

WASHINGTON AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY¹

There is a new and lively interest in history. Slowly the world comes to a realization that the past governs the present in many respects. So men delve to discover the forces which have moulded our world, our thought, and our actions. Thus the field of history has broadened. No one today would agree with Freeman in calling it "past politics." It is all human experience. Not even political history is political now! The economic determinists have studied the economic foundations of the constitution. There is a great deal of psychological biography being written, and we have even some very interesting pathological history of important figures in the world's past life.

Naturally enough, there are the marks of mode and fashion upon some of this writing. There used to be a violence in political denunciation during life that was balanced by the maxim to speak only good of the dead. Vast quantities of historical whitewash were employed. Styles have changed! Our political manners have become more urbane, but there is great joy in the autopsy to discover feet of clay, in the ransacking of old trunks of the departed to find correspondence not intended for the official edition of his writings. There is a good deal of thumping our heroes to see if they are solid marble or only hollow plaster casts.

Now Washington is up for examination. His biographers hitherto have, for the most part, been somewhat awe-struck with the task of writing his life, and it is not surprising that his place in history should come up for reassessment, or that "realists" and iconoclasts should take real pleasure in at-

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tempting to demonstrate the plaster character of his sainthood. Two new biographies appear almost simultaneously. Both have the same purpose — to paint him as a human figure.

It is a difficult task. Lincoln's life and personality lend themselves with a certain inevitability to that kind of writing. The quality of reflective sadness in his face, the extraordinary range of his humor, throw into high relief his human qualities. Dignity always serves as a mask. Most of us are not dignified in feeling or action, and dignity serves therefore to make a sort of screen between us and the motives and impulses of the statesman who has it. Washington had great dignity, and it has had its effect hitherto upon historians, most of whom had some respect for it. Washington, moreover, was in positions of authority from his youth up. Holding such positions affected his habits of thought and his manner. There was always a certain detachment, a kind of impersonality, in his acts and decisions, which concealed his emotions and feelings.

The moment is ripe for a review of his personal contribution to the nation — and particularly his relationship to international affairs. For at the moment that we are told he was no general, that his inner life was "dim," and that he had the foibles and weaknesses that ordinary flesh is heir to, another group hails his supposed foreign policy as a revelation from Sinai, or, to change the figure, a law of the Medes and Persians.

There can be no question that there is a lively new interest in foreign affairs, that foreign policy has again become one of the great issues of politics. During most of our history, foreign affairs were accounted of slight importance. But as a result of the war and its aftermath, the attention of the public is again focused on the problem. International affairs do not yet attract the interest and attention that were accorded them in the early days of the Republic. Then diplomacy was as eagerly discussed as later we talked of the tariff, internal improvements, and other topics of domestic concern. The results

of Jay's mission or of Monroe's negotiation were as anxiously awaited as news from a general in the field. Victory or defeat in diplomacy elicited as much joy or produced as much gloom and criticism as did victory or defeat in military affairs. There was no broader path to office, or to defeat for office. From Washington to Jackson there were no military men as presidents of the United States, but every one, John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, John Quincy Adams, had held the office of minister abroad or secretary of state at home, and three of them had had experience in both offices.

The importance of diplomacy at that time and its new interest and importance now, make this a favorable moment to review Washington's foreign policy. It is interesting to observe, however, that the current author, Mr. William E. Woodward, in *George Washington, the Image and the Man*, does not regard the matter of much importance. In a book of 460 pages, twenty-two suffice for his eight years as president. Three pages only are devoted to foreign affairs. The Genêt episode and Jay's mission are the two events discussed. Genêt was a fool, but the incident "revealed a turbulent current of dissatisfaction under the smooth surface of affairs." Jay was an Anglomaniac aristocrat, "completely blinded by the glitter of British aristocracy" — a third-rate statesman in a first-class position. There is no word of policy or its formation, no intimation that Washington had done more than make the sort of sensible decisions "any banker" would make.

It is worth while to examine candidly Washington's claims to statesmanship on the basis of his work in shaping foreign policy. A statesman has been defined as one who deals competently with current situations, with an eye to the future, making use of the instruments which lie ready to his hand. He must be an idealist, without being visionary. He must be practical without the sacrifice of principle. He must deal with the situation as he finds it, but not leave it without giving it direction. How does Washington measure up to these tests?

