John Adams and the Fight for an Independent American Foreign Policy

Rhonda Barlow
Ethel, Canada

Master of Arts, University of Virginia, 2009
Master of Arts, University of Calgary, 2008
Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Lakehead University, 2006

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Abstract

John Adams was both an actor and thinker in early American foreign policy. As actor, Adams assumed a leadership role in the American Revolution, represented the revolutionaries in France, secured loans to America from the Dutch, was the first American minister at the Court of St. James, and served as the Republic's first vice-president and second president. As thinker, he was a prolific writer of letters, treatises, and official documents. In 1776, Adams authored the Model Treaty, a blueprint for American foreign policy which called for a commercial treaty with France—but no military alliance—and obligated France to recognize the United States as the heir to all British and French territory in North America. His term as president was almost wholly occupied with the crisis with France and the Quasi-war. His loss of the presidency in 1800 which ended his public career did not end his interest in foreign policy. Adams criticized the Republicans for neglecting his navy, for dependence on commercial coercion, including a prolonged embargo, and for their failure to understand the importance of command of lakes and rivers. His criticism cannot be dismissed as mere political partisanship because he approved the Louisiana Purchase and the declaration of War in 1812.

It is therefore surprising to discover that no monograph on Adams and American foreign policy exists. This omission not only distorts our understanding of this period, but also has led to an artificial dichotomy that treats Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton as competing architects of early American foreign policy. Adams, however, offered an alternative that differed from both Jefferson and Hamilton. His "independent" foreign policy prioritized American interests, and secured those interests through naval strength and careful manoeuvring in the European balance of power. He called this philosophy of foreign policy "the system of Neutrality."

Adams' description of his system reveals that it was not a simplistic condemnation of all alliances apart from the actual challenges of a current crisis. The emergence of his system coincided with the American struggle for independence and the subsequent adjustment of American relations with rival colonial powers. Adams specifically identified Great Britain and France as the two powers that the United States might consider as allies. He did not treat them as interchangeable options, but noted that France was the natural ally. He argued that the United States should be slow to make an alliance with France, but even more hesitant to ally with Great Britain. He acknowledged that France might be the aggressor and, in that case, that the United States would need to resist her, but that a situation might also occur where America would fight both Great Britain and France at the same time. For John Adams, opposition to entangling alliances was not a timeless, idealistic principle based on Enlightenment philosophy, but a measured response to the current rivalry between Great Britain and France. Attention to Adams' diplomacy with Great Britain, France, Holland, and with the Haitian revolutionaries and the Barbary powers enhances our understanding of early American foreign policy.

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Rhonda Barlow

Abbreviations

AFC	Adams Family Correspondence
ASP:FR	American State Papers: Foreign Relations
JADA	Diary and Autobiography of John Adams
JALP	The Legal Papers of John Adams
DCUS	Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-1789
JCC	Journals of the Continental Congress
NDBW	Naval Documents of the Wars with the Barbary Powers
NDQW	Naval Documents of the Quasi-war
OFL	Old Family Letters
PAH	The Papers of Alexander Hamilton
PBF	The Papers of Benjamin Franklin
PGW-PS	The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series
PGW-Ret	The Papers of George Washington: Retirement Series
PJA	The Papers of John Adams
PJM	The Papers of James Madison
PJM-PS	The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series
PTJ	The Papers of Thomas Jefferson
PTJ-Ret	The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series
RDC	The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States
WBF	The Writings of Benjamin Franklin

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Introduction

John Adams was the diplomat who failed to be diplomatic, the politician who destroyed his own party, and the colossus of independence who signed the Alien and Sedition Acts. This dismal summary of Adams' public service, however, did not withstand the onslaught of historians armed with the *Adams Family Papers*: the undiplomatic Adams became an astute military analyst and patriotic defender of American interests; the dimwitted politician became a principled statesman who sacrificed his own narrow interests for those of his country; and although he did sign the Alien and Sedition Acts, so too did his vice-president, the apostle of liberty, Thomas Jefferson.[1] This revision of John Adams, however, has not produced a monograph devoted to his role in early American foreign policy. I propose to address this lacuna in the scholarship.[2]

John Adams was both an actor and thinker in early American foreign policy. As actor, Adams assumed a leadership role in the American Revolution, represented the revolutionaries in France, secured loans to America from the Dutch, was the first American minister at the Court of

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[1] Positive treatments of John Adams include Stephen G. Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism, 1795-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957); Page Smith, *John Adams* (New York: Doubleday, 1962); John Ferling, *John Adams: A Life* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); and Jean Bauer, "With Friends Like These: John Adams and the Comte de Vergennes on Franco-American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 37.4 (2013): 664-692. See also the collection of essays, mostly favorable, edited by David Waldstreicher, *A Companion to John Adams and John Quincy Adams* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.) A very sympathetic portrait of Adams is David G. McCullough's popular biography, *John Adams* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001). This book sparked a symposium on Adams and a collection of essays edited by Richard Alan Ryerson, *John Adams and the Founding of the Republic* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2001). See also Robert J. Allison, "John Adams Returns," *Reviews in American History* 30.2 (2002): 215.

[2] Surveys of the state of the historiography of early American foreign policy do not mention the absence of a comprehensive study of John Adams. For example, William Earl Weeks writes, "On the whole, however, the field has remained a scholarly backwater, in part because historians of previous generations often appear to have answered all the major questions, leaving little new ground to break. Succeeding generations have to examine old issues in a new light; they cannot have the exhilarating experience of being the first to chronicle a major event or era." See "New Directions in the Study of Early American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 17.1 (1993): 75. Weeks' emphasis on commerce also would benefit from the inclusion of the role of commerce, along with the fishery, in John Adams' conception of naval power.

St. James, and served as the Republic's first vice-president and second president. As thinker, he was a prolific writer of letters, treatises, and official documents. In 1776, Adams authored the Model Treaty, a blueprint for American foreign policy which called for a commercial treaty with France—but no formal military alliance—and obligated France to recognize the United States as the heir to all British and French territory in North America. His term as president was almost wholly occupied with the crisis with France and the Quasi-war. His loss of the presidency in 1800, which ended his public career, did not end his interest in foreign policy. Adams criticized the Republicans for neglecting his navy, for dependence on commercial coercion, including a prolonged embargo, and for their failure to understand the importance of command of lakes and rivers. His criticism cannot be dismissed as mere political partisanship because he approved the Louisiana Purchase and the declaration of war in 1812.

It is therefore surprising to discover that no monograph on Adams and American foreign policy exists. This omission not only distorts our understanding of this period, but also has led to an artificial dichotomy in the historiography that treats Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton as competing architects of early American foreign policy. Although Jefferson was George Washington's secretary of state, he broke with the Federalists over foreign policy and eventually formed the Republican Party. Undue emphasis on the domestic political quarrel between the Federalists and the Republicans has distorted the centrality of the dispute over foreign policy. Jefferson did not oppose Hamilton merely because of partisan politics, but because he disagreed with Hamilton's pro-British foreign policy. The Jay Treaty, today acknowledged as a prudent acceptance of British naval power and the reality of Britain as America's most important trading partner, was to Jefferson a humiliating and unprincipled surrender to America's enemy. The election of 1796 assumed new importance because

Washington had demonstrated the power of the office of president to determine foreign policy with both the Neutrality Proclamation, where he alone had declared that the United States would be neutral in the new outbreak of war between Great Britain and France, and with the Jay Treaty, where he ratified an unpopular treaty.[3] The formation of the first party system cannot be understood apart from the serious divisions on foreign policy which led to the rupture between Washington and Jefferson, between Hamilton and Jefferson, and between Hamilton and Adams.

Adams provided an alternative approach to foreign policy that differed from both Jefferson and Hamilton. He recognized American military weakness and emphasized careful diplomacy that took advantage of the rivalry of the great European powers. He accepted that the United States could never match the British Royal Navy nor the French standing army, but argued the United States could cope by employing a small standing army, reliance on militia, harbor defenses and a small frigate navy. Adams was therefore a proponent of asymmetric warfare. During his presidency, he differed from the High Federalist Timothy Pickering who wished to rely on the Royal Navy, as well as from Hamilton and his potential fifty thousand man army. In 1815, in a letter to James Lloyd, a Federalist from Massachusetts who had served in the Senate, Adams outlined his blueprint for foreign policy, which he called "my system":

> For full forty years, three points have been settled in my mind after mature deliberation. 1. That neutrality in the wars of Europe is our truest policy; and to preserve this, alliances ought to be avoided as much and as long as possible. But if we should be driven to the necessity of an alliance, 2. Then France is our natural ally; and, 3. That Great Britain is the last power, to which we should, in any, the last extremity, resort for any alliance, political or military.[4]

[3] William R. Casto, *Foreign Affairs and the Constitution In the Age of Fighting Sail* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 59-62.
[4] John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 9:147.

Adams recognized that the United States could not ignore Great Britain or France, but he insisted on the preservation of neutrality "as long as possible." If the United States were forced to abandon neutrality, the two great powers were not interchangeable options. In Adams' view, Great Britain would always be the more serious threat.

In combination with his caution about alliances, Adams would come to see the necessity of an American navy. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson in 1812, Adams explained that without a navy, "our Union will be a brittle China Vase, a house of Ice or a Palace of Glass."[5] Adams initially focused on a brown water navy that would keep American ports open in time of war. He subsequently developed a marine strategy that included not only frigates that would provide enough protection for American commerce that would prevent prohibitive insurance rates, but also the control of strategic points of land such as Florida, Sable Island and Bermuda. He was not interested in building a fleet that would challenge the Royal Navy in great seafights between ships of the line. Adams' emphasis on naval power meant that Hamilton's large standing army was unnecessary and that Jefferson's commercial coercion was counter-productive. There was no need for an embargo that would shut down American commerce on the Atlantic when his frigate navy, alongside armed merchantmen and privateers, could fight an undeclared war on the Atlantic against either French or British attackers. This spirited defense, combined with openness to diplomatic solutions, allowed Adams to be flexible in dealing with France during his presidency, and he was critical of both Jefferson and Madison for abandoning his policy. In a letter to Benjamin Rush during the crisis over the Embargo, Adams conceded, "It would be vanity to set up my own system as the only one that could have saved us," but he also asked,

[5] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 28 June 1812, Adams Papers, reel 118.

"Why then are not orders given to equip and Man all the Frigates we have and to build more in all our great seaports?"[6]

As an actor, a major player in events, who also was an intellectual, Adams is a window into the thought and practice of early American foreign policy. Moreover, Adams' long life, from 1735 to 1826, allows for a scope unmatched by any other statesman of the period. He was ten years old when New Englanders captured the French fortress of Louisbourg, and died fifty years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. He lived through the War of the Austrian Succession, the French and Indian War, the War of Independence, the Wars of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the First and Second Barbary Wars, the War of 1812, and saw America at last at peace with both France and Great Britain.[7]

Dissertation Overview:

This dissertation traces Adams' role in early American foreign policy. Previous books on specific founders and their foreign policy offer an effective model. They include works by Francis D. Cogliano, John Lamberton Harper, Gilbert L. Lycan, Gerald Stourzh, Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, and Karl-Friedrich Walling.[8] All these works draw extensively from the writings of the statesman in question, and consult the writings of both supporters who held

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[6] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 10 Oct. 1808, in Benjamin Rush et al., *Old Family Letters: Copied From the Originals for Alexander Biddle*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Press of J.B. Lippincott Company, 1892), 1:205-06.
[7] For the changing world of John Adams, see maps on pp. 229-231, below.
[8] Francis D. Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson's Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); John Lamberton Harper, *American Machiavelli: Alexander Hamilton and the Origins of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Gilbert L. Lycan, *Alexander Hamilton & American Foreign Policy: a Design for Greatness* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970); Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Gerald Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970); Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Karl-Friedrich Walling, *Republican Empire: Alexander Hamilton on War and Free Government* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

similar views and rivals who argued for alternatives. All introduce personal details such as marriage relationships and colleges attended only where relevant to their foreign policy, leaving other details to biographers. All recognize that their subjects held views on related topics such as political parties, and introduce this information where it enhances our understanding of the thought on foreign policy. All take a rough chronological approach, which allows the author to show how his subject adjusted to changing conditions. Walling, for example, treats Hamilton in three parts: *Part One: Revolutionary, Part Two: Constitutionalist,* and *Part Three: Statesman*. This tripartite structure follows Hamilton from the American Revolution, the Critical Period leading to the Constitution, and the Age of Federalism. Tucker and Hendrickson likewise begin with Jefferson's encounter with "the Diplomacy of the Old Regime," and then analyze Jefferson from 1783 to 1809. Stourzh opens with a study of "Reason and Power in Franklin's Political Thought," then traces Franklin from before the Revolution to its conclusion, but tends to a more thematic approach that sometimes rejects straight chronology. For example, Stourzh deals with Franklin and France in one chapter, so includes the peace treaty of 1782, and in the following chapter, returns to 1763 to address Franklin's shifts on question of the western lands. Within his thematic approach, Stourzh nevertheless preserves the chronology. I have used a similar methodology for my dissertation.

Adams was a prolific writer, and his family took care to collect his works, which include letters, both public and private, diaries, accounts, law cases, treatises, as well as official documents from his service as diplomat, president and vice-president. Most of Adams' writings are preserved by the Massachusetts Historical Society and available in over two hundred reels of microfilm. Portions such as his autobiography and letters to and from his wife Abigail are available in published collections. In addition, Adams wrote notes in the books he read, and the

marginalia are important in tracing the development of his ideas. It is challenging to assess Adams' views on his foreign policy during the American Revolution and the Quasi-war because his memoirs are a grouchy defense of himself which seem to be modeled on the Roman Republican, Marcus Tullius Cicero.[9] Adams thought that just as Cicero had faced threats to the republic from the aspiring tyrant Sergius Catalina, from the first triumvirate of Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus, and from the second triumvirate of Anthony, Octavius and Lepidus, so his presidency had been undermined by the American triumvirate of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and Charles C. Pinckney.[10] Adams insisted that "Cicero was not sacrificed to the vengeance of Anthony by the unfeeling Selfishness of the latter triumvirate, more egregiously than John Adams was to the unbridled and unbounded ambition of Alexander Hamilton in the American triumvirate."[11] Careful comparison with contemporary sources is necessary to address this entertaining bias.

This dissertation includes an introduction and conclusion, and six chapters that examine Adams' contribution to the thought and practice of early American foreign policy. The *Introduction* addresses previous scholarship and explains why a study of Adams and foreign

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[9] James M. Farrell addresses Cicero's influence on John Adams in several articles: "John Adams's Autobiography: The Ciceronian Paradigm and the Quest for Fame," *The New England Quarterly* 62.4 (1989): 505-528; "Pro Militibus Oratio: John Adams's Imitation of Cicero in the Boston Massacre Trial," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 9.3 (1991): 233-49; "New England's Cicero: John Adams and the Rhetoric of Conspiracy," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 104 (1992): 55-72; and "Classical Virtue and Presidential Fame: John Adams, Leadership, and the Franco-American Crisis," in *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership*, Leroy G. Dorsey, ed. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 73-94.

[10] Albert Gallatin, in a letter to his wife, also described these three Federalists as a threat: "They avow a design of keeping up a standing army for domestic purposes, for since the French fleet is destroyed they cannot even affect to believe that there is any danger of French invasion. General Washington, Hamilton, and Pinckney are in town." Qtd. in Kurtz, 356.

[11] John Adams to James Lloyd, 11 Feb. 1815, *Works*, 10:119. In 1824, Adams wrote, "I wish that all mankind understood that anarchical part of our history, 1798 and 1799, as well as you do—in which the Constitution was suspended, if not annihilated." See John Adams to Judge Augustus Elias Brevoort Woodward, 17 Nov. 1824, Adams Papers, reel 124.

policy is needed. The first chapter, *The Method in the Madness*, analyzes Adams' approach to foreign policy. In his retirement, Adams outlined his vision for an effective foreign policy in letters to Benjamin Rush, Commodore Thomas Truxton, and James Lloyd and called it "my system."[12] He also claimed that he had held to these principles for over forty years. Although Adams wrote treatises on government, he never wrote one on foreign policy or the art of war. It is, however, possible to construct his philosophy from the letters he wrote. This chapter analyzes his system, and suggests that his actions as a diplomat in Europe and as president may be clarified by reference to his "system."

The second chapter, *The Education of John Adams*, traces the evolution of the Model Treaty drafted by Adams. The Model Treaty has been treated as both an idealistic document that rejected old-world diplomacy, and as the blueprint for a new American Empire. Historians agree that the Model Treaty is a foundational document in American foreign policy, but its genesis is somewhat of a mystery.[13] Adams used older treaties as exemplars, but a better understanding of the development of his ideas about foreign policy enhances our understanding of the Model Treaty. This chapter proposes a new interpretation: the challenge of opening the ports of America. It also modifies Adams' portrait as "father of the navy," since the brown-water navy of row galleys, sloops, and whaleboats is significant here, rather than his famous frigates. This approach integrates diplomatic and naval history, and shows that the Model Treaty cannot be understood without attention to harbor defense.

The third chapter, *Militia Diplomacy*, turns to Adams' activities as American representative in France during the American Revolution. It addresses his quarrels with Franklin

[12] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 18 January 1808, Adams Papers, reel 405; John Adams to Commodore Thomas Truxton, 13 Dec. 1804, reel 118; John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 9:147.
[13] Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 49.

and the French as well as his more successful work in Holland where he eventually secured a Dutch loan. Adams found the Dutch much more receptive to the new American Republic than were either France or Great Britain, and he often referred to the Dutch example when making arguments about maneuvering among the great European powers. Previous scholarship on Adams' foreign policy has tended to focus on this era. I treat Adams' revolutionary diplomacy in the larger context of his thinking on foreign policy, rather than as an isolated incident.

The fourth chapter, *The Wild East*, looks at the role of minor powers in Adams' system of neutrality, with the Barbary States as a case study. Adams had been aware of the challenge posed by the Barbary powers to American merchant shipping as early as 1776. He included an article in the Model Treaty directing France to provide protection from the Barbary corsairs, a role that Britain had once assumed. During his time in France, he joined with Franklin to request the French king's attention to this matter. In his treaty with the Dutch, Adams asked for Dutch support. After independence, the British openly admitted the usefulness of the Barbary corsairs as a way to counter the potential for Americans to take over the carrying trade.

Adams seems to have evaluated all foreign policy challenges in terms of their relationship with Britain and France. In 1784, he and Thomas Jefferson were discussing the problem of the Barbary pirates, who attacked ships in the Mediterranean unless tribute had been paid. American ships were no longer protected under the British agreements with the Barbary powers. Jefferson wanted to build warships and fight the Barbary pirates. Adams, despite his interest in starting a navy, preferred to pay the tribute. He argued that the problem with the Barbary pirates could not be solved by unilateral American military force because the great powers not only paid for protection for their own ships, but also for the pirates to attack the ships

of their enemies. The problem could not be solved without a consensus of the great powers to cease paying the Barbary States.

The fifth chapter, *The Shock to the System*, analyzes Adams' policies during the Quasi-war. The French Revolution and the ensuing wars between the French Republic and Great Britain complicated foreign policy for the new American Republic. It was especially difficult for Adams, because his system obligated Britain to be the "natural enemy" while France was the "natural ally." It appears that Adams saw France as less dangerous to the United States because it held no land on the North American continent and was not the equivalent of Great Britain at sea—a status that was unchanged regardless of whether France was ruled by the Bourbons, the Jacobins, the Directory, or Napoleon. This period highlights the differences between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton which have become the simplified account of early American foreign policy. Adams is particularly important in this period as a Federalist alternative to the High Federalist Hamilton. His choice to fight an undeclared war on the Atlantic against the French who were attacking American ships needs to be treated in the context of his views on how best to conduct foreign policy rather than primarily as a domestic political quarrel.

