Quincy Adams, the Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine, without reference to the earlier republican ideology that had produced those statements of policy.³

John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams came to serve the function in later American thought that Grotius,

² D. Howe, *Political Culture of American Whigs*, 77-78.

³ John W. Davis. "The Permanent Bases of American Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 10 no. 1 (October 1931), 1-5.

Vattel, Bolingbroke and "Cato" served for the founding generation. Even if American statesmen no longer cited the Opposition Whigs in debates over foreign policy, it cannot be said that their ideas and concerns faded from the American consciousness. "Free ships make free goods" reappeared in the Civil War, at the Hague Peace Conferences and upon American entry into World War I. The idea of separation from foreign politics, put forth by the Opposition and transmitted through the Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine, has been at center of every subsequent debate over American action throughout the world, most obviously in the American entry into World War I, World War II and the Cold War. Historian and Washington biographer Curtis P. Nettels testified against the North Atlantic Treaty on the grounds that the agreement violated the tradition, laid down in the Farewell Address, against permanent alliances.⁴ In 1951 Senator Robert A. Taft echoed Opposition Whig military thought when he advocated a defense policy based on a large navy and air force, but opposed the provision in NATO that committed American ground troops to Europe.⁵ The concerns over the president's foreign policy powers that Madison raised in his "Helvidius" essays are evident in the Bricker Amendment and the War Powers Act, to name but two examples. The question of what constitutes a

⁴ Lawrence Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 14.

⁵ Robert A. Taft, *A Foreign Policy for Americans* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1951), 19-20.

republican foreign policy has not been answered for all time. John Adams, James Madison and John Quincy Adams were among the first to grapple with it. Their use of republican theory formed the guide subscribed to by each succeeding generation charged with keeping the republic.

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