The central problems of his administration, from the point of view of diplomacy, were to save the West and to release the United States from economic and diplomatic dependence (amounting almost to servitude) upon European nations. Three of the great powers, Great Britain, France, and Spain, wished to confine the United States to the territory east of the Alleghenies. None of them wished to see this nation realize its potentialities and become a vigorous and fully independent power.

France was our formal ally. But the alliance had been the fruit of French policy, not of sympathy with the aims of the Revolution. The alliance had served the purpose for which it was made; Great Britain had been injured. By 1789 there was a distinct feeling that the new state might become stronger than was good for France. The French hoped to recover Louisiana. We must never think of the retrocession from Spain to France as mere accident; it was part of a long matured policy. That policy, suggested by the whole history prior to 1763, involved the union with Louisiana of lands between the Mississippi and the Alleghenies. Its realization depended upon a weak United States, from which those lands might be detached. French hopes in this matter were reflected in an instruction to the French minister in Philadelphia in 1787, when the constitutional convention was sitting. "His Majesty thinks . . . that it is better for France that the United States should remain in their present condition, because if they achieve the unity of which they are capable, they will acquire a strength and a power which they would probably be ready to abuse." At no time during Washington's administrations was there any substantial deviation from the policy inspired by such hopes and fears. The forms and expressions of the policy varied from intrigue to insolence, but the substance was always the same. It is true that this fundamental hostility to the creation of a strong American nation did not run upon

the surface. That made it the more dangerous, the more difficult to comprehend and combat. It was not understood by a somewhat guileless public which was appreciative of the tangible aid rendered by France during the American Revolution and enthusiastic over the spread of ideas of liberty evidenced by the French Revolution. Washington and his counselors could not fail to feel the force of popular sentiment upon the one side and of French machinations upon the other.

The attitude of Spain was much simpler. It had had no sympathy with the American Revolution, and had not been ready to play with fire to the extent France had been. The United States had not been able to secure a treaty. Spain had endeavored to use French diplomacy to limit the United States to the Atlantic slope when the Revolution was won. Holding Louisiana, Spain wanted effective control of the land south of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi. Holding Florida and the mouth of the Mississippi, Spain controlled ingress and egress by water to and from the western area — a powerful leverage which her officials were eager to exploit. The dispute over opening the river, an important boundary controversy, inability to come to terms on a treaty of amity and commerce, Spain's fundamental fear and hatred of revolutionary activity and its possible effect by example upon her colonies — all these made relations strained. The futile negotiations during the previous twelve years had embittered the situation by 1789, and Spanish intrigues were already afoot in the West. We now know that their stupidity guaranteed their failure, though it was not then so clear. On the other hand, Spanish procrastination made solution a consummation scarcely to be anticipated, however devoutly desired.

Even more serious was the situation with reference to Great Britain. The terms of the treaty of peace had been satisfactory, but performance left much to be desired. The British had promised to evacuate the western posts "with all con-

venient speed." Yet when Washington took office six years later, the British still held the posts with their lucrative trade. There was no evidence of any intention to abandon them, and four years later, in 1793, an inflammatory utterance of Lord Dorchester plainly intimated war and the drawing of a new line, with Indian assistance! The establishment of a new post at Miami added fresh evidence of a desire to reduce the size of the United States.

Relations were embittered by other failures (not only by Great Britain!) to observe the treaties. American dignity and pride were injured by the shabby treatment of John Adams during his residence in London, and by British neglect to send a minister to Philadelphia. More serious yet was the fact that, neither country being represented in the other, there was no machinery for the solution of pending questions. American trade, which was predominantly with England, was protected by no commercial treaty and must depend upon British official whim. The treasured West Indian trade, an important source of wealth in colonial days, lying so temptingly close, yet legally so far away, was a source of irritation and loss. Bitterness growing from these several difficulties was, during Washington's administration, to be increased by impressment and intrigue.