The sixth chapter, *The Voice Croaking in the Wilderness*, looks at Adams' views on Republican foreign policy. The rise of Napoleon had permitted Adams to make peace with France and avert a full-scale war. Adams lost the presidency to Thomas Jefferson, and although he retired from public life, he did not stop thinking about foreign policy. His son, John Quincy Adams, became America's greatest diplomat, and their correspondence is particularly valuable. Adams supported Jefferson's embargo—but not its protracted use—and Madison's decision for war against Great Britain—though not the way it was conducted. As noted above, Adams argued that failure to maintain his navy had prevented the United States from defending itself on the

Atlantic. His view is problematic because during the Quasi-war he fought a great land power—France—at sea, but during the Napoleonic Wars, he would have had to fight a great sea power—Great Britain—at sea. It is not clear how he reacted to the failure to renew the Jay Treaty. Adams may have thought that more frigates combined with a renewed treaty would have provided enough flexibility for the United States to continue to trade and deal with the impressment controversy. As with all counterfactuals, it is more illuminating to explain what Adams thought would happen, rather than what would have happened.

The conclusion summarizes the dissertation and suggests a new understanding of early American foreign policy that moves beyond the centrality of Jefferson and Hamilton. It also draws attention to the importance of the navy in Adams' thinking about effective foreign policy, and integrates diplomatic and naval history. My dissertation also provides an important foundation for future projects such as a comparison of the foreign policy of John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams; a study of the Barbary Wars that includes the simultaneous actions of the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean; and an examination of the quasi-alliance between Britain and the United States during the Quasi-war.

Relation to Previous Scholarship:

Scholarship on John Adams has largely focused on his political thought, especially his thought on constitutions. This focus is justified because as early as 1765, Adams had penned his famous essay, *A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law*, where he explored the darkness of the medieval world, ruled by "a wicked Confederacy" of secular and clerical tyrants.[14] He also wrote three major treaties on political theory, *Thoughts on Government*, *A Defense of the*

[14] John Adams, *A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law*, [August? 1765], *PJA*, 1:110. For drafts and published texts as well as the editorial apparatus, see *PJA*, 1:103-128.

Constitutions of the United States, and *Discourses on Davila,* as well as the new Massachusetts State Constitution.[15] Adams' political views have been assessed by James Grant in *John Adams: Party of One*, and C. Bradley Thompson in *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty*, but no similar work exists for his views on foreign policy. Adams has also drawn interest as the husband of proto-feminist Abigail Adams, and the correspondent of Republican Thomas Jefferson.[16] Works on the mind of John Adams, such as John R. Howe's *The Changing Political Thought of John Adams*, and Joseph J. Ellis' *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams*, provide welcome insight for how to cope with this writer who often lacks order and elegance.[17]

Despite Adams' importance to early American foreign policy, Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson have argued for the primacy of the Jeffersonian and the Hamiltonian alternatives:

> The central figure of early American diplomacy was Thomas Jefferson. [He had] an inordinate degree of faith in his ability to 'conquer without war'—to secure the objectives of the United States by economic and peaceable means of coercion... In the 1780s, his outlook had been hardened by several years of war and was in many respects quite traditional. Only in the course of the subsequent decade and in the context of his bitter confrontations with Alexander Hamilton did Jefferson's new diplomatic outlook reach maturity. The rivalry between these two remarkable figures became the focal point not only of the emerging party system at home but also of two sharply different approaches to foreign policy. The conflict between them has echoed throughout American history.[18]

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[15] For an overview, see David J. Siemers, "John Adams's Political Thought," in *A Companion to John Adams and John Quincy Adams*, David Waldstreicher, ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 102-124.
[16] Special collections of their letters are available. See Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, During the Revolution. With a Memoir of Mrs. Adams* (New York, 1876); Frank Shuffelton, ed., *The Letters of John and Abigail Adams* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004); Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959).
[17] John R. Howe, Jr., *The Changing Political Thought of John Adams* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Joseph J. Ellis, *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams* (New York: Norton, 1993).
[18] Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford, 1990), viii.

Their study treated Jeffersonian policy as isolationist, non-militarist, and one that avoided commercial and military entanglements and alliances. As noted above, Adams dismissed this extreme isolationism and instead favored commercial treaties and a frigate navy that would protect the merchant marine. The view that Jefferson was opposed to militarism suggests that he opposed Hamilton, with his demands for a New Army, as a dangerous militarist. However, the view that Hamilton was a militarist has been challenged by Karl-Friedrich Walling. A revision of Hamilton that explains his apparent militarism as prudence and preparedness suggests the need to re-examine his other critic, John Adams. It was, after all, Adams, not Jefferson, who blocked Hamilton.

In addition, Walling pointed out the weakness of intellectual history that focuses on ideas in a vacuum rather than thinkers who are also actors. Although intellectual historiography can accommodate thinkers who were never statesmen and ideas that were never implemented, it need not be limited to them. The strategic thinker who is also a policymaker, who has a general plan for the defense of his nation, who adjusts his ideas in the face of reality, who reflects on his successes and failures, and who is also an intellectual who describes his encounter with philosophy, provides the bridge between intellectual history and the study of foreign policy. Walling argued that Founders like Adams, Jefferson, Madison and Hamilton were not "prisoners of ideology" and instead were practical synthesizers. Furthermore, "this emphasis on the practical often led to theoretical clarity, as was especially true in Hamilton's case."[19] The American Founders have proven to be a rich source for diplomatic historians interested in actors who are also thinkers. H.W. Brands in his essay, "Ideas and Foreign Affairs," noted that scholars have emphasized Jefferson over Hamilton, but he includes Washington as a third voice more

[19] Karl-Friedrich Walling, *Republican Empire: Alexander Hamilton on War and Free Government* (Lawrence, 1999), 6-7.

cautious than his lieutenant. Despite his insistence on the importance of ideas in the study of foreign policy, and the benefits of attention to the early American Republic, Brands does not mention John Adams.[20]

In his assessment of Benjamin Franklin, Gerald Stourzh explained,

> This book, then, is a study neither in diplomatic history nor in political theory. It endeavors to analyze systematically the principles of Franklin's approach to foreign policy by probing into his actions as well as into his expressions of opinion concerning international politics.[21]

This approach is not limited to the statesman of the early Republic. With regards to Henry Cabot Lodge, William Widenor explained,

> My purpose in this book is to provide an account of the development of Henry Cabot Lodge's thought on questions of foreign policy. It is an intellectual biography, but intellectual biography limited to a particular aspect of his thinking.[22]

The need to assess carefully the overall thought and actions of American statesmen is therefore not in dispute. However, no such study of Adams exists. Scholarship is fragmentary, with studies limited to either the Revolution, or the Quasi-war, or the Barbary Wars. For the Revolution, a starting place is Felix Gilbert, who saw the Model Treaty as an expression of a new diplomacy that emphasized enlightenment ideals like free trade.[23] The most comprehensive treatment is James H. Hutson's *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution.* Hutson addressed both the Model Treaty and Adams' conduct in France and Holland, and argued, *contra* Gilbert, that Adams held to European diplomatic norms of balance of power and interests,

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[20] H.W. Brands, "Ideas and Foreign Affairs," in *A Companion to American Foreign Relations,* Robert D. Schulzinger, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.
[21] Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), xiii.
[22] William C. Widenor, *Henry Cabot Lodge and the Search for an American Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), ix.
[23] Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 44-75. For a more nuanced view of ideas about free trade, see Paul A. Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailors' Rights in the War of 1812* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13-31.

modified by paranoia and envy.[24] John Ferling, in his article, "John Adams, Diplomat," challenged the view that Adams was a diplomatic failure in France, and although his article was limited to Adams' quarrel with Benjamin Franklin, he provided a good foundation for assessment of Adams' later diplomacy.[25] For the Quasi-war, Alexander DeConde's *The Quasi-war: the Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801* and Stephen Kurtz' *The Presidency of John Adams* were both more focused on the struggles of the Federalist Party than how Adams' conduct of the war fitted into his views on foreign policy.[26] Similarly, Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, in *The Age of Federalism*, focused on the rifts in the Federalist Party, but presented a much less favorable portrait of Adams than either DeConde or Kurtz. They argued that Adams' diplomacy was a futile attempt to implement his theories of "balance" in government. By dividing Adams' domestic policy from his conduct of the war itself, they offered two conflicting views of Adams: on one hand, the stubborn ideologue who destroyed his own party; on the other hand, the competent commander-in-chief who effectively handled the French threat to the American merchant marine.[27] Michael A. Palmer's *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations During the Quasi-war with France, 1798-1801* was operational history rather than a study of Adams' foreign policy. Palmer explained that "this work is primarily a study of command…. The Quasi-War was largely Ben Stoddert's war."[28] Adams hovers in the background, as the president who decided the overall policy and appointed Stoddert, and Palmer

[24] James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 145-155; James H. Hutson, "The Partition Treaty and the Declaration of American Independence," *The Journal of American History* 58.4 (1972): 887-896.
[25] John Ferling, "John Adams, Diplomat," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51.2 (1994): 227-252.
[26] Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-war: the Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801* (New York: Scribner, 1966); Stephen G. Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism, 1795-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957).
[27] Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
[28] Michael A. Palmer, *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations During the Quasi-war with France, 1798-1801* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), x.

concluded, "Adams wisely kept the ends of both foreign and domestic policies limited," and "The navy was the president's chosen weapon, wielded to serve the interests of the state."[29] William G. Anderson's article, "John Adams, the Navy, and the Quasi-war with France," provided a good overview of his long-term interest in the navy, but not how this interest developed: Adams' emphasis on the brown-water navy is unknown to the naval scholarship.[30]

The scholarship on Adams' dealings with the Barbary powers treats him as a minor character in a story about Thomas Jefferson. Scholars have focused on 1786, when Adams and Jefferson discussed whether it was better to pay the Barbary pirates or fight them. Paradoxically, Adams, the navy man, preferred to pay them; Jefferson, the half-way pacifist and isolationist, preferred to form a coalition and fight them.[31] By the time Adams returned to the United States in 1788, the United States had achieved peace with Algiers without money or arms by taking advantage of the protection of the Portuguese navy. Adams re-appears in the backstory for the First Barbary War. Robert J. Allison discussed the feuding among American consuls Richard O'Brien, James Cathcart and William Eaton during Adams' term as president, demonstrating the chaotic state of Barbary diplomacy that was beyond Adams' control.[32] Michael Kitzen, and Louis B. Wright and Julia Macleod faulted Adams for neglecting the rise of Tripoli and contributing to Bashaw Yusef Karamanli's declaration of war in 1801; in contrast, James Carr

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[29] Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 234.
[30] See, for example, William G. Anderson, "John Adams, the Navy, and the Quasi-war with France," *American Neptune* 30.2 (1970): 117-132 and Frederick H. Hayes, "John Adams and American Sea Power," *American Neptune* 25 (1965): 35-45.
[31] James A. Carr, "John Adams and the Barbary Problem: The Myth and the Record," *American Neptune* 26.4 (1966): 233. See also Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 54-55; Gardner W. Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs* (Archon Books, 1965), 36-40. Wendy Wong does not mention the Barbary States in her overview of the scholarship on John Adams and foreign policy. See Wendy H. Wong, "John Adams, Diplomat," in *A Companion to John Adams and John Quincy Adams*, David Waldstreicher, ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 125-141.
[32] Robert Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: the United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 153-185.

defended Adams and blamed Jefferson.[33] Naval scholars, however, note that Adams included an article in the Model Treaty that expected France to provide protection from the Barbary pirates for American merchantmen.[34] Attention to Adams' system shifts the focus from Jefferson, and illuminates Adams' Barbary policy, whether during the Revolution, the critical period, or his presidency. This focus on Adams is also an effective way to integrate diplomatic and naval scholarship.

Paul Varg, in *Foreign Policies of the Founding Fathers*, addressed both the Model Treaty and Adams' conduct during the Quasi-war.[35] He observed that "with the fate of the nation in the hands of Adams, at least there was no danger of the nation betraying its own interests while under the illusion that a foreign government could be its generous friend."[36] Although he did not mention the system, Varg was aware of the continuity that undergirded Adams' approach to Britain and France during the Quasi-war. In addition, Varg challenged the emphasis on ideas rather than experience in the formation of the Model Treaty. Varg did not see the Model Treaty as an expression of enlightenment ideals, but as a reasonable approach in light of the quarreling factions in Congress. These factions represented the varied economic interests: Virginia and Pennsylvania, with their western land claims, had very different interests from Massachusetts, with its eye on preserving the fishery. Varg found that limiting the Model Treaty to commerce was the logical outcome, but also noted a revolution where commerce would serve economic,

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[33] Michael Kitzen, "Money Bags or Cannon Balls: The Origins of the Tripolitan War, 1795-1801," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16.4 (1996): 601-624; Louis B. Wright and Julia Macleod, *The First Americans in North Africa: William Eaton's Struggle For A More Vigorous Policy Against the Barbary Pirates* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945); James A. Carr, "John Adams and the Barbary Problem: The Myth and the Record," *American Neptune* 26.4 (1966): 231-257.
[34] Allen, 25.
[35] Paul Varg, *Foreign Policies of the Founding Fathers* (Michigan State University Press, 1963).
[36] Ibid., 128.

rather than political, interests.[37] Varg explained that concern for supplies fueled interest in a treaty with France. He also observed that before Adams wrote the Model Treaty, he had written three principles to guide foreign policy: "No Political Connection… No military Connection… Only a Commercial Connection."[38] Varg recognized that the commercial emphasis was a declaration of political and military independence, and pointed out that Congress abandoned the limit to a "Commercial Connection" only as the value of French assistance became obvious. In a few brief pages, Varg offered one of the best available assessments of John Adams' views on foreign policy.

Varg also argued that American offers to support French and Spanish operations in the West Indies and Florida "compromised the ideal only slightly."[39] The relationship between the emerging American Republic and the Spanish, French and British Empires of the Atlantic World is another arena that benefits from the inclusion of John Adams. Peter Onuf pointed out that American independence did not mean isolationism, but instead a profound interest in the British Empire. The changes in British policies in the wake of the Seven Years' War prompted a reaction among Americans like John Adams, who first attempted to work within the Empire, and only secondly, to be independent. But even this independence did not mean that the United States could ignore the British Empire; it still had to deal with it, as well as with the imperial powers of France and Spain.[40] Onuf explained:

> The American Revolution was first and foremost an episode in the history of the European states-system: a provincial fragment of the British people made themselves into the new American nation *not* because they knew that this was

[37] Ibid., 19-22.
[38] Ibid., 20.
[39] Ibid., 22
[40] Peter S. Onuf, "A Declaration of Independence for Diplomatic Historians," *Diplomatic History* 22.1 (1998): 77.

> their destiny, but rather because they hoped to secure their rights within a more perfect British imperial order.[41]

The Jay Treaty and the Anglo-America re-approachment, the Rush-Bagot Treaty for the Great Lakes, and the dependence on the Royal Navy to enforce the Monroe doctrine may be seen as a British and American acceptance of decentralization of empire with America treated as a nominally independent, yet unofficial part of the British Empire, at times a client state, recognizing British imperial power.

Trevor Burnard, however, remarked that "It is almost a matter of faith among Atlantic historians that Atlantic history is not imperial history."[42] Bernard Bailyn, in his overview of the field, found the old imperial history too narrow, and instead focused on networks:

> There were Atlantic networks everywhere—economic, religious, social, cultural—and as they matured, they enhanced the fortunes of creole leaders (American-born, of European ancestry) who became powerful figures in the Western Hemisphere, linked to, culturally associated with, the metropolitan centers of commerce, politics, religion, and high culture.[43]

As one of those creole leaders, Adams would seem an ideal subject for the study of the Atlantic World, especially because he faced east and prioritized the Atlantic trade over western expansion. Although Bailyn did address Adams in his *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founders*, he preferred to emphasize Benjamin Franklin as the model diplomat. Bailyn quoted Felix Gilbert: "America has wavered in her foreign policy between Idealism and Realism, and her great historical moments have occurred when both were

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[41] Ibid., 83.
[42] Trevor Burnard, "Empire Matters? The Historiography of Imperialism in Early America, 1492-1830," *History of European Ideas* 33.1 (2007): 91.
[43] Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 100-01. For a defense of the old imperial history, see Ian K. Steele, "Bernard Bailyn's American Atlantic," *History & Theory* 46.1 (2007): 48-58.

combined."[44] Bailyn concluded that Franklin's two treaties with France demonstrate this combination: the one, an open trade agreement; the other, a secret treaty of alliance that partitioned British possessions in the New World.[45] Following Gilbert, Bailyn accepted that the Model Treaty was an expression of Adams' idealism, and that eventually Adams suffered from "disillusion" as he "came to realize that… hardheaded realism alone could guarantee America's survival," yet the Farewell Address meant that "the strain of idealism embedded in the draft treaty survived."[46] Considering that Adams insisted that the Model Treaty was an expression of the system he had held to throughout his diplomatic career, it is worth pondering whether the Model Treaty was actually a combination of idealism and realism, and, if a better framework for analyzing this important document might be constructed. As Gregg Lint observed,

> From Article 14 on, the provisions of the treaty plan were copied from three existing agreements between Great Britain and France, especially the commercial treaty concluded at Utrecht in 1713… [Adams'] draft was essentially a transformation of existing Anglo-French agreements into Franco-American treaties and for France amounted merely to a re-ratification of them in favor of the United States.[47]

Understanding that the Model Treaty was a European treaty adapted for America has important implications not only for American idealism, but also for the question of American exceptionalism.

As the author of the Model Treaty, Adams' own understanding of exceptionalism is relevant. At their first meeting, he told George III that he was hopeful about "restoring…the old good nature and the old good Humour, between People, who, though seperated, by the Ocean, and under different Governments, have the Same Language, a Similar Religion, and kindred

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[44] Qtd. in Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew: the Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 63.
[45] Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew*, 96.
[46] Ibid., 63.
[47] Editorial Note, *PJA*, 4.260-65.

Blood."[48] He was inspired by British naval thinkers and described the United States as a "chip off the block."[49] He thought geography more constraining of foreign policy than the form of government: hostile neighbors did not disappear after a revolution or election. He also observed that nations made choices between justice and power. As they became more powerful, they were tempted to be less just. In a letter to Jay in 1785, he observed that the British were "less just than us," not that Americans were completely just and the British were not just at all.[50] As a weak power, the new United States would naturally appeal to the law of nations, just as Britain had before her increase in power. Early American support for free trade was simply in the interests of a weak commercial state that lacked a powerful navy, and that wished to trade on a most-favored nation basis with all potential partners. Natural trade, rather than imperial trade, was also in the interests of the United States, because its geographical position made trade with all West Indian islands profitable, whether possessed by the British, the French, the Spanish or the Dutch. The "new diplomacy" exercised by the United States reflected the shift from its position within the powerful British empire to its new status as a weak neutral in the Atlantic World. Adams did, however, think the United States had some characteristics that differed substantially from European nations: the absence of the aristocratic and priestly classes who tyrannized society, the proliferation of primary schools that made New Englanders the most literate people in the world, and the geographic size which made the United States both unconquerable by foreign armies but easily fragmented from within. European diplomats sprang from the aristocrats, and it could be a challenge for farmers and lawyers like himself to deal with them. The United States would exist

[48] John Adams, "Presentation Speech to the King of Great Britain," 1 June 1785, *Messages of the Presidents*, 10.22.
[49] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 1 January 1799, Adams Papers, reel 393. N.A.M. Rodger writes that the British foreign policy that combined naval power with a continental ally was referred to by British politicians as "the old system." Whether Adams was aware of this term is unclear. See N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1646-1814* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 241.
[50] John Adams to John Jay, 24 Apr. 1785, *PJA*, 17:38.

as a republic in a world of empires, but because the revolution also had made a division of empire, what sort of empire would this republic be?