These three — France, Spain, and Britain — were the powers with which Washington must deal. All had a common interest in limiting the United States to the area east of the Alleghenies. All hoped to keep the United States weak and in leading strings. Each expressed by intrigues and insolence its contempt for the independence of the nationhood of the United States. If they could have worked together toward these common purposes even for a relatively brief time, they would almost certainly have succeeded. Washington's task was to exploit their mutual bickerings for the preservation of the integrity to our boundaries and effective autonomy — to slip between them as they quarreled.

Such was the problem. What tools lay ready to his hand?

His own knowledge and experience are a matter of first importance. The situation was such that success or failure rested with him personally. There was no second choice, if he were to fail. And he lacked experience, almost entirely. He had not been abroad. He had had little or no contact with foreign affairs. He was a soldier and a farmer. Diplomacy was not in his line. These things he knew, for he had an extraordinarily sound estimate both of his own responsibilities and of his own deficiencies. He moved, therefore, with great care. No reference to foreign affairs appeared in his inaugural address, nor did any appear in his first annual message, save a request for a contingent fund. No broad policy was announced in a public document for nearly four years.

But he engaged in laborious preparation. With pencil in hand he read the whole body of correspondence with foreign powers, making notes as he read. Thus he gained first-hand knowledge of what had gone before. With great industry he prepared himself, and he asked advice which he weighed with great care. His approach to the subject was not theoretical, but empirical — based upon experiment and experience.

His second asset was a spirit of nationalism. His career in the army and in the constitutional convention had laid the foundations for an appreciation of the values of a substantial union. The number who had any real grasp of this idea was very small.

Combined with his nationalism was a recognition of the vital importance of the West. Washington had a peculiar interest in the West. In his youth he had gone to the upper waters of the Potomac to do surveying on the great estate of Lord Fairfax. There he learned the life of the frontier, caught the atmosphere of land speculation and adventure which was to affect his own investments and those of thousands of others. From that time on he was never without important interests in the West. When we first catch a glimpse of him as a strip-

ling stepping over the threshold of history, it is in the guise of the herald of colonial mastery of the country west of the Alleghenies. In October, 1753, he set out to notify the French, on behalf of the governor of Virginia, that they must evacuate the Ohio Valley. When his clear warning was disregarded, war came. It was he who took the offensive against the French in 1754, and fired the first shot to dislodge them. His was the gesture that opened the decisive struggle between France and England for possession, and there, in his Fort Necessity, he was compelled to surrender on July 4, 1754. His connection with the disastrous expedition of Braddock is one of the familiar stories of our history. After the defeat he undertook to protect the wide open frontier. He was called upon "to perform . . . impossibilities, that is to protect from the cruel incursions of a crafty, savage enemy a line of inhabitants, of more than three hundred and fifty miles in extent, with a force inadequate to the task." When the war was over and the French were gone, he secured land claims from veterans of the war until he possessed seventy thousand acres in the western country.

The fact is that this youthful patriot and soldier had caught the idea of "manifest destiny." He was determined that the trans-Allegheny region must belong to Virginia. The western question played an important part in the framing of the Constitution. Gouverneur Morris, a leading figure in the convention, said that "the Mississippi and the fisheries" were the two great objects of union. No man in America had a better practical grasp upon that problem than Washington. Hot-heads, fire eaters, intriguers, and sectionalists made more sound and fury; none showed equal sanity and perseverance. When Jay was despondent, when Jefferson would wink at intrigue, when Hamilton would sacrifice a point for greater financial stability, Washington held steadily to his path. Washington's industrious caution, his nationalism, and his understanding of the

western problem were the three great assets of his knowledge and experience.

The second tool was the government of which he was the head. It was no instrument at all when he began. The government of the Confederation had been feeble at best; it fell to pieces as the time came for the new government to be set up. The new government was yet to be formed and the prospect was not wholly reassuring. The Constitution had been accepted by a narrow margin after months of dramatic suspense, and the opposition was not yet convinced of its defeat. Two states were still outside the fold, and others had entered with conditions which were no less real for not being explicit in form. The first years of his administration were marked by efforts to bring in the two and to meet the implied conditions set by others. In short, the new government was not known to be permanent. Even at the end of his administration he was not confident of the perpetuity of the new government. A person or an institution on trial is handicapped in shaping policies.

The agencies through which he must work were the department of foreign affairs and the diplomatic service. They were sadly inadequate and possessed no sound tradition. The Continental Congress had neglected the matter, leaving the work to be bandied about from committee to committee. When an office was set up, the secretary was given no substantial powers, he was a mere clerk. Livingston had resigned as secretary of state, and for more than a year the office had been closed entirely, and even the files left untouched. Jay made the office influential, but it was tiny — two rooms, only, and a clerk or two to assist. The members of the Constitutional Convention had shown no appreciation of the importance of foreign relations. They made provision for treaties, expressing the expectation that all negotiations would be conducted in this country, though in point of fact their prediction was

inaccurate, since it was many years before a treaty was negotiated in the United States. The Constitutional Convention never discussed management of other diplomatic business. There is nothing to suggest that the members thought it important.

When Washington took office there was no legal structure. John Jay held on, pending the organization of a state department. Congress established it, but thought the secretary would not be very busy, so added other duties. There were many evidences that it was not expected to be a permanent department! It was important, and its vital importance came to be recognized, but not until Washington had set up a more effective government.

The foreign service was yet more slender. In 1789 we had only two ministers abroad — in France and in Spain — and there were only two European ministers here. Agencies for sending full and accurate information about events and policies in European courts were not available. There was, therefore, nothing approaching adequate machinery for gathering the data upon which to found a policy. In the course of Washington's administration the foreign service was expanded and the department somewhat developed. But they never became reliable sources of information and advice. Jay, who had charge until Jefferson arrived, had wide knowledge and experience. Jefferson entered upon his duties fresh from long activity and observation abroad, the value of which was limited, for Washington's purposes, by the bias he had developed. But after Jefferson's resignation, neither of his successors had experience, special knowledge, or first-class ability.

Washington had other counselors — Vice President Adams, Hamilton, Knox, and others. But counsel was extraordinarily confused. Jefferson and Hamilton moved in separate spheres of thought; they differed not only in details of policy but in the very foundations of their political philosophy.

Washington's habit of having other people draft his important papers has led some to the shallow conclusion that these men formed his policy. Jefferson wrote the neutrality proclamation—the foundation document of our foreign policy, in many respects. Yet anyone who knows the rudiments of the history of Washington's administration is familiar with the fact that Washington's ideas on neutrality and Jefferson's plans were fundamentally divergent. On the other hand, Washington was not deflected in his thinking by the sophistry of Hamilton's elaborate argument that the treaty of alliance with France was no longer binding because it had been made with a royalist government, subsequently overthrown. The plain fact is that Washington had, in a singular degree, the capacity to take and to use advice without surrendering his own judgment. It would be foolish to deny that Hamilton had great influence. He was entitled to it, because he was responsible for a field which conditioned our freedom of action in an important way. It is equally foolish to assert that he shaped the policy which Washington followed. A recent president furnishes illustration of the fact that a man may be criticised for not taking advice, yet have two or three different people lay claim to having done his thinking for him!

There were certain environmental factors, which conditioned Washington's foreign policy. This point is worthy of especial emphasis because all of us have an almost inescapable tendency to think of policy as something formed in a vacuum. In point of fact, the range of choices is always strictly limited by factors not subject to control.

First and most important of these was the lack of that spirit of unity which is the essential element, if a state is to be also a nation. Washington was exceedingly sensitive upon this point. Evidences of divisive localism were on every hand. John Hancock's mixture of pomposity and absurdity upon the occasion of Washington's visit to Boston was a reflection

of a localism that limited national feeling in an important way. Sectionalism was so keen as to constitute a denial of a spirit of unity. It cropped out at every turn—in the choice of president and vice president, in the selection of a site for the capital, and in the discussions over western lands, the assumption of state debts, the tariff, and the bank.

The depth and importance of the sectionalism are difficult for us to appreciate. To Washington the problem was ever present. His Farewell Address reflects its importance in the attention it receives. He sought to demonstrate the interdependence of the North and the South, of the West and the Atlantic seaboard. To the West he made his especial appeal since "it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest as one nation. Any other tenure by which the west can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength or from an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious. . . . It is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity. . . . Citizens by birth or choice of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations."