Trevor Burnard has noted that "The recent efflorescence of works on comparative imperialism suggests that these long-standing historiographical issues have become of urgent concern in the histories of European settlement overseas in the early modern period."[51] Similarly, in his review of *Emperor of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson's Foreign Policy*, Lawrence B. A. Hatter concludes,

> "[Francis D.] Cogliano, [Eliga] Gould, and [Jay] Sexton contribute to the recasting of the American Revolution from an exercise in isolationism, in which Americans declared independence as a rejection of the irredeemably corrupt Old World, to an act motivated by Americans' desire for a deeper engagement with the European world. Taken as a whole, a geopolitical perspective on American empire represents an emphatic rejection of American exceptionalism. It is no longer possible to think of the Revolution as a fork in the road when the founders wisely chose a unique path to the future that would set the United States apart from the rest of the world.[52]

Although the early American Republic could not isolate itself from the Atlantic trade, this aspect of its history has been neglected in the question of whether the United States has always been an empire, and therefore requires attention.

The fall of the Soviet Empire, with the United States left as the world's lone superpower, has prompted questions of whether America itself is an empire, if it has always been an empire, and, if so, what sort of empire it is. As a nation that began with a successful revolt against an empire, can the United States be an empire? If it did not begin as an empire, has it nevertheless developed into an empire? Related to the question of empire is that of imperialism: if the United

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[51] Burnard, 107.

[52] Lawrence B. A. Hatter, "Taking Exception to Exceptionalism: Geopolitics and the Founding of an American Empire," *Journal of the Early Republic* 34.4 (2014): 653-660. See also Alexander Deconde, "Historians, the War of American Independence, and the Persistence of the Exceptionalist Ideal," *The International History Review* 5.3 (1983): 399-430.

States is not an empire, is it nonetheless guilty of imperialism? These questions have assumed a new significance with the war on terrorism and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as Anthony Pagden explained:

> "Empire" and "Imperialism," which since the end of the First World War have been topics in steady decline, are back… much of this interest, which has reached well beyond the Academy, has been triggered by recent events: the latest Afghan war and the invasion of Iraq and their continuing, deleterious consequences. We now have a concept of "Empire Lite"—to go with Marlboro or Coca Cola Lite—a dusted off version of the older "informal empire" thesis but in a new tone of moral urgency.[53]

Central to the angst over the American Empire is American foreign policy in the Middle East. Richard Parker, career diplomat and author of several books on modern Middle Eastern history, tackled early America in the Mediterranean in *Uncle Sam in Barbary: A Diplomatic History*. He explained the value of the study for modern American policymakers:

> This episode was America's first challenge from the Muslim world, a challenge it had difficulty meeting. Although a number of commentators since September 11 have cited America's experiences with the "Barbary pirates" as an example of how it must deal with terrorists today, the details of what happened and the nature of the American response two centuries ago are poorly understood by the writers and their readers (or listeners) today… There are lessons to be learned from the Barbary experience, but they are not what the commentators seem to think. They are lessons about the utility of force as an adjunct of diplomacy, not as a substitute for it.[54]

Parker drew on the familiar dichotomy of Jefferson preferring to use naval power against the Barbary States and Adams advocating diplomacy and payment of tribute. Parker concluded that "Fortunately for the Algiers captives, John Adams's view prevailed in 1795" and that Jefferson's

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[53] Anthony Pagden, "Afterward: From Empire to Federation," in *Imperialisms: Historical and Literary Investigations, 1500-1900*, Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 255.
[54] Richard B. Parker, *Uncle Sam in Barbary: A Diplomatic History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), xiii, xv.

blockade of Tripoli "was not very effective."[55] If Parker was correct that Adams had the right approach, a closer examination of his thinking is warranted.

The United States has also been called an "empire in denial," and a "reluctant empire."[56] Scholars note that Thomas Jefferson himself spoke of the new republic as "an empire of liberty."[57] Fred Anderson argued that

> war and imperialism have powerfully influenced American development from the seventeenth century through the present day… [and] that the defining moments of American political culture and nationhood, the Revolution and the Civil War, can be understood as the unintended consequences of vaunting imperial ambitions.[58]

Walter McDougall, on the other hand, tried to balance idealism and realism, including the reality of the world that America must deal with when forming its foreign policy. He cheerfully explained that the sinister appearance of American imperialism was in reality a combination of good, bad, and ugly, as in the Clint Eastwood movie.[59] McDougall discussed whether the Model Treaty, a foundational document to early American foreign policy, was evidence of American exceptionalism and idealism, and concluded, "If there was an air of unreality about American diplomacy, it stemmed from naiveté, caution, and overestimation of the allure of American trade—not from an excess of idealism."[60] Instead, American exceptionalism can be explained as "overestimation of American economic clout."[61] J.C.A Stagg showed that there was an "ideology of American continentalism," which saw America as "the successor state to the rival European empires of North America. This view, long in the making, received its first significant political

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[55] Parker, 159.
[56] Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: the Price of America's Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 3, 295.
[57] Eliga H. Gould and Peter Onuf, eds., *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).
[58] Fred Anderson, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500-2000* (New York: Viking, 2005), xxi.
[59] Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: the American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (New York: Houghton, 1997), 1-3.
[60] Ibid., 25.
[61] Ibid., 34.

expression in the territorial provisions of the Model Treaty of 1776."[62] An idealistic emphasis in the historiography of foreign policy needs to confront the realistic limitations faced by the actors. Stagg explained the challenge of the attempt to make decisions in a fog of uncertainty:

> The conduct of a nation's foreign policy, by its very nature, depends heavily on the ability of its policy makers and executives to assimilate considerable quantities of ambiguous and incomplete data concerning international relations in their broadest dimensions, to weigh contingent and imponderable factors, to plot courses of action, and to implement and to adjust them when policy collides with unforeseen realities—as it invariably does. It is, in short, the task of individuals placed in these situations "to hold the world in their minds" and to act accordingly.[63]

As the author of the Model Treaty, and an actor who fumed about the frustrating limits he faced, John Adams is crucial to the investigation of the early American empire.

James D. Drake concentrated on the importance of "continentalism" in understanding the Model Treaty and western expansion.[64] Although Drake conceded that "Adams undoubtedly drew inspiration from a number of sources," Drake saw Paine as the main source for the Model Treaty. Drake argued that Paine

> offered a blueprint for American diplomacy predicated on the marriage of two seemingly countervailing tendencies—insularity and expansionism—made compatible by metageographical assumptions. The United States could avoid entangling European alliances as long as it assumed its natural state and became a continental society whose trade constituted a prize for which Europeans competed.[65]

Drake used George Washington's letter to the inhabitants of Bermuda, where he addressed them merely as "Brother Colonists," and the fact that Bermuda, unlike Canada, was not invited to join the Union, as evidence for the limits of the "continental" vision of the Founders to the continent

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[62] J.C.A. Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands: James Madison and the Spanish-American Frontier, 1776-1821* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 5.
[63] Ibid., 11-12.
[64] James D. Drake, *The Nation's Nature: How Continental Presumptions Gave Rise to the United States of America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).
[65] Ibid., 170-71.

proper.[66] However, John Adams wanted Bermuda to become part of the United States to prevent it from becoming—as it later did—a nest for privateers.[67] It appears that Adams focused on waterways rather than the North American landmass, emphasizing the coastlines, rivers, and the Atlantic Ocean. Closer attention to Adams therefore complicates Drake's understanding of "continentalism," and suggests that investigating sources for the Model Treaty other than Paine is warranted.

Early America is the Achilles' heel in attempting to prove that the United States has always been an empire. In the jungles of Vietnam and the deserts of Iraq, America does look rather imperialistic. Not so on the Atlantic two hundred years earlier, when American seamen were being impressed by the British, and the American government could do nothing about it. David Hendrickson attempted a reading that began with the genuine weakness of the newly independent states and worked forward, rather than one that begins with the twenty-first century superpower and works backwards.[68] He took three terms from the twentieth century—internationalism, nationalism, imperialism—and finds their counterparts—union, nation, empire—in 1776.[69] Hendrickson accepted the typical Hamilton-Jefferson dichotomy, which was unfortunate because he cited John Adams and his interest in free trade, but not the larger vision of Adams that included being heir to the British territory in North America.[70] This gap in the scholarship needs to be addressed by an exploration of Adams and how he understood American security.

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[66] Ibid.,, 169.
[67] John Adams, 10 Dec. 1782, *JADA*, 3:95.
[68] David C. Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire: the American Debate Over International Relations, 1789-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), xi.
[69] Hendrickson, *Union*, 4.
[70] Hendrickson, *Union*, 9; Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 60.

Hendrickson's basic argument, dealt with at length in his previous book, *Peace Pact: the Lost World of the American Founding*, was that the Founders formed a union for their mutual defense.[71] This federation was an international compact, and therefore the antithesis of empire. Moreover, the ideal of union continued throughout American history, though competing and intermingling with selfish nationalism and imperialism, which is similar to McDougall's view of a combination of good, bad and ugly.[72] Hendrickson explained that "the ideal of cooperative peace… is the great contribution of the Americas to world thought."[73] Hendrickson's thesis encountered the same difficulty as that of scholars who begin in the twentieth century and work backwards. For example, he drew a comparison with the Concert of Europe that hammered out a workable peace in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. He ignored the distinctions between the American Federation and the Concert of Europe and concentrated on the similarity: "North America, then was not alone in having advanced toward the beau ideal of a federative system... [and] the two federative systems, then, were antipodes of each other, yet essentially alike."[74] They were also essentially different. The Thirteen Colonies banded together in the face of powerful external threats—from the French, Spanish and British—that could have tried to use them as pawns against each other. Although they had been administered separately to some degree, because each had its own governor and assembly, they had all been part of the British Empire and they had not fought a major war with each other, let alone fought for centuries. Canada, which did have a long history of warfare with New England, had no interest in joining the compact and never did. Adams did not think the Concert of Europe in 1815 was akin to the

[71] David C. Hendrickson, *Peace Pact: the Lost World of the American Founding* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003).
[72] Hendrickson, *Union*, 275.
[73] Hendrickson, *Union*, 363.
[74] Hendrickson, *Union*, 75.

American Union, any more than he thought the French Revolution a sister to the American Revolution.

This dissertation therefore will be of interest to Adams scholars, diplomatic historians, naval historians, and specialists in early American history. It addresses the need for a study on John Adams and early American foreign policy. It overturns the Jefferson-Hamilton dichotomy, and provides context for important documents like the Model Treaty. It also examines the continuity from colonial New England foreign policy and addresses the foreign policy challenges often neglected in the scholarship on the Atlantic world. The inclusion of Adams makes early American foreign policy more useful and accessible to diplomatic historians who study the twentieth century and are interested in potential continuity with the early American Republic.

Chapter One: The Method in the Madness

I am persuaded, however, that he means well for his Country, is always an honest Man, often a wise one, but sometimes, and in some things, absolutely out of his senses.[1]

Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, 1783

Retirement did not suit John Adams well. Unlike George Washington, who repeatedly told his admirers that he wanted to sit under his fig tree and tend to his plantation, and unlike John Jay, who turned from politics and busied himself with philanthropy, John Adams devoted much of his time to writing either grouchy defenses of his policies as revolutionary, diplomat and president, or caustic evaluations of the past and present conduct of his opponents. He mocked Jefferson's gunboat navy and criticized his embargo. He insisted that he had been right to make peace with France but that Jefferson was wrong to not make war on England.[2] He brushed aside historians of the revolution for misunderstanding what had really happened, and explained how unimportant was Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and how neglected was his own, made twenty-one years earlier.[3] But his criticism of Jefferson paled in comparison to his ravings about that "bastard brat of a Scotch pedlar,"Alexander Hamilton.[4] Adams despised Hamilton as the head of a disloyal "triumvirate" who had wanted a "50,000 man army" to fight the French if they

[1] Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, 22 July 1783, *WBF*, 9:62.
[2] John Adams to J. B. Varnum, 26 Dec. 1808, *Works*, 9:607; John Adams to Joseph Lyman, 20 Apr. 1809, *Works*, 9:621.
[3] Adams was referring to a letter he wrote to Nathan Webb in 1755, which reads in part: "For if we can remove the turbulent Gallicks, our People according to the exactest Computations, will in another Century, become more numerous than England itself. Should this be the Case, since we have (I may say) all the naval Stores of the Nation in our hands, it will be easy to obtain the mastery of the seas, and then the united force of all Europe, will not be able to subdue us. The only way to keep us from setting up for ourselves, is to disunite Us." See John Adams to Nathan Webb, 12 Oct. 1755, *PJA*, 1:4. Adams enclosed a copy of this letter in his letter to Rush, and wrote, "Jefferson has acquired such glory by his declaration of independence in 1776 that I think I may boast of my declaration of independence in 1755, twenty one years older than his." See John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 1 May 1807, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[4] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 25 Jan. 1806, Adams Papers, reel 118.

invaded during the Quasi-war; despite the fact that France was "distracted" in Europe and "had not a man to spare" and could not transport an army to America even if she had ships and men because the Royal Navy would block their passage.[5] In a letter to Benjamin Rush in 1805, Adams complained that the party headed by Hamilton had rejected his system of neutrality but Thomas Jefferson "had been mean enough to Steal" it.[6] But whether the modern American thinks that the doctrine of "no entangling alliances" was the product of Alexander Hamilton in George Washington's Farewell Address, or the vision of Thomas Jefferson in his 1801 inaugural speech, the result is the same: John Adams has indeed been robbed.

Opposition to entangling alliances was central to Adams' views on American foreign policy, but it was not an isolated ideal divorced from actual conditions. Faced with criticism for the foreign policy of his "mad administration," Adams fought back in both newspapers and private letters. He abandoned his attempt to write his autobiography in order to write a series of letters to Mercy Warren, scolding her for misunderstanding the course of the Revolution and his role in it.[7] He wrote a scathing attack on Hamilton in 1801 that he initially decided not to publish, but which became the first of his essays that began to appear in the *Boston Patriot* in 1809.[8] His private correspondents included old friends like Benjamin Rush, and, after the death of Rush in 1813, his son Richard Rush, comptroller in Madison's administration; curious seekers of the true history of the Revolution like Hezekiah Niles, editor of *Niles Weekly*, and William Tudor, his former law clerk; retired politicians—whether former adversaries or allies—like James Lloyd, Thomas McKean, Timothy Pickering and Thomas Jefferson; and navy men like Commodore Thomas Truxton.

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[5] John Adams to Harrison Grey Otis, 9 May 1823, Adams Papers, reel 124.
[6] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 7 July 1805, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[7] John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, 11 July 1807, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[8] John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 10:148.

Defending his actions may have forced him to become more analytical of his foreign policies.[9] Adams began to explain how he had long envisioned a *system* which would permit the early American Republic to navigate the hostile world into which it had been born. In a letter to James Lloyd in 1815, Adams outlined the "three propositions" of this system:

> 1. That neutrality in the wars of Europe is *our* truest policy; and to preserve this, alliances ought to be avoided as much and as long as possible.
> But, if we should be driven to the necessity of an alliance,
> 2. Then *France* is *our natural ally*; and,
> 3. That Great Britain is the last power, to which we should, in any, the last extremity, resort for any alliance, political or military.
> These three propositions appear to me as clear, as obvious, and as demonstrable as any political principles whatever, and almost as any proposition in Euclid.

Adams noted that he had held these three propositions for "full forty years."[10]

Adams had already outlined his system in similar terms to Joseph Lyman in 1809:

> My invariable principle for five-and thirty years has been, to promote, preserve, and secure the integrity of the Union, and the independence of the nation, against the policy of England as well as France.[11]

And to Benjamin Rush in 1808:

> My system for four and thirty years has been Neutrality among the nations of Europe, as long as possible. But when no longer possible, to war with the Agressor. when two agressors at once render peace untenable, to war with both or at least with the worst. the principle has been to support a national government, national honor, national union and national independence. the hyperfederalists are for hazarding all. it is my opinion and has been so, ever since our independence and will be so for a long time to come, that the English are our natural enemies.[12]

And to Commodore Truxton in 1804:

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[9] Adams embarked on a similar path in 1783: "When his comments about France, Vergennes, and Franklin are considered with those concerning Congress' incompetence in conducting foreign relations, it is apparent that Adams is undertaking a detailed, if somewhat unsystematic, analysis of American foreign policy… Adams believed that the United States faced great danger if it did not pursue an independent foreign policy that kept it from being aligned with any of the great powers of Europe." See Ed. note, *PJA*, 14:xxvi.
[10] John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 9:147.
[11] John Adams to Joseph Lyman, 20 April 1809, *Works*, 9:619.
[12] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 18 Jan. 1808, Adams Papers, reel 405.

> I was never arrogant or presumptuous enough to talk of playing off France against England and England against France as some scribblers have pretended, nor yet of holding the ballance between these two great Nations as some members of Parliament have hinted, but 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 alliances with none if we could avoid it.[13]

Adams' description of his system reveals that it was not a simplistic condemnation of all alliances apart from the actual challenges of a current crisis. The emergence of his system coincided with the American struggle for independence and the subsequent adjustment of American relations with the rival colonial powers. Adams specifically identified Great Britain and France as the two powers that the United States might consider as allies. He did not treat them as interchangeable options, but noted that France was the "natural ally." He argued that the United States should be slow to make an alliance with France, but even more hesitant to ally with Great Britain. He acknowledged that France might be "the Aggressor" and, in that case, that the United States would need to resist her, but that a situation might also occur where America would fight both Great Britain and France at the same time. For John Adams, opposition to entangling alliances was not a timeless, idealistic principle based on Enlightenment philosophy, but a measured response to the current rivalry between Great Britain and France. He called this philosophy of foreign policy "the system of Neutrality."[14]

Adams' description of an orderly system, one that he had developed as early as 1774 and that had guided his decision-making, could be dismissed as a retirement fantasy, an attempt to justify himself and present his actions in the best possible light.[15] There is, however, evidence that Adams was thinking in terms of this *system* as early as 1785. In a letter to John Jay, he wrote:

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[13] John Adams to Commodore Truxton, 13 Dec. 1804, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[14] John Adams to William Sumner, 28 March 1809, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[15] Elkins and McKitrick, 529.

> My system is a very simple one; let us preserve the friendship of France, Holland, and Spain, if we can, and in case of war between France and England let us preserve our neutrality, if possible.[16]

This brief statement reveals his understanding of Britain as the greater threat, and the importance of friendship with France, although he also included the lesser powers of Holland and Spain. This friendship did not, however, automatically extend to a military alliance with France. Instead, if war between France and Britain broke out, the United States was to try to remain neutral, "if possible." Adams left open the possibility that the United States could not maintain its neutrality. He accepted the usefulness of the Treaty of Alliance negotiated with France in 1778 because it worked as a brake on British power.[17] Part of Adams' system was a hierarchy of options: certain policies were preferable, if possible; others were permissible, if necessary. This hierarchy underwrote a flexibility of the system that permitted different policies that could adjust to changing circumstances. Adams gave priority to what was workable in the real world rather than abstract speculation about what was purely ideal.[18]

Although he did not use the term "system," the propositions that formed it can be seen in Adams' thinking in a letter to James Warren in 1778. Adams discussed his concern that conflict between Britain and France would not remain limited, but would shortly involve Spain, "and then all Europe will arrange themselves on one side and the other, and what Consequences to Us might be involved in it, I dont know." He explained further:

> If We could have a free Trade with Europe, I should rather run the Risque of fighting it out with George and his present Allies, provided he should get no other. I dont love to be intangled in the Quarrels of Europe, I dont wish to be under Obligations to any of them, and I am very unwilling they should rob Us of the Glory of vindicating our own Liberties.[19]

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[16] John Adams to John Jay, 13 April 1785, *Works*, 8:235.
[17] John Adams to Samuel Adams, 28 July 1778, *PJA*, 6:326.
[18] For Adams' similar approach to political thought, see Howe, xii-xv.
[19] John Adams to James Warren, 3 April [May 3?] 1777, *PJA*, 5:173.

Adams acknowledged that France had given the Americans financial and military support, but he feared becoming too dependent on France. As he would later famously say, he had not put off the chains of England in order to put on those of France.[20] To prevent America from becoming a French satellite, Adams stressed the importance of new commercial treaties with the states of Europe that were opposed to the Bourbons since this success would earn America respect from both France and Britain.[21] His Model Treaty, penned in 1776, is further evidence that he had indeed been thinking in terms of a system for foreign policy whereby the United States, although accepting France as the preferable ally in the struggle with Great Britain, would nevertheless pursue neutrality if possible.

Adams' brief overview of his system, and his deconstruction of that system into three propositions, invites further investigation. While it is clear that he considered Britain to be the "natural enemy" and a greater threat than France, it is not clear why. Nor is it clear what circumstances or conditions were the basis for a "necessary" shift from neutrality to forming an alliance, or how that alliance, once formed, could be terminated. He seemed to regard any alliance as a threat to American independence, yet also accepted that the alliance with France in 1778 had helped secure American independence.[22] Adams insisted that "the three propositions [were] as demonstrable as… almost any proposition in Euclid," but it is obvious that what was so clear to him was not clear at all to others; certainly not to his main rivals, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. Fortunately, Adams was a voluminous writer, and his surviving correspondence reveals both his assessment of the workings of the international arena and his perception of why Britain was the greater threat, and likely to remain so.

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[20] John Adams, *JADA*, 4:80.
[21] John Adams to the President of Congress, 5 Sept. 1783, *Works*, 8:146.
[22] John Adams to Samuel Adams, 28 July 1778, *PJA*, 6:326.

Key to Adams' understanding of foreign relations was the concept of balance of power. He borrowed from Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, British politician and philosopher, whose collected works spanned five volumes. Adams read *The Study and Use of History* and *The Patriot King* as early as 1756, and was so impressed that he loaned them to James Putnam, the lawyer with whom he was boarding and studying. Putnam, likewise impressed, ordered the whole set of Bolingbroke's works. Adams poured through the volumes, and later told Thomas Jefferson that he had read the entire works five times.[23] Bolingbroke briefly mentioned the balance of power in his overview of Britain's place in Europe:

> By a continual attention to improve her natural, that is her maritime strength, by collecting all her forces within herself, and reserving them to be laid out on great occasions, such as regard her immediate interests and her honour, or such as are truly important to the general system of power in Europe; she may be the arbitrator of differences, the guardian of liberty, and the preserver of that balance, which has been so much talked of, and is so little understood.[24]

Bolingbroke was arguing that Elizabeth I, with her attention to maritime trade, and careful diplomacy, was an effective Patriot King. He went into more detail on his understanding of the balance of power in *Letters on the Study and Use of History*. He explained that although empires routinely rise and fall, they usually do not fall suddenly in a catastrophic moment, but gradually decline. At the same time as one empire was declining, another power was slowly rising, gaining in strength, and would eventually challenge the present empire for preeminence. Bolingbroke described this shift using the model of a set of scales, or balance, with one power rising while the other slowly fell. For Bolingbroke, the balance of power was a metaphor for the system of

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[23] During his retirement, Adams made extensive marginal notes in his copies, mainly about religion. See Zoltán Haraszti, *John Adams & the Prophets of Progress* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 49-79. For Adams' debt to Bolingbroke for his views on the importance of the disinterested executive see Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party: the First American Presidency, 1789-1829* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 93-99.

[24] Viscount Henry St John Bolingbroke, "The Idea of a Patriot King," in *Bolingbroke: Political Writings*, David Armitage, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 278.

Europe, not a goal for foreign policy.[25] He instead emphasized Britain's geographical advantages that permitted her to avoid standing armies and gave her time to decide if a continental alliance was necessary.[26]

Adams identified Britain and France as the two powers on the scales of the balance, which explains his emphasis on them in his system. He argued that as part of the British Empire, the American colonies had been a significant weight on Britain's side of the scales. Independence removed that weight, decreasing the power against France, and this change that favored France was reason enough for France to support American independence. In his letter to Edme Jacques Genet, the father of the future diplomat, he included a long quote from Bolingbroke, and added, "These Observations were never more remarkably verified, than in these times. The English proud and porr [sic], and enterprising and feeble, Still think themselves a Match for France and Spain, and America if not for all the World, but this delirium cannot last long." He asked Genet if it was worth publishing, and Genet agreed and did so.[27] In a letter to Commodore Thomas Truxton in 1804, Adams insisted that it was a misunderstanding that he had advocated America holding the balance of power between the two great European powers.[28] It is possible that his emphasis on "balance" in a nation's political constitution contributed to this

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[25] Viscount Henry St John Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 2 vols. (London, 1752), 1:259–261. The concept, "balance of power" has no precise definition, and was used in various ways by both eighteenth and twentieth century thinkers. Ernest B. Haas explains, "The earlier doctrines, based on the guide-and-system idea, contented themselves with the so-called simple balance. The analogy is that of a pair of scales, and the supposition was that there would be only two major states, with their satellites, in the "system." The idea of a strict physical equilibrium—or slight hegemony—would then apply." See "The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept, or Propaganda," *World Politics* 5.4 (1953): 458. M.S. Anderson explains that a few writers thought of the balance of power as akin to the invisible hand, but "most writers thought of the balance in terms of something that *ought* to exist, something deliberately constructed by man and to be consciously fostered and safeguarded by him." See "Eighteenth-Century Theories of the Balance of Power," in *Studies In Diplomatic History: Essays In Memory of David Bayne Horn*, D. B. Horn, Ragnhild Marie Hatton, and M. S Anderson, eds. (Harlow: Longmans, 1970), 190.
[26] Bolingbroke, *The Patriot King*, 277-78. Adams may also be indebted to Bolingbroke for his own emphasis on geography and fear of standing armies.
[27] John Adams to Edme Jacques Genet, 29 April 1780, *PJA*, 9:249-50.
[28] John Adams to Commodore Truxton, 13 Dec. 1804, Adams Papers, reel 118.

misunderstanding. In the case of internal politics, Adams did see value in maintaining equilibrium in the balance between the bicameral legislature and executive. But in foreign affairs, Adams accepted Bolingbroke's model where empires would inevitably rise and fall, and he argued that it was not in the interests of the United States to interfere. Instead, Americans needed to avoid entanglement in this process, and only consider alliances for their own concrete interests. He did concede that if Britain's power became so overwhelming as to threaten to destroy France completely, the United States might need to step in to assist France, "for, after humbling France, England would not scruple to attack the United States."[29] He therefore saw this interference in terms of America's interest in not facing a single European power, rather than commitment to maintaining the status quo to try to avoid the outbreak of war between the two great powers.

Adams' attention to geography was the basis for his understanding of "natural" enemies and "natural" allies. He explained that "As long as Great Britain shall have Canada Nova Scotia, and the Floridas, or any of them so long will Gb be the enemy of the us, let her disguise it as much as she will…. but the fact is certain that neighboring Nations are never friends in reality."[30] Adams argued that British victory in 1763 had increased British power at the expense of France, and he described the settlement of 1783, where some British colonies became independent and others did not, as "a division of the empire."[31] Although this defection by the Thirteen Colonies had weakened Britain, and he expected Britain to decline further, he nevertheless viewed Britain as the greater threat to the United States. A glance at the map reveals his reasoning.[32] France had

[29] John Adams to John Jay, 15 November 1787, *Works*, 8:461.
[30] John Adams to Samuel Adams, 28 July 1778, *PJA*, 6:326.
[31] John Adams to William Thomas, 10 Aug. 1822, Adams Papers, reel 124.
[32] Adams was personally interested in maps. In a letter to Abigail, he described the maps about to be hung in the war office. He explained, "Geography is a Branch of Knowledge, not only very useful, but absolutely necessary, to every Person of public Character whether in civil or military Life. Nay it is equally necessary for Merchants." Adams

been driven from the North American continent by General James Wolfe's victory at Quebec in 1759, and had accepted the loss of the northern colony at the subsequent peace talks.[33] In the Treaty of Alliance in 1778, France had agreed not to try to regain a foothold on the American mainland. Britain, however, possessed Nova Scotia, Canada and Florida in 1776, and retained all but Florida in the aftermath of the Peace of 1783. Despite American hopes, during the War of Independence the inhabitants of Quebec had remained loyal to the British, and the old enemy, now reinforced by British regulars, remained a threat to New England. Nova Scotia, home of the naval base at Halifax, continued to threaten American fishing rights in the waters to the north of New England.

Britain not only held strategic points of land that were a potential threat, but also was America's rival in the Atlantic carrying trade. Initially, Adams wished to counter British advantages by gaining other strategic points of land such as Bermuda, which he said would prevent the island from becoming a nest for privateers. He also encouraged an increase in America's share of the carrying trade as the foundation for naval power. American sailors accustomed to touching at ports of entry on the American coastline would become familiar not only with the effective handling of ships, but also with the defense needs of that coastline. Adams hoped to emulate the British success at combining maritime trade with seapower, though he recognized that a rival fleet of ships of the line would not be supported by a nation whose

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further noted that maps, while useful, could nevertheless be misleading and frustrating for diplomats like himself who were attempting to settle boundary disputes and land claims. Adams not only encountered the famous Mitchell's map, but also those drawn by French and Dutch cartographers. He mentioned a map that assigned most of North America to the colony of New York; maps that were necessary to attempt to determine which river was intended to be the St. Croix; and maps that would be useful for anyone attempting to navigate America's coastline. See John Adams to Abigail Adams, 13 August 1776, *AFC*, 2:90-92.

[33] See Map, p. 230, below.

energies were also directed westward across the continent.[34] American efforts to supplant British control of the maritime trade on the Atlantic, and American expansion westward into regions claimed either by Britain or by Britain's Indian allies were potential sources of conflicts. France, in contrast, had opened her West Indian colonies to American trade and shipping, had little interest in competing for the carrying trade, and had renounced her claims to the North American continent. If Americans were to secure their independence on both the western and the Atlantic frontiers, Adams preferred that they do so without depending on France. The carrying trade, along with the fishery, would be the nursery for the navy, and the local militia would provide whatever defense was necessary on the frontiers.

Considering his emphasis on the United States as the heir of the territory of the European empires in North America, it is surprising that Adams paid little attention to Spain, even though Spain held New Orleans and, after 1783, Florida. It appears that Adams took seriously the two scales in the balance of power, and, having assigned one side to Great Britain and the other to France, he regarded all other European powers in terms of their relationship with the crucial two. He expected that Spain would always be a French ally, and thus opposed to Great Britain. He noted that Spain "cannot determine upon War, but in the last Extremity, and even then, she Sighs, for Peace." That meant that conflicts with Spain could be negotiated. Spain was also not a rival for the fishery or the carrying trade, and access to her commerce meant, again, potential conflict with Britain.[35] It is also possible that Adams, as a New Englander, had never had to give much thought to Spain's empire in the south-west, and with his emphasis on security in the interior dependent on security of the coast, he had more to fear from the Royal Navy blocking

[34] John Adams, 13 Dec. 1779, *JADA*, 3:3. Adams would not have been surprised to see Theodore Roosevelt's navy arise after the close of the frontier.
[35] John Adams to the President of the Congress, 4 Aug. 1779, *PJA*, 8:113.

the port of New Orleans than Spain closing the Mississippi. Not until 1806, after Spain allied with Britain, did Adams re-think Spain's position in the system of Europe:

> An Alliance between England and Spain, is a new Aspect of Planets towards Us. Surround by Land on the East, North, West and South by the Territories of two Such Powers, and blockaded by Sea by two Such Navies as the English and Spanish, without a Friend or Ally by Sea or Land, We may have all our Republican Virtues put to a Tryal.[36]

Spain nevertheless was fading as a great power, and Adams generally thought that the real problem was the danger of Spain's American colonies falling into British hands.[37]

When evaluating the threat to American security, Adams emphasized the interests of the British and French empires rather than their internal political structures. He did not seem to consider the much more autocratic government of France a factor. Instead, Adams stressed that the neighbors of France were a constant problem for France, remarking that "I was told the king never went to bed but figured he would get up at war with someone."[38] These European neighbors remained distractions regardless whether France was ruled by the Bourbon monarch, the Girondins, Robespierre, the Directory or Napoleon. The greatest threat to France in Europe, however, was Great Britain. Adams mused that if Britain, Holland and Prussia united against France and threatened her existence, the United States would then be forced to aid France, lest Britain, having destroyed France, then turn on the United States. In such an extreme circumstance, American self-interest would dictate the abandonment of neutrality. But Adams also argued that it would not be in the interest of the United States for France to destroy Britain and achieve the status of universal empire. Adams thought that peace in Europe would only come about if forced on it by a tyrant, or through the great powers dividing up the world. This

[36] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 27 Sept. 1808, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[37] John Adams to John Jay, 30 Nov. 1787, *Works*, 8:463.
[38] John Adams to Colonel Joseph Ward, 14 Dec. 1809, Adams Papers, reel 118.

peace would therefore be a threat to the United States, as a minor power to be partitioned. Adams had seen Britain and France come to terms before and divide up their North American possessions; seen Britain return Louisbourg, and France surrender Canada in exchange for retention of sugar islands in the West Indies. Adams insisted, "America has been the sport of European Wars and Politicks long enough."[39] So in 1783, the United States sat down at the table and divided the empire with Britain, becoming a partitioner of the world in her own right.

But this new independent role for America rested on a fragile American union. Adams famously remarked that it was difficult to make thirteen clocks strike as one.[40] He was aware that leaders in the thirteen States found it difficult to overlook local interests for national ones, and he spoke of the divisions between North and South, between the established East and the frontier West, between those concentrated on westward expansion and those who looked to the Atlantic fishery and trade. These regional and economic interests were foundational to pro-British and pro-French factions in America. Adams argued that neutrality was vital to the survival of the Union lest those pro-French or pro-British leanings polarize the population and European quarrels eventually drag the United States into a civil war. As a child of the Seven Years' War, Adams had seen the interests of American colonists trampled by Great Britain. Though there is no direct evidence, he may also have been aware of the special Anglo-French Treaty in 1686 that specifically limited the war to Europe, and declared their colonies neutral in the conflict. This precedent, although an exception in the age of the great wars for empire between Britain and France, was to become the standard policy for the newly independent United States.[41]

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[39] John Adams to President of Congress, 18 April 1780, Adams Papers, reel 98.
[40] John Adams to Benjamin Kent, 22 June 1776, *PJA*, 4:326.
[41] Max Savelle, "Colonial Origins of American Diplomatic Principles," *Pacific Historical Review* 3.3 (1934): 334-350.

During the colonial period, America had been entangled not only in the wars of Europe, but also in the arms of Europe. Although Americans had developed a militia tradition, they had relied on British regulars and, more importantly, the Royal Navy. Adams had not been impressed by most of the British generals in the Seven Years' War. In several letters, he recalled his disgust at their incompetence and thought America better able to defend itself with less expense. The victory of James Wolfe at Quebec had done much to improve his opinion.[42] In the reorganization of North America after the Seven Years' War, Adams initially suggested that rather than New Englanders paying taxes to support regulars they no longer needed, they instead finance the Royal Navy for their part of paying for the maritime defense necessary for the Atlantic trade. With the coming of independence, Adams shifted to advocating an American navy. But he was opposed by those who favored replacing British regulars and ships with those of the French. Adams came to accept the usefulness of French military support, and even tried to take charge of French strategy, much to the annoyance of both the Comte de Vergennes and Benjamin Franklin. Adams growled that allies were as much trouble as enemies.[43] He also pointed to Dutch history as "instructive to us."[44] The Dutch had allowed their own navy to deteriorate as they came to depend on the Royal Navy, and this dependence limited their freedom to conduct their own foreign policy. Similarly, the usefulness of France and French military power as a distraction to Britain included the danger of America failing to develop its own military institutions. America could not be neutral unless it could defend itself, but, because of American disunity, that defense needed to be as cost-effective as possible.

[42] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 1 May 1807, *Works*, 9:592.
[43] John Adams to Robert Livingstone, 11 Nov. 1782, *Works*, 8:8.
[44] John Adams to F.A. Vanderkemp, 16 February 1809, *Works*, 9:608.

Accordingly, Adams argued that "A naval power, next to the militia, is the natural defense of the United States."[45] Adams differed from Federalists like George Washington, who originally supported a small standing army and opposed the creation of a navy, and from the "hyperfederalists" like Hamilton, who were for "hazarding all."[46] In a letter to James Lloyd in 1815, Adams expanded on those "hazards":

> The fools who were intriguing to plunge us into an alliance with England, an endless war with all the rest of the world, and wild expeditions to South America and St. Domingo; and, what was worse than all the rest, a civil war, which I knew would be the consequence of the measures the heads of that party wished to pursue.[47]

In his next letter to Lloyd, Adams explained why he had refused to join with Great Britain and support Francisco de Miranda's bid for the independence of the Spanish colonies. Miranda, a Venezuelan officer, had already taken part in the wars during the American and French Revolutions. In 1798, he was attempting to enlist both American and British support for expeditions against Cuba, Panama, and New Granada.[48] Adams gave several reasons for his objections to this alliance. First, American soldiers would die from disease in the tropics, and the American people would denounce him as "a traitor and a bribed slave to Great Britain." Second, a "connection" with Great Britain would make it harder to come to terms with the French Directory. Third, having seen firsthand revolutions in Holland and having heard of the coming revolution in France, he was not eager to participate in "hazardous and expensive and bloody experiments to excite similar horrors in South America." Adams believed that the success of the

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[45] John Adams, "Speech to both Houses of Congress," 16 May 1797, *Works*, 9:115-116.
[46] John Adams to John Adams Smith, 14 Dec. 1808, Adams Papers, reel 406.
[47] John Adams to James Lloyd, 31 March 1815, *Works*, 10:155.
[48] William Spence Robertson, *The Life of Miranda*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1929), 1:176-87.

American Revolution had been due to a literate population educated in freedom, and that this success could not be duplicated unless those conditions were already present.[49]

Aside from these hazards and horrors promoted by other Federalists, Adams had to consider the "crude and visionary notions of government" of Thomas Jefferson and the reluctance of the Republicans to pay taxes to support military institutions.[50] Like the Republicans, Adams held the militia in high esteem, but he also emphasized its practical limitations. He observed that although raising an army, marching north, and conquering Canada might be possible, it would nevertheless also be pointless because Britain would simply attack the exposed American coastline. On the other hand, Adams noted the incidents where the militia had been effective during the War of Independence, and argued that, should America be invaded again, the militia, combined with America's harsh terrain and vast size, would prevent the aggressor from conquering the United States.[51] The militia would be a convenient local force intended for emergency defense, but needed to be coupled with a navy.

As early as 1775, Adams outlined the naval power necessary for independence. His focus was on the trade that would be carried out in coastal ports, rather than defense of the coast as an end in itself. Adams explained to James Warren that if America could offer safe ports, other nations would come to buy, and their own ships could also venture out:

> All this, however, supposes that we fortify and defend our own harbors and rivers. We may begin to do this. We may build row galleys, flat-bottomed boats, floating batteries, whaleboats, vaisseaux de fries, nay ships of war, how many and how large I can't say. To talk of coping suddenly with G.B. at sea would be Quixotism indeed, but the only question with me is, can we defend our harbors and rivers? If we can, we can trade.[52]

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[49] John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 10:147, 149.
[50] Ibid.
[51] John Adams to Edmund Jenings, 20 Jan. 1781, *PJA*, 11:61.
[52] John Adams to James Warren, 7 October 1775, *PJA*, 3:191.