These opinions were not new — much less were they Hamilton's. In 1784 Washington had been in the West and upon his return wrote Governor Benjamin Harrison of Virginia an account of his trip, and said: "I need not remark to you,

Sir . . . how necessary it is to apply the cement of interest to bind all parts of the Union together by insoluble bonds, especially that part of it which lies immediately west of us, with the middle states. For what ties, let me ask, should we have upon those people? How entirely unconnected with them shall we be . . . if the Spaniards on their right, and Great Britain on their left, instead of throwing stumbling blocks in their way, as they now do, should hold out lures for their trade and alliance! What, when they gain strength which will be sooner than most people conceive, (from the emigration of foreigners, who will have no particular predilection toward us, as well as from the removal of our own citizens) will be the consequences of their having formed close connections with both or either of those powers in a commercial way? It needs not, in my opinion, the gift of prophecy to foretell. *The Western states (I speak now from my own observation) stand, as it were, upon a pivot. The touch of a feather would turn them any way.*"

Ample evidence that he read the signs aright can be found in the correspondence of Westerners with friends in the East. The fact is that the rugged men of the West were innocent alike of the laws of nations and of national feeling. If they were to survive, the mastery of their fortunes exercised by Spanish control of the Mississippi outlet must be broken. They cared not a fig about the legality or the means. If the United States could open the Mississippi, well and good. If another power would achieve that result, they would be ready to coöperate. Wilkinson, later the head of the American army, took a secret oath of allegiance to the Spanish king, and accepted a pension. George Rogers Clark, conspicuous in the struggle for the Northwest during the Revolution, twice accepted a military commission from France, once during Washington's term, and again during that of John Adams. Washington sympathized with these Westerners. Writing to Lafayette in 1790 he declared, "free navigation of the

Mississippi . . . we must have, and as certainly shall have, if we remain a nation."

Sectionalism was not the only enemy of nationalism; nor was readiness to follow a foreign government rather than that of the United States confined to the West. Writing to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney in 1796, Washington declared, "It is a fact too notorious to be denied that the greatest embarrassments under which the administration of this government labors, proceed from the counteraction of people among ourselves who are more disposed to promote the views of another nation than to establish a national character of their own." With passionate earnestness Washington pleaded in his Farewell Address: "Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government."

Jefferson, whose nationalism was the product of his own presidency, played into the hands of Genêt. Monroe, who was later to become the sponsor for a highly nationalist doctrine, could not catch at all the significance of Washington's nationalism during his mission to France. Hamilton, in his relations with Hammond, was not as careful of the national dignity as he should have been. Randolph's fatal mistake in "unbosoming" himself in conferences with the French minister furnishes another illustration. Back of leaders with an inadequate appreciation of the word "independence," with too limited a notion of nationalism, was a constituency divided as sharply on matters of foreign preference as upon constitutional interpretation. Democratic societies sprang up, "instituted," as Washington said, "by their father, Genêt," in an effort to "shake the government to its foundation."

Violence of party feeling illustrated still further the lack of nationalist sentiment. The business of the government was carried on in an atmosphere of intense factional bitter-

ness. Thomas Paine, author of *Common Sense*, closed a scathing letter to Washington with the statement: "the world will be puzzled to decide whether you are an apostate or an imposter; whether you have abandoned good principles, or whether you never had any."

Whatever Washington did in the field of foreign policy was conditioned by this absence of national feeling; he was seeking always to develop it and to teach the meaning of real independence.

The second environmental factor which determined his policy was the financial situation of the United States. The nation was deeply in debt—not in proportion to its total wealth but in proportion to available resources and current assets. Payments upon the principal of the foreign debt had been due to begin in 1787. No payments had been made. Interest on various obligations was overdue for periods varying from four to six years. Gossip in diplomatic circles intimated that France might seize Rhode Island in lieu of payment—just as other naval bases have been seized by great powers when weak ones did not meet their obligations. To make the situation more difficult, the currency was in chaos. Paper money had so depreciated as to be almost valueless. Beyond that, there was no revenue system nor any orderly method of managing government finance.

In the face of such a situation, one would hardly expect a bold or aggressive policy. Before all else it was necessary to build up an economically sound condition. The war of the Revolution had dislocated commerce; it had upset the fishing industry; it had affected the labor situation adversely; it had diverted industry from its normal channels. Recovery from these economic ills was slow. It had to be made in the face of unfavorable conditions, which were due at home to the weaknesses of the Confederation, and abroad, to the hostile commercial policies of the mother country. The measures which seemed necessary to put the new government upon a

sound financial basis ran counter to local prejudices and doctrines. The consequence was rebellion, which at one time seemed likely to be of a formidable character. There was no surplus energy available for foreign quarrels.

Washington was not an expert economist. But he was a man of sound sense. He knew that a foreign war would produce a commercial crisis; it would mean a relapse when the patient was on the road to recovery. A severe financial upset would be likely to destroy the prestige of the new government and lead to the overthrow of the Constitution. The demand which he faced was for joining our French ally in a war against England. But the foreign trade of the United States was primarily with England. War with England would inevitably imperil the whole structure, which had been built with such infinite pains. The figure of speech he used cannot be improved upon. The United States, he said, was in a "convalescent" state. The idea of convalescence appears again and again. Peace and quiet were essential to final and full recovery. Progress toward political maturity and economic health was along that road alone. Hamilton had emphasized the point in his first report on the public credit, saying, "If the policy of the country be prudent, cautious, and neutral towards foreign nations, there is a rational probability that war may be avoided long enough to wipe off the debt." Washington himself said upon one occasion that the United States, as a neutral debtor, would profit economically by a European war.

The United States was weak not only in finance, but in many other ways. In area the United States was much larger than European nations, but not all the area was effectively controlled, and still less was occupied or developed. Its very size was a source of weakness because of the absence of means of communication and defense, and the meager facilities for public information. The population was slightly less than four millions, a fifth of the number being Negroes. This was

to be compared with France's twenty-five millions, Spain's eleven millions, and Britain's nine millions. In manufactures the country was scarcely started upon its career, its manufactured products having an annual value of only twenty million dollars. Its commerce in 1790 totaled only forty-three million dollars, that of England being ten times as great. The army and navy were both in what was substantially a condition of total eclipse. Washington, peaceful as his policy was, besought Congress earnestly for provision for a reasonable army and navy. He used correct words in speaking of "our infant situation" and "our half-fledged reputation."

There is yet one more environmental fact of first-class importance — the geographical position of the United States. This nation was the first extra-European state connected with the European system. One might make an exception in favor of the Barbary States, but they ranked rather as international pests than as international forces. From the point of view of international relations, Europe was the world. Asia was outside the field of politics. China, Japan, and Korea were all sealed. The rivalry of France and Britain in India was after all a European colonial question. South America was unborn as a body politic; it was still absolutely in the hands of Spain and Portugal. Four-fifths of North America was in a colonial status. Consequently, it is exact to say that outside Europe, there were no directing forces in international life. Whatever of policy there was sprang from Europe.

Europe had used America as a makeweight in the balance of power for a century and a half. Europe's wars cast their long shadows across the Atlantic. They had, in the wilderness, their counterparts to the battles on the fields of Europe. The last and greatest of the colonial wars had, indeed, been kindled by a shot in the woods. Possessing all of South and Central America, and a vast preponderance of North America, Europe naturally expected to continue to use America as a pawn in its chessboard diplomacy. That, indeed, had been a

fundamental motive of France in its support of the American Revolution. It was a fresh move to redress the balance of power, to take from England something comparable to what had been taken from France in 1763, and to give to French interests in the New World badly needed support.

Was America to play this rôle, so marked out? One point was certain. No rival system could be set up. The materials were wanting. The choice was to join Europe or go it alone! Tradition and the colonial frame of mind were both on the side of joining Europe. There were no precedents for any other policy. But the inferences from distance were inescapable.

It is difficult to realize how dependent we have become upon modern means of communication and how far away Europe really was in Washington's day. It took more than four weeks to make the trip under reasonably favorable conditions. Upon one occasion, it took from October 18 to January 22 for an important letter to go from Washington, in New York, to Gouverneur Morris, in Paris.

The very obvious relation of this fact to American international relations was not first discovered by Washington, but in the Farewell Address he discussed it with convincing logic. "Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies" into which we shall be drawn if we create artificial ties. "Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. . . . Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation?"