At this point, Adams was focused on keeping ports open and using privateers to attack British transports and merchantmen. He understood that attacks on enemy commerce were an effective way to harm the enemy and at the same time enrich one's own treasury.[53] By the time he became president he was willing to support the small frigate navy established by George Washington. He also favored permitting merchantmen to arm themselves, and brushed aside concerns that they might start a war. Adams saw no need to protect each and every merchant ship, but instead aimed to keep insurance rates affordable; a goal that could be accomplished with a few "super-frigates": ships that were formidable enough to take on any foreign frigates in single combat, and fast enough to sail away to safety if they met ships of the line. Adams argued that his advocacy of a navy had been crucial in the struggle for neutrality:

> If… I had omitted to speak and write…an American Navy would not have existed, the Barbary Powers would have captivated and plundered; and without my Treaty in 1800…we should have been now involved in a foolish War with France and a slavish Alliance with Great Britain.[54]

Although Thomas Jefferson turned to alternatives like gunboats and the embargo, Adams' navy had not disappeared, and by 1815, was a permanent fixture in America's military institutions.

Adams' naval policy also reveals his understanding of the place of international law in his system of neutrality. Although Adams had been a practicing lawyer, he held a pessimistic view of the effectiveness of the law of nations. He had read the works of Pufendorf, Vattel, and Bolingbroke as part of his legal education, and won two notable victories in British courts.[55] The famous case, where he defended the soldiers indicted for the Boston Massacre, was neither his first victory nor the one he himself thought important. Instead, Adams stressed the 1768 case

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[53] John Adams to W. Health, 11 May 1807, *Works*, 9:596.
[54] John Adams to William Sumner, 28 March 1809, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[55] Adams, however, appears to have been more influenced by Bolingbroke than Vattel in his understanding of the balance of power. See above, p. 28.

where he had successfully defended four sailors, including Michael Corbet, who had killed a British lieutenant who was trying to impress him. Adams pointed to a law which "prohibited the impressment of seamen in America." He had been prepared to argue before the British court that Corbet had been within his rights to resist impressment, and the death of Lieutenant Panton was "justifiable homicide in necessary self-defence." Adams claimed this legal victory was the foundation for American independence.[56] Adams later argued that although the king had the right to call his subjects to serve him, his subjects had the right to decide whether to respond to the call. Yet he recognized that for law to function, it required the strong to respect the weak. He noted that when Britain had not had command of the sea, she had demanded her rights under the law of nations; but once Britain became the master, she refused to respect the same rights under the law for others. Adams was aware that the British Admiralty claimed to be operating under the Rule of 1756, but he was not fooled: he recognized a legal cloak for British interests. He was pessimistic about the success of attempts at leagues of armed neutrality: a paper alliance would never be enough; as he explained to Charles Dumas:

> Nothing but hard blows, taking their fleets of merchant ships, and burning, taking sinking, or destroying their men-of-war, will bring them to reason. Nor this neither, until it is carried to such a length as to deprive so many of the people of their subsistence as to make them rise in outrages against the government.[57]

He conceded that the ideal of "free ships make free goods," if recognized, "would put an end forever to all maritime war, and render all military navies useless," but contended that it was unworkable in the era of struggle between Great Britain and France because "the dominant

[56] John Adams to Dr. J. Morse, 20 January 1816, *Works*, 10:204-210. See also *Works*, 2:224-226; *Works*, 9:317-319.
[57] John Adams to M. [Charles] Dumas, 6 Feb. 1781, *Works*, 7:367.

power on the sea will trample it."[58] American merchantmen, therefore, could not depend solely on legal rights as neutrals to safeguard their shipping.

This overview of Adams' system of neutrality reveals his understanding of the principles of effective foreign policy for the new American Republic. It is not necessary to accept Adams' insistence that "Without me the system of neutrality to which we owe so much would not have been adopted."[59] He himself borrowed from previous colonial policy and from the British example in his advocacy of the importance of the militia, naval power, and neutrality as the foundation for successful American defense and unity. How his experiences as a New England lawyer and revolutionary intersected with his voracious reading of history, law, and philosophy and led to the development of his system of neutrality are the focus of the next chapter.

[58] John Adams to John Marshall, 3 Oct. 1800, *Works*, 9:86.
[59] John Adams to William Sumner, 28 March 1809, Adams Papers, reel 118.

Chapter Two: The Education of John Adams

In Short, as comprehensive Knowledge of Arts and Sciences, especially of Law and History, of Geography, Commerce, War and of Life, is necessary for an American Statesman, at this Time as was ever necessary for a British, or a Roman Senator, or a British or Roman General. Our New England Educations, are quite unequal to the Production of Such great Characters.[1]

John Adams to James Warren, 1774

The Model Treaty can be considered John Adams' most important contribution to American foreign policy.[2] Although he was part of a committee that included John Dickinson, Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Harrison, and Robert Morris, he alone was responsible for drafting the document. In his *Autobiography*, Adams recorded that Benjamin Franklin "had made some marks with a Pencil against some Articles in a printed Volume of Treaties, which he put into my hand." Adams said that he used some of those articles and selected others as he produced a report to submit to Congress.[3] A close reading of those treaties has confirmed the accuracy of Adams' recollections: Franklin's copy of *A Compleat Collection of All the Articles and Clauses which Relate to the Marine, in the Several Treaties Now Subsisting Between Great Britain, and Other Kingdoms and States, To which is Prefixed a Preface or Introductory Discourse* shows "X"

[1] John Adams to James Warren, 17 July 1774, *PJA*, 2:109. On 20 June 1774, he wrote, "There will be an assembly of the wisest Men upon the Continent, who are Americans in Principle, i.e. against the Taxation of Americans, by Authority of Parliament. I feel myself unequal to this Business. A more extensive Knowledge of the Realm, the Colonies, and of Commerce, as well as of Law and Policy, is necessary, than I am Master of." John Adams, *JADA*, 2:96.

[2] Gregg L. Lint noted that the Model Treaty was "the first major state paper dealing with the conduct of the United States toward other sovereign powers," and "perhaps the most important document written by him as a member of the Continental Congress." See "John Adams on the Drafting of the Treaty Plan of 1776," *Diplomatic History* 2.3 (1978): 313, 319. Samuel Flagg Bemis wrote that the Model Treaty "furnished the model for all, except one, of the eighteenth century treaties of the United States, and may be regarded as a charter document of early American maritime practice." See *Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (New York, 1935), 46.

[3] John Adams, *JADA*, 3:338.

beside the relevant articles.[4] Although the treaties provided Adams with the language and format he needed to compose the Model Treaty, they were not, however, the source of his ideas. At least three months earlier, Adams wrote in his diary that America should make "Only a Commercial Connection" with France.[5] By the time he wrote the Model Treaty, Adams recalled that he was arguing that "Independence, Confederation, and Negotiation with foreign powers, particularly France, ought to go hand in hand, and be adopted all together."[6] To understand the genesis of the Model Treaty, it is therefore necessary to examine Adams' letters and diary entries and follow the development of his thinking.

Scholars disagree on the motivation and background of the Model Treaty.[7] Felix Gilbert argued that the Model Treaty represented a new approach to diplomacy that rejected the old European system of mercantilism, where commercial and political alliances were united. Gilbert emphasized the ideas about free trade offered by the philosophes, and the new world proclaimed by Thomas Paine. Gilbert observed that "The internal story… is much more difficult to disentangle. For its reconstruction we have only a few documents—the Model Treaty and the instructions—and brief remarks in the letters and memoirs of the main actors." Gilbert assumed that because John Adams read Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, in January 1776, he drew from

[4] See Ed. note, "John Adams on the Drafting of the Treaty Plan of 1776," *PJA*, 4:313-320, and the extensive editorial notes on the Model Treaty, *PJA*, 4:265-278.
[5] John Adams, March/April 1776, *JADA*, 2:236.
[6] John Adams, *JADA*, 3:327-330.
[7] Studies of the Model Treaty include Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy*; James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980); James H. Hutson, "Early American Diplomacy: A Reappraisal," in *The American Revolution in a Candid World*, Lawrence S. Kaplan, ed. (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977), 40-68; and William C. Stinchcombe, "John Adams and the Model Treaty," in *The American Revolution in a Candid World*, Lawrence S. Kaplan, ed. (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977), 69-84.

it the inspiration for the Model Treaty. Gilbert concluded that the Model Treaty was "entirely alien to the diplomatic practice of the time."[8]

James Hutson, specifically targeting Gilbert, argued that the American revolutionaries, as children of the Seven Years' War, understood and endorsed ideas about the balance of power and the primacy of interests. He pointed out that the Model Treaty prohibited a restored French Empire in North America. Hutson also introduced the fear of partition as a significant motivation for the timing of the Model Treaty. Loyalist Charles Inglis, in response to Thomas Paine, had argued that Great Britain might partition North America to prevent American independence: "Canada might be restored to France, Florida to Spain, with additions to each." The Patriots therefore were under pressure to make their own agreement with France before Great Britain won over France and Spain by agreeing to restore Canada and the Floridas. In essence, they offered something far more valuable than "a few acres of snow" or "pine trees & sand hills": access to their trade.[9]

It is tempting to identify Gilbert's analysis with Wilsonian idealism, and Hutson's analysis with realism. This view, however, does not take into account the development of the law of nations. As Daniel George Lang points out, Emmerich de Vattel, a primary source for the American revolutionaries, did not have an amoral view of the balance of power. Instead, "he combined the universalism and categories of the just-war tradition with aspects of modern natural rights theory derived from Hobbes and praise for the balance of power system, making a

[8] Gilbert, 44-54
[9] James H. Hutson, "The Partition Treaty and the Declaration of American Independence," *The Journal of American History* 58.4 (1972): 887-896. Voltaire famously dismissed Canada as "a few acres of snow." John Armstrong Jr. characterized Florida as "pine trees & sand hills" in a letter to James Madison in 1806. See Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 45.

new synthesis."[10] Peter Onuf and Eliga Gould both emphasize the place of the United States in the Atlantic world, and the importance of the law of nations in American diplomacy. Onuf, however, also warns against dismissing Gilbert's emphasis on ideas, and suggests revolutionary ideas about federalism are key. Gould stresses the desire of the American revolutionaries to be seen as "treaty-worthy" in the courts of Europe.[11] What Adams thought about "treaty-worthiness," federalism, balance of power, interests, alliances, and free trade are helpful in untangling the meaning and significance of the Model Treaty.

Adams was a child of the Seven Years' War, and he himself pointed to the importance of even his boyhood in shaping his views on foreign policy. But Adams learned more from that war than the importance of interests and the balance of power: he also understood the concept of "strategic depth." Although other revolutionaries may have feared the threat of partition, Adams pointed to the difficulty of conquering Canada in the Seven Years' War and pronounced the Thirteen Colonies, so long as they remained united, unconquerable. Furthermore, by the time he penned the Model Treaty, he was also a revolutionary fighting a war, and his correspondence before 1776, particularly with fellow New Englander James Warren, reveals how much he learned from his responsibilities for procuring supplies like powder for Washington's army. Adams' concern for open ports was not indebted to a timeless and an abstract appreciation of free trade, but a practical necessity in 1776. Thomas Paine does not appear to have influenced his thinking on foreign policy at all. Although in 1776 he did not express the contempt for Paine that he would in later years, he did not give *Common Sense* much notice either, simply including the

[10] Daniel George Lang, *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic: The Law of Nations and the Balance of Power* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1985), 10.
[11] Peter S. Onuf and Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World: the Law of Nations In an Age of Revolutions, 1776-1814* (Madison: Madison House, 1993); Peter S. Onuf, "A Declaration of Independence for Diplomatic Historians," *Diplomatic History* 22.1 (1998): 71-83; Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: the American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

pamphlet among others he sent to his wife, Abigail.[12] An analysis of the Model Treaty therefore needs to begin before 1776, and include both the thought and experience of John Adams. Adams saw diplomacy *and* force *and* geography as tools to achieve the goals of revolutionary foreign policy. Understanding of the Model Treaty is enhanced by the integration of diplomatic and naval history.[13]

As a New Englander, Adams grew up in a culture that was both agrarian and seafaring. Adams recalled gaining his earliest insights into the need for an independent American foreign policy from his father.[14] In 1809 he wrote in answer to Skelton Jones's request for information about his life:

> From my earliest infancy I had listened with eagerness to his [his father's] conversation with his friends during the whole expedition to Cape Breton, in

[12] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 18 Feb. 1776, *AFC*, 1:348-49.

[13] For a similar approach that integrates French diplomatic and naval history see Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence: a Study of Arms and Diplomacy, 1774-1787* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[14] Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick warn that Adams' recollections must be used with care. With regards to his writing about one of his cabinet meetings, they conclude: "The striking thing about this story is that it seems to have been fashioned almost entirely out of whole cloth. No such discussions occurred, and when Adams' purported account of them was published in the *Boston Patriot* it evoked astonished protests from those alleged to have taken part, both among each other and even to Adams himself." See *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 640. For a more sympathetic analysis of Adams' memory lapses see Robert E. McGlone, "Deciphering Memory: John Adams and the Authorship of the Declaration of Independence," *Journal of American History* 85.2 (1998): 411-438. McGlone takes advantage of recent developments in cognitive psychology to assess Adams' detailed recollection of a conversation he had with Thomas Jefferson over which of them should draft the Declaration of Independence. McGlone explains, "The very detail of Adams's 1822 recollection of the conversation with Jefferson invites skepticism. Only if Adams had repeated the whole exchange to himself or to others immediately afterward and often enough to store it, like a French lesson, in semantic memory, might it have survived substantially intact." See McGlone, 417. For a detailed study of the drafting of the Declaration that tries to assess all the available evidence see Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Knopf, 1997); for her treatment of Adams' memory, and her conclusion that neither Adams nor Jefferson remembered everything perfectly, see pp. 97-105, and 122-3. Like McGlone, she recognizes Adams' concern over his place in the history of the Revolution affected his recollections, as well as his acceptance of anti-Jeffersonian claims. For example, Adams liked to think that the infamous Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, which surfaced in 1819, was indeed earlier than Jefferson's. See Maier, 173. In practical terms, comparing Adams' recollections with contemporary documents helps to evaluate how dependable those recollections are. For example, while it is true that Adams thought a naval strategy to be of paramount importance in the Quasi-war, the impression he gives that he had always been an advocate for a frigate navy has eclipsed his earlier emphasis, during the War of Independence, on the brown-water navy.

> 1745, and I had received very grievous impressions of the injustice and ingratitude of GB towards new England in that whole transaction, as well as many others before and after it, during the years 1754, 1755, 1765, and 1757. The conduct of Generals Shirley, Braddock, Abercrombie, Webb and above all Lord Loudon, which were daily discussed in Mr. Putnam's family [Adams clerked for Putnam and boarded with him], gave me such an opinion and such a disgust of the British government that I heartily wished the two countries were separated for ever. I was convinced we could defend ourselves against the French and manage our affairs better without, than with, the English.[15]

Although Adams also acknowledged that he had rejoiced at the successful capture of Quebec in 1759, he dismissed it as inconsequential since unfortunately the benefits to the American colonies did not last. More importantly, he betrayed no appreciation for the role played by the Royal Navy, or the importance of seapower. His focus was on the conflict between British and American aims. New Englanders had been proud of the capture of the formidable French fortress of Louisbourg in 1746, and incensed at its return in 1748. Adams claimed that this early introduction to British injustices like the return of Louisbourg roused a hatred in him of the English, and a conviction that America would be better off without them. This framing of his memories, however, appears to owe more to his training in classics than his reaction at the time.[16]

Adams' earliest diary entry, dated November 18th, 1755, begins, "We had a severe Shock of an Earthquake. It continued near four minutes. I was then at my Fathers in Braintree, and awoke out of my sleep in the midst of it."[17] John Adams was twenty years old and a recent graduate of Harvard. He had not yet begun his legal career; and the French and Indian War had not yet spread to Europe. In his earliest letter, later dated sometime around October 12, 1755, Adams described the rise and ruin of empires. He mused about "the transfer of the great seat of

[15] John Adams to Skelton Jones, 11 March 1809, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[16] Adams may be more indebted to Livy's Hannibal, whose father taught him from childhood to hate the Romans.
[17] John Adams, 18 Nov. 1755, *JADA*, 1:1.

empire into America." Thanks to its growing population and plentiful naval stores, America would become unconquerable "if we can remove the turbulent Gallicks." The sole threat to American mastery would be disunion.[18] Adams may have read Benjamin Franklin's famous call to action about American colonists needing living space—a complaint less famously answered by Lord Howe who noted American colonists already had plenty of living space awaiting them in the new colonies of Nova Scotia and the Floridas.[19] This early interest in America's glorious future did not, however, translate into Adams abandoning his studies to assume an active role in removing the Gallicks, turbulent or otherwise.[20]

In 1756, Frederick the Great invaded Saxony, Louis XV seized Minorca, and John Adams taught school in Worcester. He was also hard at work mastering both law and the classics, the latter of which provided a framework more practical than is sometimes realized in the post-industrial age.[21] In his diary, Adams discusses military commanders Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), Charles XII of Sweden (1682-1718 AD), and Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658 AD) in the same vein.[22] Adams soaked up ideas like a sponge, for he "owned books, read books and battled them."[23] It is not surprising that when he had decided not to enter the ministry, he instead turned to law. Adams' home colony was deeply involved in the carrying trade,

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[18] John Adams to Nathan Webb, 12 Oct. 1755, *Old Family Letters*, 1:5-6.
[19] See Gerald Stourtz, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy*, 59; Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 25; and Richard Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 28.
[20] John E. Ferling, "Oh that I was a Soldier: John Adams and the Anguish of War," *American Quarterly* 36.2 (1984): 258-275.
[21] Dave R. Palmer notes, "The setting for warfare in Washington's time bears little resemblance to that of today… Washington and his contemporaries acted on a stage closer in many ways to the Roman Empire than to the world we know. To understand the art of war in their time, it is essential to take a long look back. See Dave R. Palmer, *George Washington: First in War* (Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon Ladies Association, 2000), 10. See also Don Higginbotham, "Military Education Before West Point," and Elizabeth D. Samet, "John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and the Figure in Arms," both in *Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy: Founding West Point*, Robert M.S. McDonald, ed. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004).
[22] John Adams, 22 November 1755, *JADA*, 1:6.
[23] Joseph J. Ellis, *Passionate Sage: the Character and Legacy of John Adams* (New York: Norton, 1993), 88.

shipbuilding, and supplying sailors. Boston, where he studied and later practiced law, was a port city. Adams records that he "Read in naval Trade and Commerce, concerning Factors, Consuls, Embassadors, &c., and the East South Sea Company, &c."[24] Adams betrayed a greater variety in his diary entry a few days later: "My Books, naval Trade, Coke, Andrews, Locke, Homer… Law and not Poetry, is to be the Business of my Life."[25] As part of his law practice, Adams dealt with merchants, so he was well aware of the importance and impact of trade on the New England economy. Adams defended clients accused of smuggling and murder at sea.[26] Living in the midst of a town that looked out on the Atlantic gave him intimate knowledge not only of the profits and expenses of the marine trade, but also the practical challenges facing ships at sea:

> But besides this, all Merchants, all Persons who have Property, in shipping, in Vessells that sail upon the sea, are in a peculiar manner liable to Accidents and Misfortunes. They are in Danger, from storms, from Rocks and sands, and they are in Danger from Pyrates and frenchmen, so that the Law, in establishing the freight of Vessells has made allowance, for these 3 things-for the Interest of Money on the Capital, for the Constant Expences in Repairing the Hull and the Cordage and the sails, and for the peculiar Danger from seas, Winds, Rocks and Enemies, which constantly environ Vessells on the sea. And accordingly the freight or Rent of shipping is very high in all foreign Voyages. Well, now the same Reasons, which have established a freight upon Vessells in foreign Voyages, has by Law established a certain share of the Profits [of] this schooner now in Controversy. But the Case, which is more precisely parrallel to this of Mr. Lovell, and which is decisive in this Case, is that of Whaling Voyages.[27]

Adams mentioned here the "Rent of shipping," that is, insurance, which often became a painful cost of doing business in wartime. Keeping insurance rates affordable would become key to maintaining American neutrality.

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[24] John Adams, 31 May 1760, *JADA*, 5:9.
[25] John Adams, 10 June 1760, *JADA*, 5:12.
[26] John Adams, *JALP*, L. Kinvin Wroth and Hiller B. Zobel, eds. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1965), 1:xxvi.
[27] John Adams, 24 Sept. 1760, *JADA*, 5:46.