Such, then, was the diplomatic situation — disputes with three nations, all interested in the limitation of the growth and power of the United States. Such were the tools — Washington's own character and ability; a government new, untried; a foreign office and diplomatic service small and ill equipped; counselors divided in judgment. Such were the environmental factors — lack of nationhood, financial insta-

bility, smallness and weakness, and a geographical situation without precedent.

When Washington took charge, substantial progress had been made only in the matter of commercial policy. Models had been set which were to have great influence upon the framing of later commercial treaties. But in meeting current situations achievement was meager. The diplomacy of the Revolution had been able and effective. Post-revolutionary problems were new, and the Confederation had not faced them. No foreign policy had been adopted.

The cornerstone of Washington's policy was peace — a period when we could recover from "our convalescent state." "With me," he said, "a predominant motive has been to endeavor to give time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, command of its own destinies." Peace alone would give opportunity for the restoration of credit; peace alone would give American commerce opportunity to find markets; peace alone would give opportunity to organize the new government, meet the conditions of its existence, and make its authority felt. No one recognized more fully than Washington the justice of John Adam's remark, "The people of the United States would not willingly support a war, and the present government *has not the strength to command, nor enough of the general confidence of the nation to draw* the men and money necessary until the grounds, causes, and necessity of it should be generally known and universally approved." The party situation made any such persuaded unanimity an utterly impracticable ideal. The propagandist efforts of the French ministers to drive a wedge between the people of the United States and their government came perilously close to success. Only during peace could Washington hope to create the loyalty among the people toward their own chosen representatives which would make for national action.

Neutrality was the corollary of peace. The nations with which our relations were most intimate and most difficult went to war with each other. We were bound to France by a treaty of alliance. The forces of diplomacy, of intrigue, and of party politics were all at work to destroy peace. There must be some positive platform. Neutrality furnished it. It was probably fortunate for Washington that the matter came to an issue in 1790, over the Nootka Sound affair, where France was not deeply involved, as that deflecting element was absent. Neutrality is both difficult and inglorious—it required great courage and firmness to pursue it. Madison called the neutrality policy “a most unfortunate error. . . . It will be a millstone which would sink any other character.” Jefferson defended it officially; privately he branded it as an act of pusillanimity. Yet an authority in international law, usually an unfriendly critic of American actions, has said, “The policy of the United States in 1793 constitutes an epoch in the development of the usages of neutrality. . . . It represented by far the most advanced existing opinions as to what those obligations were. . . . In the main . . . it is identical with the standard of conduct which is now adopted by the community of nations.”

The inevitable concomitant of peace and neutrality was isolation. The policy of isolation rested upon geographic facts—the fact of distance, and the fact that we alone of all the nations were distant. It rested, in the second place, upon the fact that all the nations with whom we had connections of importance were involved in the war. We could not act in close harmony with anyone without destroying our peace and jeopardizing the whole principle of neutrality. Isolation, moreover, was calculated to cut all ties between American parties and Europe. The abnormal condition of European affairs during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars neutralized this effect somewhat. But in the long run the policy of isolation did make its contribution to the overwhelmingly

domestic character of American politics. It was not alone responsible, of course, but its contribution to that result was very significant.

Peace, neutrality, isolation — three phases of a policy fundamental to national health during the first half century of our existence! Every deviation brought heavy penalties in the years to come.

What is more, Washington's policy of peace showed in it a constructive element, looking to the far future as well as to the solution of immediate problems. The Jay treaty was the first instrument negotiated after the Constitution went into effect. It reestablished in the family of nations the practice of arbitration for the settlement of irritating questions which might produce war. The experiment there tried has been fruitful, not only for the peace of the United States and of the two Americas, but for the peace of the whole world. Washington established the United States as the leader in a policy which has had fruitful results everywhere.

The second main object of policy was to free the West from the grip of Britain in the north and the throttling control of Spain at the south. This, with peace, was the essential condition for the achievement of the perfect independence of the United States. Jay's treaty secured the Northwest, and it kept the peace. It was not all Washington desired, nor all he had hoped. Perhaps Jay could and should have secured more. The treaty has well been called "the hard terms of an unforgiving mother." Washington was clear-eyed enough to see that it secured the two essentials. Woodward says that "the uproar over the treaty was terrific" and that Washington's "popularity went to its lowest mark." But he misses any meaning in the situation when he says "Washington had to put it through the Senate, or at least he thought so." It deflected the tide toward war, with all that meant to the financial and political stability of the new government, and it secured the West. John Adams, when he settled the naval

war with France, wanted it put on his tombstone that he took the responsibility for peace with France in 1800. He was justified in the thought. Washington took much more responsibility in the matter of the Jay treaty. The event proved his wisdom. Tactics other than patient diplomacy might have secured the West, but only at the cost of economic and political upheavals which might have made the prize valueless when won. His method made it of infinite value.

So with Spain. The temptation was all to sweep away the feeble and annoying neighbor, to utilize the French intrigue, to wink at filibusters. Spanish diplomacy was maddening in its delays, its insolence, its tergiversations, its intrigues. Patience and persistence, readiness to utilize diplomatic opportunity when it came, made possible the Pinckney treaty of 1795. The Jay treaty had indirect fruits of great value in this connection, which have been too little appreciated. Virtually without cost, substantial results were obtained — the opening of the Mississippi, and the preservation of peace. It was the essential factor in securing the loyalty of the West to the Union. The West was indispensable to the strength and permanence of the nation. The opening of the Mississippi meant that in due time the temptations to join in foreign intrigue would be withdrawn. The foundation of secessionist feeling was destroyed. It is true that the difficulty was not entirely solved by the treaty of 1795. But it was put in the way of solution. Even more important, it gained time. For time was of the essence of the problem. Time was playing entirely upon the side of the new nation. Every passing year meant a government better organized, better financed, a people more numerous, more strategically located — better able to cope with Spain if the matter ever should come to the arbitrament of force.

Washington had freed the United States from a position of international servitude. The Declaration of Independence had used the proud words "free and independent." The treaty

of peace with Great Britain of 1783 specifically acknowledged the United States to be "free, sovereign and independent." But Britain did not treat the new nation so for many years. By the end of Washington's administration great progress had been made in that direction. The treaty of alliance with France in 1778 had as its "essential and direct ends . . . to maintain effectually the liberty, sovereignty, and independence, absolute and unlimited, of the United States." Yet Washington had come to grips with the French minister for failure to recognize those facts. By 1797 it was evident that the United States was not a French protectorate or sphere of interest — no tail to the French diplomatic kite.

Not only had Washington achieved much in the establishment of policy — his diplomacy left things in reasonably improved conditions with Britain and Spain. The old issues were put in train for settlement. New ones growing out of the great European struggle were not simply to be pyramided upon the old. With France success was slighter. The violent and propagandist character of the French government, its recklessness of the forms and obligations of international intercourse were a formidable obstacle to good relations. The successive French ministers were impossible persons, who meddled in domestic affairs. Nor was Washington well served by his ministers in France. Morris leaned too far in the direction of the monarch, Monroe too far toward the Revolution. Neither maintained his balance and detachment amid the furious political storms that beat about them.

I cannot help pausing to remark upon the irony of a situation which associates the complete assertion of a distinctively American attitude toward the diplomacy of Europe — the Monroe Doctrine — with the name of a man whom Washington had had to reprimand and recall for failure to sense the first principles of Americanism, and who at that time, and for that reason, bitterly assailed Washington and all his works.

There is another ironic circumstance equally pertinent to the discussion. Jefferson left Washington's administration and denounced him, yet his own announcement of policy in his inaugural, "peace, commerce, honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none," has become in popular parlance the epitome of Washington's own policy. And Jefferson's conspicuous service in the field of foreign affairs was the acquisition of the Farther West, the Louisiana Purchase, which rounded out the West that Washington had saved and secured, and which made forever impracticable the French dream of the recovery of a Mississippi empire.

In the truest sense, Washington was willing to play for the verdict of history. It is a remarkable evidence that he was a leader, and a singular triumph, that Jefferson should be compelled to take Washington's essential ideals as his own, to epitomize and complete his policy, and that the ultimate verdict, a generation later, should come from the pen of James Monroe!

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