Adams began studying the law in 1756, the same year war was declared again between Britain and France. In the midst of the Seven Years' War, Adams, the fledgling lawyer, mused about the limitations of seapower, and the need for alliances.

> The Representatives in their Address to the Governor, have told him that "Great Britain is the leading and most respectable Power in the whole World." — Let us examine this. — Is she the Leading Power, either in War or Negociation? — In War? She has no Army, not more than 50 or 60 thousand Men, whereas France has a standing Army, of 250,000 men in Camp and in Garrison. And their officers are as gallant and skillful, their Gunners and Engineers, the most accomplished of any in Europe. Their Navy indeed is now inconsiderable, And our Navy alone has given us the Advantage. But our Navy alone will not make us the leading Power. How we can be called the Leading Power I cant see. Holland, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, and all Italy has refused to follow us, and Austria, [*illegible*] Russia, Sweeden, and indeed almost all the states of Germany, the Prince of Hesse excepted, have followed France. The only Power, independent Power that has consented to follow us is Prussia, and indeed upon Recollection it seems to me we followed Prussia too, rather than the Contrary. — Thus we are the Leading Power without Followers. In short, "Leading and Respectable," is not to be determined, either by the Prince, the Policy, the Army, Navy, Arts, Science, Commerce, nor by any other national Advantage, taken singly and abstracted from the rest. But that Power is to be denominated so, whose Aggregate, of component Parts, is most.[28]

Adams noted that command of the sea had not won the war for Britain, nor ensured political or commercial supremacy.

Although his New England background and Boston law practice should not be discounted in shaping his ideas, it is difficult to find the future American diplomat in Adams' writings before the Revolution.[29] His diaries reveal that he was exposed to ideas about war and security that appear in the writings of English thinkers like John Locke, Francis Bacon, and Viscount Bolingbroke, but Adams himself suggests that his *system* for an effective foreign policy for the emerging American Republic dates from no earlier than 1774. In 1804, he told Commodore

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[28] John Adams, 2 Jan. 1761, *JADA*, 6:16.
[29] Max Saville, "Colonial Origins of American Diplomatic Principles," *Pacific Historical Review* 3.3 (1934): 334-350.

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 alliances with none if we could avoid it."[30] In 1808, he told Benjamin Rush he had held to his system for 34 years; in 1809 he told Joseph Lyman that he had held "this principle" for 35 years; and in 1815 he told James Lloyd that it had been for 40 years.[31] Adams gave the clearest outline of his system in the letter to Lloyd:

> 1. That neutrality in the wars of Europe is *our* truest policy; and to preserve this, alliances ought to be avoided as much and as long as possible.
> But, if we should be driven to the necessity of an alliance,
> 2. Then *France* is *our natural ally*; and,
> 3. That Great Britain is the last power, to which we should, in any, the last extremity, resort for any alliance, political or military.
> These three propositions appear to me as clear, as obvious, and as demonstrable as any political principles whatever, and almost as any proposition in Euclid.[32]

These four letters date the origin of Adams' system of neutrality to 1774 or 1775. Furthermore, in a letter to Benjamin Rush in 1805, Adams equated his system of neutrality with the Model Treaty. He explained that

> The Principle of Foreign Affairs which I then advocated, has been the invariable guide of my conduct, in all situations, as Ambassador in France, Holland and England, and as Vice President and President of the United States, from that hour to this… that we should make no Treaties of Allyance with any European Power: that we should consent to none but Treaties of Commerce.[33]

Adams went on to discuss the arguing about foreign policy in Congress in 1774 and 1775, then explained, "Long after this came the Motion for a Committee to prepare a plan of a Treaty to be offered to France. I was of this Committee and drew up the plan. I carefully excluded every Idea

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[30] John Adams to Commodore Truxton, 13 Dec 1804, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[31] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 18 January 1808, Adams Papers, reel 405; John Adams to Joseph Lyman, 20 April 1809, *Works*, 9:619; John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 9:147.
[32] John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 9:147.
[33] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 30 Sept. 1805, *Old Family Letters*, 79.

of Alliance: and reported a mere Treaty of Commerce."[34] Tracing the development of Adams' system of neutrality from 1774 therefore illuminates the genesis of the Model Treaty.[35]

On the night of December 16, 1773, a group of Bostonians dressed as Mohawks threw bales of tea into the Boston Harbor. This Boston Tea Party also marked the beginning of an illuminating series of letters between John Adams and James Warren.[36] Warren, probably best known to history as the husband of historian Mercy Otis Warren, was a member of the Sons of Liberty and an officer in the militia.[37] Adams turned to him for advice, and their letters would be filled with discussions of the manufacture of saltpeter, the defense of Boston harbor, and the relationship between trade and independence. At times Adams sought advice from others, such as Josiah Quincy, but then consulted Warren about the advice he had received.

Adams wrote Warren that the Tea Party was "the grandest, Event, which has ever yet happened Since, the Controversy, with Britain, opened!"[38] A few months later, Adams revealed that he thought the quarrel between Parliament and the colonies would continue without resolution; the colonies would neither "obtain a compleat Redress" nor "submit to an absolute Establishment." Adams forecast that ongoing bickering would continue beyond their lifetimes, and that "Our Children, may see Revolutions, and be concerned and active in effecting them of

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[34] Ibid., 81.
[35] Somewhere in 1773 or 1774 Adams decided to take an active role in supporting the Whigs. Ferling observes that "Clearly, the John Adams of 1774 was quite different from the man who proclaimed 'Farewell Politicks' in 1766 and again in 1771 and 1772." See *John Adams: A Life*, 81, 97. Ferling also cautions that "The evolution of Adams' thinking during this period is impossible to discern." It is true that Adams needed to use discretion in his letters in case they were intercepted, and that Congress sometimes insisted that their discussions be kept secret. See Ferling, *John Adams: A Life*, 129.
[36] *PJA*, 2: vii.
[37] On a letter he received from James Warren dated 16 Oct. 1774, Adams at some point wrote the note, "The Husband of the curious Historian!" Ed. note, *PJA*, 2:192.
[38] John Adams to James Warren, 17 December 1773, *PJA*, 2:1.

which we can form no Conception."[39] Unable to see American independence, Adams had no motivation to envision an American foreign policy.

Adams spent the early part of 1774 riding the court circuit, but in August he left Massachusetts and headed for Philadelphia where he took part in the First Continental Congress. Parliament had closed the port of Boston in March, and the central issue facing Congress was retaliation through continental non-exportation. Though he had listened to the arguments that these measures would "distress the commercial and manufacturing Interests in G. Britain," Adams was unsure of the effectiveness of non-exportation. Before he left for Philadelphia, he had written Warren and asked,

> But what do you think of a Non Exportation to Great Britain? Is it expedient to advise to a general Non Exportation? Will not Such a Measure, hurt ourselves? What will be the Consequence? Must not Fish, Rice, Wheat, Tobacco &c &c &c perish on our Hands, or must not Thousands of Families perish who once lived, by raising and producing those Commodities in America? [40]

Though he framed his opinion as questions, it appeared to Adams that non-exportation would do more damage to the fishermen and farmers of America than to the British merchants who pressured Parliament. In later years, he would claim that he had always opposed non-exportation, embargo, and any other form of commercial coercion.[41] In a second letter to Warren sent only a week later, Adams basically repeated his opposition, noting that

> I can't help enquiring what Plans would be adopted at the Congress, if a Sully, a Cecil, a Pitt, or a Ximenes, a Demosthenes or a Cicero were there—or all of them together… is it easy to believe they would propose Non Importation? Non Exportation? Non Consumption? If I mistake not, Somewhat a little more Sublime, and mettlesome, would come from Such Kind of Spirits. [42]

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[39] John Adams to James Warren, 9 April 1774, *PJA*, 2:83.
[40] John Adams to James Warren, 17 July 1774, *PJA*, 2:110.
[41] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 25 December 1811, *Works*, 10:10.
[42] John Adams to James Warren, 24 July 1774, *PJA*, 2:117.

Adams used previous leaders as an example for a more vigorous response. If Warren replied to these letters, his replies have not yet been found.

While in Philadelphia, Adams met Christopher Gadsden, a South Carolinian who became his loyal friend.[43] Adams recorded in his diary:

> There we were introduced to a Number of other Gentlemen of the City—Dr. Shippen, Dr. Knox, Mr. Smith, and a Multitude of others, and to Mr. Linch and Mr. Gadsden of S. Carolina. Here we had a fresh Welcome to the City of Philadelphia, and after some Time spent in Conversation a curtain was drawn, and in the other Half of the Chamber a Supper appeared as elegant as ever was laid upon a Table. About Eleven o Clock we retired.[44]

Gadsden was already friends with Samuel Adams and a leader of the Sons of Liberty in Charleston. He was also an officer in the militia and a merchant. [45] He had served two years as a purser in the British navy, and Adams later wrote of him as a former naval officer who "is well acquainted with the Fleet."[46] Though Adams did not record what Gadsden said at their supper, two weeks later he wrote that "Gadsden is violent against allowing to Parliament any Power of regulating Trade."[47] Charleston, although a Southern city, was also a port like Boston with an active merchant marine. Gadsden would later play an active role in establishing the Continental Navy.

Adams also met Richard Henry Lee when a number of representatives had breakfast together. He described Lee as "a masterly Man." According to Adams, Lee opposed all of Parliament's crackdowns in the American colonies:

> Lee is for making the Repeal of every Revenue Law, the Boston Port Bill, the Bill for altering the Massachusetts Constitution, and the Quebec Bill, and the Removal

[43] After Adams lost the election of 1800, Gadsden wrote him a supportive letter. See *Works*, 9:578-80.
[44] John Adams, 29 August 1774, *JADA*, 2:114.
[45] For a brief overview of his life and a collection of his most important surviving letters see *The Writings of Christopher Gadsden 1746-1805*, Richard Walsh, ed. (Columbia, 1966).
[46] John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 11 June 1775, *PJA*, 3:23.
[47] John Adams, 14 Sept. 1774, *JADA*, 2:133.

> of all the Troops, the End of the Congress, and an Abstinence from all Dutied Articles the Means—Rum, Mollosses, Sugar, Tea, Wine, Fruits, &c.[48]

Like Adams, Lee considered non-exportation counter-productive, but for a different reason:

> Mr. Lee think's that to strike at the Navigation Acts would unite every Man in Britain against us, because the Kingdom could not exist without them, and the Advantages they derive from these Regulations and Restrictions of our Trade, are an ample Compensation for all the Protection they have afforded us, or will afford us.[49]

Lee was pointing out that while it was true the Navigation Acts favored Britain over the colonies, these advantages were "ample compensation" for the expense of protecting that trade. In the Model Treaty, Adams would turn this idea on its head: he who benefited from access to American trade was responsible for protecting that trade.

The First Continental Congress adjourned on October 26, and Adams returned home. It was not clear how Parliament would respond to the threat of non-exportation and American Loyalists continued to defend the advantages the colonies had within the Empire. The clearest encounter between Adams and one of those Loyalists were the letters he wrote under the pseudonym Novanglus in response to those of Daniel Leonard, who wrote as Massachusettensis.[50] Leonard was not the first person to address the dangers inherent in independence, nor was Adams the only person to challenge Leonard. But because Adams wrote his Novanglus letters to counter Massachusettensis, they reveal that in early 1775, he was still uncertain about a foreign policy for an independent America. Massachusettensis published his

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[48] John Adams, 3 Sept. 1774, *JADA*, 2:120.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Adams did not know that Massachusettensis was Daniel Leonard. He thought his Loyalist opponent was Jonathan Sewall and did not find out Massachusettensis' true identity until 1819 when their letters were reprinted. See Ed. note, *JADA*, 2:161-162.

first letter December 12, 1774 in the *Massachusetts Gazette*.[51] He reminded his readers that Britain had "protected and defended the colonies against the maritime powers of Europe from their first British settlement to this day," and that Britain had recently "triumphed over the united powers of France and Spain." He outlined the dangers a rebellious America would face from Canadians and Indians on the western frontier and from the British navy against the coastal cities, the Atlantic trade and the fisheries.[52] In his second letter, published on December 19, 1774, he explained that the new British empire required more expense, but that the colonies benefited, including that "their trade was protected by the British navy."[53] Leonard would expand on these brief remarks later.

In his eighth letter, published January 30, 1775, Leonard wrote, "Let us indulge the idea, however extravagant and romantic, and suppose ourselves for ever separated from the parent state."[54] He went on to describe the horrors in the wake of the loss of British protection:

> Would not our trade, navigation and fishery… become the sport and prey of the maritime powers of Europe? Would not our maritime towns be exposed to the pillaging of every piratical enterprize? Are the colonies able to maintain a fleet, sufficient to afford one idea of security to such an extensive sea-coast?[55]

Leonard then pointed out that "Before they can defend themselves against foreign invasions, they must unite into one empire," then proceeded to explain that this union was impossible because of regional imperatives; and, even if it were possible, the new empire would be "staggering and sinking under the load of your own taxes" that would be needed to support the new empire's defense.[56]

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[51] Daniel Leonard and John Adams, *The American Colonial Crisis: The Daniel Leonard-John Adams Letters to the Press 1774-1775*, Bernard Mason, ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 1-7.
[52] Ibid., 6.
[53] Ibid., 8.
[54] Ibid., 51.
[55] Ibid., 51.
[56] Ibid., 51-53.

Independence, then, would require confederation and both would require taxes. Leonard then addressed the proposed solution:

> To elude the difficulty resulting from our defenceless situation, we are told that the colonies would open a free trade with all the world, and all the nations would join in protecting their common mart. A very little reflection will convince us that this is chimerical.[57]

Leonard scoffed at the idea that American trade with Britain could be shifted to another European power, or even all of them together. It was "chimerical" to dream of multinational protection. Furthermore, both Spain and France, rather than assisting the new empire, would instead attempt to recover the "territories, that were torn, reluctant and bleeding from them, in the last war."[58] Worse yet, the fate of the former British colonies would be partition like Poland.[59]

John Adams addressed this nightmare in his third letter published on February 6, 1775. He argued that the colonies were more united than Britain itself, despite the efforts of the local Loyalists.[60] He pointed out that "It is not so easy a thing for the most powerful state to conquer a country a thousand leagues off;" and reminded his readers that it had taken years and troops and millions of pounds to conquer Canada, and Britain had had to guarantee property and religion to secure the province.[61] He thus pronounced the American colonies unconquerable. He then turned to the role of the Royal Navy, which would not only need to subdue America, but continue to protect the home island. He noted the difficulty Britain had of preventing smuggling even in her home islands: how much more impossible would it be to blockade the North American

[57] Ibid., 53.
[58] Ibid., 53.
[59] Ibid., 54.
[60] Ibid., 126.
[61] Ibid., 126.

colonies.[62] Massachusettensis had criticized the "new-fangled militia," but Adams insisted "in a land war, this continent might defend itself against all the world," including against the Indians, should it become necessary.[63] He warned that if Britain opened fire on a coastal town, the outcry at the atrocity "would occasion the loss of all the colonies to Great Britain forever."[64]

Adams could look back to the French and Indian war for a model for American defense. He was less sure how to counter Leonard on commercial issues:

> It is not so clear that our trade, fishery, and navigation, could be taken from us. Some persons, who understand this subject better than Massachusettensis, with his sprightly imaginations, are of a different opinion. They think our trade will be increased.[65]

Who "some persons" were is unclear. Adams added that he "would not enlarge upon this subject, because I wish the trade of this continent may be confined to Great Britain, at least as much of it, as it can do her any good to restrain."[66] In his fourth letter, published on the 13th of February, 1775, Adams expanded on his understanding of the role of Britain. He argued that since Britain had the benefit of American trade, that in itself was "really a tax on us."[67] He conceded that "Duties for regulating trade we paid, because we thought it just and necessary that they should regulate the trade which their power protected."[68] It is important to note that he was willing to entertain the idea of Britain remaining America's predominant trading partner.

In his third letter, Adams had argued that it was Britain's "name… not her fleets and armies," which protected the American trade and fishery, and any effort Britain made on the

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[62] Ibid., 130
[63] Ibid., 131-132.
[64] Ibid., 132.
[65] Ibid., 132.
[66] Ibid., 132.
[67] Ibid., 138.
[68] Ibid., 141.

behalf of Americans during the French and Indian War was financed by Americans.[69] Though Adams did not say so, the implication was that the same money could be spent on American fleets and armies. Leonard responded directly to these points in his fourteenth letter published 13 March, 1775. He scoffed that "Novanglus would persuade us that exclusive of her assistance in the last war, we have had but little of her protection, unless it was such that her name alone afforded."[70] Massachusettensis had concrete evidence that Britain had given America more than her name:

> It ought not to be forgot that the siege of Louisbourg, in 1745, by our own forces, was covered by a British fleet… it is not probable that the expedition would have been undertaken without an expectation of some naval assistance, or that the reduction could have been effected without it.[71]

Massachusettensis struck directly at New England pride by giving Britain credit for the great victory at Louisbourg. To further prove his point, Massachusettensis quoted the assembly's appeal to Governor Shirley for help from his Majesty.[72] He also noted that the "fleets stationed on our coasts and the convoys and security afforded to our trade and fishery" are "always in readiness." Britain was prepared, if necessary, should war break out, and "By such precautions every part of her wide extended empire enjoys as ample security as human power and policy can afford."[73] Leonard's praise of Britain's attention to the safety of the colonists, and concern over how an independent America might defend itself, demanded an answer.

But Adams failed to counter Massachusettensis. He never addressed the points about the effectiveness of the Royal Navy in his remaining Novanglus letters or in his subsequent letters to Warren. In early 1775, he still was willing to accept that Britain could regulate American trade,

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[69] Ibid., 129.
[70] Ibid., 81.
[71] Ibid., 82.
[72] Ibid., 82.
[73] Ibid., 83.

and had given no thought to how that trade was protected, let alone how an independent America might do so.[74] Because he was still envisioning America's role within the British Empire, that meant developing an independent foreign policy was not required.

By the tenth of May, 1775, Adams was back in Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress. Fighting had already broken out between British regulars and New England militia, and Adams wrote to his friend Warren,

> The martial Spirit throughout this Province is astonishing. It arose all of a Sudden, Since the News of the Battle of Lexington. Quakers and all are carried away with it…. America will Soon be in a Condition to defend itself by Land against all Mankind.[75]

The Patriots could look to their colonial militia and minutemen as the basis for a Continental Army, though Adams wrote to Warren again a few weeks later, remarking that, "We have a most miraculous Militia in this City, brought into existence, out of Nothing since the Battle of Lexington." Adams noted some interest in pikemen, but was himself more impressed with the skill of the riflemen, some of whom he hoped Congress would send north to assist New England.[76]

While not watching Philadelphia's fighting men, Adams participated in meetings with the representatives from other colonies and served on at least nine committees.[77] It is impossible to recover all the suggestions and ideas Adams encountered, and even those extant are not without mystery. Adams received a letter in June from someone unknown who described himself as "a private Man," who wished "to offer to your Consideration the following Hints."[78] These "Hints" included assurance that force was necessary to restore peace with Britain and maintain American

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[74] Ferling, *John Adams: A Life*, 130.
[75] John Adams to James Warren, 21 May 1775, *PJA*, 3:11.
[76] John Adams to James Warren, 10 June 1775, *PJA*, 3:22-23.
[77] See Ed. note, *PJA*, 3:7-9 for details of those nine committees.
[78] Unknown to John Adams, 9 June 1775, *PJA*, 3:18.

liberty; and that if the inhabitants of Quebec would join the revolt, the colonists should "lead their slaves to the Conquest of that Country," and these slaves should subsequently be freed and settled in Quebec. Whether Quebec and Jamaica might join with the other colonies was still an open question, and support from Quebec would end the threat from Indians and weaken Britain's hold on the continent. Using slaves as soldiers was part of the colonial tradition, and would neutralize the British threat to entice slaves to revolt; though the Private man acknowledged masters would also need some compensation for the loss of their slaves.[79]

The Private man also had advice about a treaty of commerce:

> Is not Holland our natural Ally upon the present Occasion, to supply us with Arms, Ammunition, Manufactures and perhaps Money? Ought not an advantageous Treaty of Commerce to be immediately offered her, upon her repaying that Assistance against the Oppressions of Britain, which our Ancestors in the Reign of our glorious Queen Elizabeth afforded them against the Tyranny of Spain?[80]

The appeal to Holland's debt from the past differs from a pragmatic expectation of protection of commerce for trade privileges, but the idea that countries such as Holland, Spain and France could supply the Americans with military stores was not unique to the Private man. In addition, the focus in Congress had shifted from non-importation to finding ways to open America's ports. The fighting in New England had depleted the rebels' ammunition, and they were already robbing British depots to try to replenish their supplies. On June 10, Adams wrote Moses Gill, Chairman of the Committee of Supplies in Massachusetts. He told Gill that although he had to stay silent about the discussions in Congress, he could nevertheless disclose what he heard "out of Doors" from general conversation. The view seemed to be that Americans should "prepare for a vigorous defensive War, but at the Same Time to keep open the Door of Reconciliation,"

[79] Ibid., 3:18-19.
[80] Ibid.

although Adams himself preferred "Powder and Artillery." He described "this Continent" as "a vast, unweildy Machine."[81] The same day, he wrote Warren about attempts to find that powder.[82] At this point, Adams was learning the art of war, not from books, but from his part in fighting one.

On July 6, 1775, Adams wrote Warren and included a section, "Secret and confidential, as the Saying is." Adams complained that "You will see a Strange Oscilation between Love and Hatred, between War and Peace. Preparations for War, and Negociations for Peace."[83] It is possible Adams had already decided independence was coming, and therefore was impatient with others, who like himself a few months earlier, had not yet grasped the inevitable.[84] He also drew Warren's attention to a "Spirited Manifesto":

> We ought immediately to dissolve all Ministerial Tyrannies, and Custom houses, set up Governments of our own, like that of Connecticutt in all the Colonies, confederate together like an indissoluble Band, for mutual defence and open our Ports to all Nations immediately. This is the system that your Friend has aimed at promoting from first to last; But the Colonies are not yet ripe for it.[85]

This "Spirited Manifesto" to which Adams referred was *The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity for Taking Up Arms,* which had been drafted by Thomas Jefferson and reworked by John Dickinson.[86] Although Jefferson wrote the document, Adams clearly approved of its combination of independence, confederation, and the opening of ports. Eventually Congress would form three committees to deal with these three issues; the first would produce the Declaration of Independence, the second, the Articles of Confederation, and the third, the Model

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[81] John Adams to Moses Gill, 10 June 1775, *PJA*, 3:20-21.
[82] John Adams to James Warren, 10 June 1775, *PJA*, 3:22.
[83] John Adams to James Warren, 6 July 1775, *PJA*, 3:63.
[84] See ed. note, *PJA*, 3:63.
[85] Ibid., 3:73.
[86] For a treatment of the complex authorship of the *Declaration* see Julian P. Boyd, "The Disputed Authorship of the Declaration on the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms, 1775," in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 74 (1950): 51-73.

Treaty. But this crystallization of the three interlocking keys to the establishment of the American Republic would not occur for almost another year.

When Warren wrote to Adams on the 11th of July, 1775, he informed Adams that he had seen a letter Adams sent to Elbridge Gerry. A month earlier, Adams had written Gerry about Christopher Gadsden's proposals for dealing with the British navy:

> Mr. Gadsden of South Carolina whose Fame you must have heard, was in his younger Years, an officer, on board the Navy, and is well acquainted with the Fleet. He has Several Times taken Pains to convince me that this Fleet is not so formidable to America, as we fear. He Says, We can easily take their sloops, Schooners, and Cutters, on board of whom are all their best Seamen, and with these We can easily take their large ships, on board of whom are all their impress'd and discontented Men. He thinks, the Men would not fight on board the large ships with their fellow subjects, but would certainly kill their own officers. He says it is a different Thing, to fight the French or Spaniards from what it is to fight british Americans—in one case, if taken Prisoners they must lie in Prison for Years, in the other obtain their Liberty and Happiness.[87]

Gadsden thought Americans could neutralize the British by seizing their ships because their impressed crews would not resist. America would then have both warships and men to man them, while at the same time reducing the force against them. Warren was pleased with Gadsden's plan, and "thought it very happy to have so great an Authority Confirming my own Sentiments, and haveing proposed in Congress." Warren himself thought that "Ten very good going Sloops from 10 to 16 Guns I am persuaded would clear our Coasts. What would 40 such be to the Continent." A mere ten sloops would open "our Coasts," that is, the ports of New England, including Boston, which was still occupied by the British. It seems reasonable that Adams was indebted to Gadsden and Warren for ideas on how to open America's ports to the trade of the world.

[87] John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, [ante 11] June 1775, *PJA*, 3:23.

On the same day, another New Englander was writing to Adams. Josiah Quincy, whose home provided him with a view of Boston's harbor, informed Adams of the missed opportunity to seize an anchored transport ship and its cargo of powder and cannon. Quincy also shared his enthusiasm for row galleys:

> I am unable to concieve, any Method so likely to secure our Navigation (Coastwise) as *Row Gallies.* They are calculated to go in shoal Water, and navigated with many Men, are armed with Swivels, and one large battering Cannon in the Bow of each. By this, they can keep off any Vessel of one Tier of Guns. One such Vessel (I apprehend) might securely convoy 10 or a Dozn. provision Vessels, from Harbor to Harbor, in the summer Season.[88]

Both Warren and Quincy were focused on ships that would keep America's harbors open; the former suggesting sloops, the latter row galleys. Adams later told Warren that Quincy had "got the idea of row gallies from a shipwright escaped from a Turkish galley and has a model of one."[89] When Adams asked Warren what he thought of this option, Warren said,

> The Row Gallies you have at Philadelphia may be very serviceable in smooth water but if I am rightly Informed would not do in a Sea. No doubt such might be Constructed as would but I am Inclined to think that our common Armed Vessels, especially as we can be so superiour in Men, and are more used to them will Answer the purpose better, if we choose such as sail well.[90]

Sloops would be a more flexible option than row galleys, and although they would require more experienced sailors, New England had the manpower. Warren, however, also recognized the value of whaleboats, which, being small and maneuverable, could approach British warships in the harbor and capture them in surprise attacks. He gloated that the British were "more afraid of our whale boats than we are of their men of war."[91]

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[88] Josiah Quincy to John Adams, 11 July 1775, *PJA*, 3:75. This Josiah Quincy's dates are 1710-1784.
[89] John Adams to James Warren, 8 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:192.
[90] James Warren to John Adams, 20 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:224.
[91] James Warren to John Adams, 20 July 1775, *PJA*, 3:84.

As Adams indicated in his letter of 23 July 1775 to Warren, Congress had decided that each colony should look to its own harbor defense. A related question was who should make use of those harbors:

> We have had in contemplation a resolution to invite all nations to bring their commodities to market here, and like fools have lost it for the present. This is a great idea. What shall we do? Shall we invite all nations to come with their luxuries, as well as conveniences and necessaries? Or shall we think of confining our trade with them to our own bottoms, which alone can lay a foundation for great wealth and naval power. Pray think of it. [92]

Adams, unconvinced about the value of non-importation, was much more receptive to Americans finding ways to force open their ports to trade. The question was, who should carry the luxuries, conveniences, and necessaries: the foreign nations or America's own merchantmen? The next day he wrote again to Warren, "freely" this time, and argued for an aggressive policy where Americans should have established "whole Legislative, Executive and Judicial of the whole Continent, and have compleatly moddelled a Constitution, to have raised a Naval Power and opened all our Ports wide."[93] Warren replied on the 31st, that "The Hint you give of Inviteing all Nations to Trade with us is indeed a grand Idea," but cautioned Adams that confining the carrying trade to Americans was not, at this present time, in America's interests, though he conceded it might also be difficult to take over that trade in the future. He hoped to discuss the matter further in person.[94]

Adams wrote one of his longest surviving letters to Warren on the seventh of October.[95] According to his own notes, on that day Congress considered the establishment of an American fleet, though the decision was put off for the next few months. Congress did establish a

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[92] John Adams to James Warren, 23 July 1775, *PJA*, 3:87-88. Congress was divided over whether duties should be assigned and collected or not. See *JCC* 2:189, 200-202. "Naval power" as used by Adams here, does not mean a standing navy, but the carrying trade.
[93] John Adams to James Warren, 24 July 1775, *PJA*, 3:89.
[94] James Warren to John Adams, 31 July 1775, *PJA*, 3:112.
[95] John Adams to James Warren, 7 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:188-191.

committee to deal with the threat of two powder ships sailing for Quebec, and appointed Adams a member of this committee, as well as his friend Christopher Gadsden. This committee, though intended to address a specific threat, grew into the Naval Committee and operated as such until the Marine Committee took over in December. [96] Using Warren as a sounding board, Adams began,

> I wish We were at Liberty to write freely and Speak openly upon every Subject, for their is frequently as much Knowledge derived from Conversation and Correspondence, as from Solemn public Debates. A more intricate and complicated Subject never came into any Mans thoughts, than the Trade of America. The Questions that arise, when one thinks of it, are very numerous. [97]

Adams wondered what would happen if the colonies should decide to cease all trade. Would simply making the decision mean all trade would therefore cease? Would smugglers not take the risk anyway, despite the threats from warships? Then he wondered if the Americans decided to send ambassadors, where they should send them, and would they be received? And if received, what should they offer? If the Americans offered a treaty of commerce, what guarantee could they give that, once they won their independence, they would honor the treaty? And would not Spain and France fear for their colonies? But could the Americans even afford to cease commerce? Could they win the war without it? Adams then asked, "If we must have Trade, how shall we obtain it? There is one Plan, which alone, as it has ever appeared to me, will answer the End in some Degree, at first." Adams then outlined his plan:

> Our Country furnishes a vast abundance of materials for Commerce. Foreign Nations, have great Demands for them. If We should publish an Invitation to any one Nation or more, or to all Nations, to send their ships here, and let our Merchants inform theirs that We have Harbours where the Vessells can lie in Safety, I conjecture that many private foreign Adventurers would find Ways to send Cargoes here thro all the Risques without Convoys. At the Same Time our

[96] See Ed. note, *PJA*, 2:202.
[97] John Adams to James Warren, 7 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:188-191. Adams repeated some of these concerns in other letters to Warren. See 19 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:215-216; 20 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:216-217.

> own Merchants, would venture out with their Vessells and Cargoes, especially in Winter, and would run thro many Dangers, and in both these Ways together, I should hope We might be supplied with Necessaries.
> All this however Supposes that We fortify and defend our own Harbours and Rivers. We may begin to do this. We may build Row Gallies, flatt bottomed Boats, floating Batteries, Whale Boats, Vesseaux de Frize, nay Ships of War, how many, and how large I cant say. To talk of coping Suddenly with G. B. at sea would be Quixotish indeed. But the only Question with me is can We defend our Harbours and Rivers? If We can We can trade.[98]

Adams' plan focused on keeping the harbors open to receive merchantmen, and permitting any merchant—American or European—who wished to run the risks on the Atlantic to take those risks. A formal treaty was not required; the invitation would be enough. Adams had accepted Warren's recommendation not to confine this risky carrying trade to American merchantmen. He was also unsure what the American fleet, that is, the new American standing navy, should look like. What was important was opening the ports, and keeping them open. Adams' next letter to Warren dealt with Boston harbor and the question of Quincy's row galleys.[99] A few days later, he enclosed to Warren, "A Proposal Regarding the Procurement of Powder."[100] On the 19th he asked Warren, "What Think you of an American Fleet? I dont mean 100 ships of the Line." He explained that even a fleet of small ships was opposed by some because they, unlike New England, had no carrying trade and thought it too expensive.[101] It is important to note that Adams' ideas about trade and an American fleet to protect that trade were developing in the context of concrete necessities and limitations during the War of Independence.

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[98] Ibid. Adams also wrote Charles Lee and expressed similar thoughts. See John Adams to Charles Lee, 13 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:204.
[99] See above.
[100] John Adams to James Warren, 12 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:197-98.
[101] John Adams to James Warren, 19 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:214-215.

Warren answered Adams' long letter on 20th October, 1775. His own long letter gave mostly news of the war, but he addressed the issue of trade:

> We are in a Storm and must make A Port. We must Exert ourselves in some of the ways you mention. I think we must have Trade and Commerce. I see no difficulty in Admitting it in our own Bottoms consistantly with the Association if Individuals will hazard their Interest and opening our Ports to foreigners, one or more.[102]

Warren would write more letters to Adams, informing him of how American privateers had captured British ships, prizes that provided not only powder but wine; how these same captures were depriving the British of needed supplies; and that the British had finally abandoned Boston, though he did not know where they went. Adams appreciated the practical advice supplied by those on the scene; he admitted to Josiah Quincy that "I must confess, altho I was born so near it, I never before understood the Course of the Channell, and the Situation of the Harbour so well."[103] Americans built row galleys and used whaleboats to harass British warships, and both New Englanders and Europeans did risk sailing the Atlantic. Britain's blockade proved to be a leaky one.[104]

In the spring of 1776, Congress issued letters of marque to American privateers. Adams wrote Warren, expecting him to be pleased, and also mentioned his hope that "will not be long before, Trade will be open."[105] In a letter to Horatio Gates two days later, Adams said that before the letters of marque we had "conducted half a war," but "for the future We are likely to wage

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[102] James Warren to John Adams, 20 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:218-224.
[103] John Adams to Josiah Quincy, 6 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:188.
[104] Lance E. Davis and Stanley L. Engerman, *Naval Blockades in Peace and War: An Economic History Since 1750* (Cambridge, 2006), 63. The authors note, "Because of its physical location—a location marked by narrow channels and frequent fog—Boston and the surrounding waters proved most difficult for the British to blockade effectively. In addition, after 1778, Britain was committed to operations in the South—operations that drew vessels from the Northern blockade. Taken together, Massachusetts Bay continued, throughout the war, as the safest port for entry." They also point out that the British became more successful in their overall blockade after 1782, which is of course long after Adams wrote the Model Treaty. See p. 64.
[105] John Adams to James Warren, 21 March 1776, *PJA*, 4:56.

three Quarters of a war." In the same letter, he also commented on the Prohibitory Act, passed by Parliament on December 22, 1775 and published in American newspapers in February. The Prohibitory Act removed the protection of the Royal Navy and unleashed that same Navy against America's coastal cities. Adams argued that the Act, whatever it was called, was really an "Act of Independence," and that it was "a compleat Dismemberment of the British Empire. It throws thirteen Colonies out of the Royal Protection, levels all Distinctions and makes us independent in spight of all our supplications and Entreaties."[106] He also mentioned his frustration with establishing state governments in the Middle and Southern colonies, but was confident that the Thirteen Colonies "leagued together in a faithfull Confederacy might bid Defyance to all the Potentates of Europe if united against them."[107] Privateers were one way to resist the Prohibitory Act; Confederation another. Treaties of Commerce would be the third.

It was becoming clear, despite the significance of issuing letters of marque, that more formal documents were required. French harassment of Britain in Europe would assist Patriot war efforts in North America, but France would require some enticement from America to give that support. The obvious enticement was American trade; as Adams argued, depriving Britain of trade advantages was already in French interests, and guaranteeing those advantages to France should be enough to merit her support. Political independence therefore could not be achieved without a companion declaration of economic independence. Sometime in March or April, Adams wrote in his diary:

> Is any Assistance attainable from F.?
>
> What Connection may We safely form with her?

[106] John Adams to Horatio Gates, 23 March 1776, *PJA*, 4:58-60.
[107] Ibid.

> 1 st. No Political Connection. Submit to none of her Authority—receive no Governors, or officers from her.
>
> 2d. No military Connection. Receive no Troops from her.
>
> 3d. Only a Commercial Connection, i.e. make a Treaty, to receive her Ships into our Ports. Let her engage to receive our Ships into her Ports—furnish Us with Arms, Cannon, Salt Petre, Powder, Duck, Steel.[108]

Here then is the Model Treaty in brief. America would be independent, and not ruled by France. America would not receive troops from France: the hated Hessians would not be replaced by the *troupes de la terre* who had left Quebec after 1763. The commercial connection focused, not on free trade, but on open ports. That emphasis made room for limited French naval support; it was already clear to Adams that an American fleet of some kind was necessary to keep America's ports open to trade; it was reasonable that France would likewise use a naval force of some kind to keep her ports open to American merchantmen. In a letter to James Warren, Adams explained,

> But We ought to form Alliances. With Whom? What Alliances? You dont mean to exchange British for French Tyranny. No, you dont mean to ask the Protection of French Armies. No. We had better depend upon our own. We only Want, commercial Treaties. Try the experiment without them. But France and England will part the Continent between them. Perhaps so, But both will have good Luck to get it. [109]

The commercial treaty was aimed primarily at keeping France from simply replacing the British tyranny in America in 1776 rather than keeping America out of future European wars. Americans must win their own independence through their own exertions, and Adams was proud of his part in establishing an American fleet. He wrote to his wife,

> You will see an Account of the Fleet in some of the Papers I have sent you. Give you Joy of the Admirals Success. I have Vanity enough to take to myself, a share in the Merit of the American Navy. It was always a Measure that my Heart was

[108] John Adams, March/April 1776, *JADA*, 2:236.
[109] John Adams to James Warren, 16 April 1776, *PJA*, 4:121-123.

> much engaged in, and I pursued it, for a long Time, against the Wind and Tide. But at last obtained it.[110]

This navy that he was so proud of was not his famous frigate navy, but one of sloops, row galleys, and whale boats.

Warren agreed with Adams that a formal commercial treaty was necessary; the informal invitation signified by opening of ports would not be enough:

> I dont want a French Army here, but I want to have one Employed against Britain, and I doubt whether that will ever be done till you make A more Explicit declaration of Independence than is in your privateering Resolves, or those for Opening the Ports. You will never be thought in Earnest, and fully determined yourselves, and to be depended on by others till you go further.[111]

The Rule of '56 forbade the opening of ports in wartime to nations who had not been welcome to trade in those ports in peacetime. The French needed a guarantee that, were independence achieved and peace restored, the old commercial ties between America and Britain would not merely resume. A formal treaty was an accepted method of providing that guarantee. Adams had also received a letter from Patrick Henry, where Henry expressed fear of partition: "the half of our continent offered to France, may induce her to aid our destruction, which she certainly has the power to accomplish."[112] As noted above, Adams had not forgotten the difficulty Britain had experienced in the French and Indian War, and he was unafraid of the threat of partition.[113] The solution was to use commercial advantages to enlist France against Britain in Europe, and at the same time, avoid a military alliance by making only a commercial treaty.

On June 10, Congress appointed a committee to prepare a Declaration of Independence, and two days later appointed another committee to draw up a Plan of Treaties. Thomas Jefferson

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[110] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 28 April 1776, *AFP*, 1:399.
[111] James Warren to John Adams, 8 May 1776, *PJA*, 4:178.
[112] Patrick Henry to John Adams, 20 May 1776, *PJA*, 4:201.
[113] For the view that Adams did fear partition, see James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 23-24.

was the principal author of the former; John Adams of the latter. In a letter to John Winthrop, Adams explained his thinking: the American states were already independent; Britain was already "roused" against them; a formal declaration could not strain relations further. For those who feared that "France will take advantage of us," Adams had this assurance:

> I am not for soliciting any political Connection, or military Assistance, or indeed naval, from France. I wish for nothing but Commerce, a mere Marine Treaty with them. And this they will never grant, untill We make the Declaration, and this I think they cannot refuse, after We have made it.[114]

Adams was not inviting a French army or navy to America; the dangers expressed by Massachusettis, and more recently, by Patrick Henry, of coming under the power of France had not disappeared. The formal Declaration would strengthen America's position both at home and abroad, and the marine treaty would support independence. A committee had been appointed to work out a confederation, which he thought would take more time.[115]

Adams had never written a treaty before, but in 1774 his legal experience had earned him the task of dealing with Massachusetts' claim to Vermont.[116] While it is true that boundary disputes are commonly dealt with by diplomats, and the experience may have been helpful, Adams himself gave credit to a book loaned to him by Benjamin Franklin, *A Compleat Collection of All the Articles and Clauses which Relate to the Marine, in the Several Treaties Now Subsisting Between Great Britain, and Other Kingdoms and States, To which is Prefixed a Preface or Introductory Discourse*. He also used two books that he cited in the draft: *A Collection of State Tracts Publish'd . . . during the Reign of King William III. To which is Prefix'd The History of the Dutch War in 1672* and *A General Treatise of the Dominion of the*

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[114] John Adams to John Winthrop, 23 June 1776, *PJA*, 4:333.
[115] Ibid.
[116] John Adams, *JADA*, 3:302-04. Some of the work he did was useful during Washington's presidency (and later) for the Maine boundary dispute.

Sea: And a Compleat Body of the Sea-Laws . . . To which is subjoin'd, An Appendix concerning the present State and Regulations of the Admiralty and Navy.[117] From these works, Adams selected the material he needed to express his ideas. The finished draft included a preamble and 30 articles, which can be divided into two sections.[118] For the first thirteen articles, Adams borrowed some of the language from *A Collection of State Tracts* and from *A General Treatise of the Dominion of the Sea.* For Articles 14-30, Adams basically copied conventional articles from commercial treaties between Britain and France that addressed issues such as privateering, piracy, contraband, prizes and procedures should war break out.[119] It is important to note that a commercial treaty was not limited to economics, but included articles addressing security of merchantmen and naval support on their behalf.

In the first 13 Articles, Adams addressed the division of the British Empire and the privileges and responsibilities of the American heir, and in doing so, finally answered the challenges of Massachusettenis. Leonard had feared that France would seek to regain her lost territory. In Article 8, Adams obligated France to accept the Treaty of 1763 where she had been driven from the continent:

> In Case of any War between the most Christian King and the King of Great Britain, the most Christian King Shall never invade, nor attempt to invade, or get Possession, for himself of Labradore, New Britain, Nova Scotia, Accadia, Canada, Florida, nor any of the Countries, Cities, or Towns, on the Continent of North America, nor of the Islands of Newfoundland, Cape Breton, St. Johns, Anticoste, nor of any other Islands lying near to the Said Continent, in the Seas, or in any Gulph, Bay, or River, it being the true intent and meaning of this Treaty, that the Said united States Shall have the Sole, exclusive undivided and perpetual Possession of all the Countries, Cities, and Towns, on the Said Continent, and of all Islands near to it, which now are, or lately were under the Jurisdiction of or subject to the King or Crown of Great Britain, whenever the Same can be

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[117] John Adams, *JADA*, 4:260-265; Ed. note, *PJA*, 4:262-263.
[118] Lint, 316.
[119] For details on which articles Adams borrowed from which treaties, see Lint, 313-320, and the extensive editorial notes on the Model Treaty, *PJA*, 4:265-278.

> invaded, and conquered by the Said united States, or shall in any manner submit to or be confederated with them.[120]

France was never to seek to regain former possessions such as Canada, nor was she to seek new colonies on the North American mainland such as Florida. The Patriots had already invaded Canada, and were determined to choke off this potential threat to the west, but it was unclear whether Canada would "submit" or "be confederated."[121] Whatever the outcome, France would not be part of it.

Leonard had asked who would protect the trade; Adams now had an answer. Adams divided the former responsibilities of the Royal Navy by including articles that obligated America to keep her ports open, as her row galleys and whaleboats were doing, and articles that obligated France to protect not only the trade that came into her ports, but also American merchantmen threatened by the Barbary pirates:

> The most Christian King Shall protect, defend and Secure, as far as in his Power, the Subjects, People and Inhabitants of the Said united States and every of them, and their Vessells and Effects of every Kind, against all Attacks, Assaults, Violences, Injuries. Depredations or Plunderings by or from the King or Emperor of Morocco, or Fez, and the States of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, and any of them.[122]

Asking the Most Christian King to defend American merchantmen in the Mediterranean "as the King and Kingdom of Great Britain, before the Commencement of the present War," had done

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[120] "Plan of Treaties," *PJA*, 4:266.

[121] Article 20 of the Articles of Confederation states that, "Canada acceding to this Confederation, and entirely joining in the Measures of the United Colonies, shall be admitted into and entitled to all the Advantages of this Union." In practical terms, Adams was not sure whether Canada would join the Union: "We have been puzzled to discover, what we ought to do, with the Canadians and Indians. Several Persons, have been before the Congress who have lately been in the Province of Canada, particularly Mr. Brown and Mr. Price, who have informed us that the French are not unfriendly to us. And by all that we can learn of the Indians, they intend to be neutral. But whether We Should march into Canada with an Army Sufficient to break the Power of Governor Carlton, to overawe the Indians, and to protect the French has been a great Question. It Seems to be the general Conclusion that it is best to go, if We can be assured that the Canadians will be pleased with it, and join." See John Adams to James Warren, 7 June 1775, *PJA*, 3:17.

[122] "Plan of Treaties," *PJA*, 4:266.

proved contentious when Congress reviewed the Model Treaty. The instructions given to the American representatives who travelled to France to make a treaty included this concession:

> The seventh article ought to be obtained if possible, but should be waved rather than that the treaty should be interrupted by insisting upon it. His most Christian Majesty agreeing nevertheless to use his interest and influence to procure passes from the states mentioned in this article for the vessels of the United States upon the Mediterranean.[123]

France never did provide the protection against the Barbary pirates that Britain had, and Adams' attempt to shift the responsibility to her betrays a serious flaw in the Model Treaty. Although he wisely combined keeping America's ports open to trade with defending the coastline, and assigned that responsibility to Americans themselves, he overestimated the importance of American commerce to French interests, and assumed a greater influence on French naval policy than he could possibly possess. Seen in this light, his attempt to secure for American merchants the same unrestricted trade that French subjects enjoyed reveals, not the pursuit of free trade for its own sake, but the simple substitution of the rights Americans had enjoyed under the British empire. The Model Treaty, then, is less a radical break from the colonial past than it first appears. Adams' own frigate navy, so central to his foreign policy during his presidency, is absent from the Model Treaty. His substitution of French naval force for that of Britain would come back to haunt Adams.

But that was the future; Adams' quarrels with Vergennes, like his frigates, were not even on the horizon in 1776. His Model Treaty, finished by the 18th of July, 1776, was accepted with few changes, suggesting that Adams had successfully caught the spirit of the revolution in foreign policy. Considering the very different economies in New England, the Middle colonies, and the South, this was no mean feat. His ideas had developed in a very American context of

[123] Ibid.

ports and powder, and were indebted to Loyalist opponents like Daniel Leonard as well as fellow revolutionaries like James Warren and Christopher Gadsden.[124] Though it is not surprising a New Englander authored America's first commercial treaty, this declaration of American economic independence supported the unity of the new Confederacy.

Adams' authorship of the Model Treaty also supports his contention that he had established the principle of no entangling alliances long before Washington, Jefferson, or Hamilton. Although he had not arrived at his understanding of the importance of neutrality without consulting with others, he had synthesized those experiences and converted them into a clear statement that would guide the American representatives when they arrived in France. How Adams himself dealt with the French and his fellow Americans in the struggle for American independence will be dealt with in the next chapter.

[124] James Madison pointed out that experiences during the Revolution could be much more important than ideas learned from European thinkers: "But why is the experiment of an extended republic to be rejected, merely because it may comprise what is new? Is it not the glory of the people of America, that whilst they have paid a decent regard to the opinions of former times and other nations, they have not suffered a blind veneration for antiquity, for custom, or for names, to overrule the suggestions of their own good sense, the knowledge of their own situation, and the lessons of their own experience?" *Federalist Papers*, 14.

Chapter Three: Militia Diplomacy

Your Veterans in Diplomaticks and in Affairs of State consider Us as a kind of Militia, and hold Us perhaps, as is natural, in some degree of Contempt, but wise Men know that Militia sometimes gain Victories over regular Troops, even by departing from the Rules.[1]

John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, 1782

By the eighteenth of July 1776, John Adams had submitted his draft of the Model Treaty to Congress, and turned back to his duties on other committees, including his oversight of the Board of War and Ordnance. Twenty months would pass before he landed on the shores of Europe, appointed as joint commissioner to France. Benjamin Franklin, Arthur Lee and Silas Deane had tried in vain to secure a commercial treaty with France, and Adams, armed with news of the triumph at Saratoga, was to replace Deane and make a fresh attempt. By the time he arrived, a treaty had already been signed, and Adams instead focused on putting the financial affairs of the commissioners in order and collecting intelligence for Congress. Adams spent a little over a year in France, and returned home in August of 1779 where he would become the primary architect of the Massachusetts Constitution. In November, Congress asked him to return to Europe and attempt to negotiate a treaty with Great Britain. After a difficult crossing of the Atlantic, and an even more difficult overland journey through Spain, Adams arrived in France in February of 1780. Adams' subsequent conduct in France, and, in particular, his quarrel with Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes, earned him criticism from senior diplomat Benjamin Franklin. Adams appears to have ignored the conventions of diplomacy and unnecessarily alienated Vergennes. Adams defended himself by insisting that he had discerned the duplicity of

[1] John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, 21 Feb. 1782, *PJA*, 12:254.

France, and had defended American interests that Franklin had been only too willing to compromise.[2] While it is true that a frustrated Franklin wrote to Congress that John Adams "was sometimes, and in some things, completely out of his senses," at the same time he conceded that his fellow diplomat was "always an honest man, [and] often a wise one."[3]

It is tempting to attribute Adams' conduct in France to either his vain and abrasive personality or to his inexperience. Neither of these explanations account for his years of dealing with British officials and representatives from other colonies, or for the second diplomatic mission with which Congress entrusted him. Other factors should be taken into consideration in the attempt to understand Adams' wartime diplomacy. Adams' primary interest appears to have been in constitutions rather than diplomacy. He had initially been content to entrust foreign policy to Benjamin Franklin.[4] In addition, he was a New Englander who remained focused on New England and her interests for the duration of the war. Unlike Franklin, who had long been interested in the West, Adams looked east, at the grey waters of the Atlantic, and emphasized the fishery and the carrying trade.

The system he had developed and which was the basis for the Model Treaty would guide his actions as diplomat. He was convinced that American independence was in the interests of France, and France would not withdraw her support. Although the system was flexible and permitted a temporary alliance with France if it became "necessary," he seems to have thought it was not "necessary" and that America could fight and win a limited war against Great Britain.

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[2] Modern historians are divided in their evaluation of Adams' diplomacy during the Revolution. James Hutson tends to be critical of Adams; John Ferling and Jean Bauer tend to be sympathetic. See James Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution*; John Ferling, "John Adams, Diplomat," *WMQ* 51.2 (1994): 227-252; and Jean Bauer, "With Friends Like These: John Adams and the Comte de Vergennes on Franco-American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 37.4 (2013): 664-692.

[3] Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, 22 July 1783, *WBF*, 9:62.

[4] Adams initially was impressed with Franklin's command of the French language—until he learned French himself. Adams wrote long treatises on constitutions, but not on foreign policy. See John Adams, *JADA*, 4:59-62.

Yet the war escalated from a civil war to a world war, an escalation he had neither wanted nor promoted. Paired with that escalation was Adams' attempt to contain that escalation, to channel it to achieve American independence from both Great Britain and France. Adams was not the architect of America's foreign policy nor the commander of America's military forces, but as an agent of Congress, he was responsible for policies he did not agree with. In addition, his forecasts were often wrong, yet he was making decisions based on those forecasts.

Adams' uncertainty about the role of the French navy reveals that he had still not resolved the difficult question of how to replace the Royal Navy in an independent America. The Model Treaty had assigned to the French navy a defensive role in European waters. His duties on the Naval Committee and the Board of War had given him insight into the importance of logistics, and he was certain the Thirteen Colonies were unconquerable. But as the War of Independence escalated into yet another great war for empire, Adams at times accepted the utility of French warships in North American waters, but vacillated on whether those warships should operate against British whaleboats and merchantmen in the West Indies, or in combined operations with American troops against British strongholds like New York. Adams continued to develop his strategy to secure American independence by drawing on his experiences in America before he landed in France, as well as his encounters in France and Holland.

In the fall of 1775, Adams became a member of the Marine Committee. Adams admitted that although he had practiced law in a port city, he had "never thought much of old Ocean or the Dominion of it."[5] As a member of the Marine Committee, he would now think a great deal, as he was responsible for ascertaining how many sailors might serve in the Continental Navy or on

[5] John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 5 Nov. 1775, *PJA*, 3:277.

privateers, who might serve as the officers of those men, what ships were available for either loan or sale that could be converted to warships, and what size and make they were. Congress was also interested in learning where warships could be safely constructed.[6] Adams told James Warren that people were failing to share the information he needed:

> Our People have a curious Way of telling a Story. "The Continental Cruizers Hancock and Franklin, took a noble Prize." Ay! But who knows any Thing, about the Said Cruisers. How large are they? How many Guns? 6. 9. 12. 18 or 24 Pounders? How many Men? Who was the Commander? These Questions are asked me So often that I am ashamed to repeat my Answer. I dont know. I cant tell. I have not heard. Our Province have never informed me.[7]

Adams' work on the Marine Committee and later on the Board of War and Ordnance gave him first-hand experience with the challenges of supplying America's armed forces. Outfitting the troops also familiarized him with the course of the campaigns, and with the status of exports and imports, the trade vital for American financing of the war. By the time he penned the Model Treaty, he had decided that America could assume responsibility for keeping American ports open, France could assume responsibility for keeping French ports open, and merchantmen could assume responsibility for themselves on the high seas. The Model Treaty, framed to address these delegated responsibilities, was compatible with militiamen, privateers, oar galleys, and the Continental Army. Because Adams was convinced that America, spread over a vast wilderness, was unconquerable, he reassured John Winthrop that Americans needed a "mere Marine Treaty" with France, which he was confident would be easily obtained.[8]

Adams was confident about more than a treaty with the French. In July, he wrote Joseph Ward, explaining that the failures in Canada only encouraged Congress and "more decisive steps

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[6] Ibid. Adams wrote similar requests to Joseph Ward, 20 Aug. 1776, *PJA*, 4:478, and James Warren, 17 Aug. 1776, *PJA*, 4:470.
[7] John Adams to James Warren, 17 August 1776, *PJA*, 4:470.
[8] John Adams to John Winthrop, 23 June 1776, *PJA*, 4:333.

have been taken than ever."[9] In late August, he wrote to Abigail, listing factors that showed the war turning in America's favor. The British no longer held Boston, and their fleet "have not an Harbour, so convenient, or safe, as they had last Year." He expected more and better of Americans: more and better soldiers, with better arms, more warships, more trade, more artillery, better officers, even better politicians with "more Courage and Confidence" and state governments "all compleatly form'd and organized."[10] Two days later, however, in the Battle of Long Island, the Howe brothers outflanked Washington and forced the Americans to retreat, eventually leaving the valuable port of New York in British hands for the duration of the war.

Congress appointed Adams, along with Benjamin Franklin and Edward Rutledge, to meet with Lord Howe, a peace conference that proved fruitless. More productive were Adams' observations on the need for discipline among the American troops he encountered during the trek from Philadelphia to Staten Island: on his return Congress resolved, "That the board of war be directed to prepare a resolution for enforcing and perfecting discipline in the army;" and Adams then wrote the Articles of War.[11] Adams put a brave face on the defeat at New York, noting that "Had the Enemies Fleet and Army been kept from Long Island, they must and would have made an Effort elsewhere for Winter Quarters," and options such as Boston, or a port in Virginia or further south, "perhaps would have been worse, for Us."[12] He was personally aware of the limitations of the British victory, for he reassured Abigail that "I can go home when I please in spight of all the Fleets and Army of Great Britain;" and in fact he did so.[13]

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[9] John Adams to Joseph Ward, 10 July 1776, *PJA*, 4:378.
[10] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 25 Aug. 1776, *AFC*, 2:108.
[11] *Works*, 3:82-83. Adams had already written Articles for the navy.
[12] John Adams to Samuel Cooper, 4 Sept. 1776, *PJA*, 5:11.
[13] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 5 Sept. 1776, *AFC*, 2:120.

In the wake of the loss of New York, Congress made two significant changes in policy. First, Congress approved the Articles of War that Adams had written, and offered one hundred dollars and two hundred acres to any man who would enlist for the duration of the war. This "new army" would replace dependence on militia, like those who had fled from New York. Second, Congress addressed the Model Treaty, also written by Adams.[14] America's coastline, already under pressure from British cruisers despite local efforts, was further endangered by the new British foothold on the Continent.[15] A formal treaty with France, ensuring both the steady supply of war materials and ready markets for American tobacco and indigo to generate the funds needed to pay for those war materials, may have taken on a new urgency. Congress quickly approved the Model Treaty, making few alterations, and asked Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson to join Silas Deane as commissioners to France. Jefferson declined to serve, so Arthur Lee, who was already in Europe, became the third man on the team. Adams may also have been asked, but he was content to leave this diplomatic mission to others. He wrote James Warren that he needed to abandon this "drudgery" and look to his personal finances, and he left Philadelphia the thirteenth of October.[16] Franklin sailed for France on October 26, and arrived in Paris on December 21. But just as Adams' "mere Marine Treaty" was not limited to mere trade, so Congress's instructions to Franklin were not limited to Adams' mere Marine Treaty.

Congress debated the terms of the Treaty on September 24. Adams was still in Philadelphia, but he left before Congress finalized their instructions to the commissioners on

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[14] In his *Autobiography*, Adams quoted from the Journals of the Continental Congress: "Congress took into consideration the plan of treaties to be proposed to foreign nations, with the amendments agreed to by the committee of the whole, and the same was agreed to." He then complained, "This is all I can find in the Public Journal relative to this, one of the most important transactions that ever came before Congress." He also noted his authorship of the Articles of War, and that they "have governed our armies with little variation to this day." He further noted that "The articles of war, and the institution of the army, during the war, were all my work, and yet I have been represented as an enemy to a regular army!" See *Works*, 3:82-84.

[15] John Winthrop to John Adams, 17 Sept. 1776, *PJA*, 5:27.

[16] John Adams to James Warren, 5 Oct. 1776, *PJA*, 5:46-47.

October 22.[17] The Committee of Secret Correspondence also gave the commissioners more instructions: Franklin was to try to persuade the French to permit American privateers to use French ports as nests for their activities against British merchantmen in European waters. If the French agreed, he was to press further and ask for the establishment of American admiralty courts to judge the prizes the privateers brought into the French ports. Even the ship that carried Franklin was authorized to take prizes, and Captain Wicks did in fact capture two small merchantmen.[18] Although France was already engaged in covert support of American independence, these requests for privateer nests and admiralty courts would have brought French support into the open, and violated the existing French treaty with Great Britain.[19] More importantly, from the French point of view, it would make French merchantmen and ports legitimate targets of the Royal Navy. Although France had been trying to rebuild its navy since the humiliation in the Seven Years' War, it was not yet able to defend its coastline from British attack.[20]

Support for American privateers was not the only additional request that Congress had instructed Franklin to make. Congress amended the initial instructions on October 22:

> Resolved, That the Commissioners going to the Court of France be directed to procure from that Court at the Expence of these United States either by purchase or Loan, eight Line of battle ships of 74 and 64 Guns, well manned, and fitted in every respect for Service; That as these Ships may be useful in proportion to the quickness with which they reach North-America, the Commissioners, be directed to expedite this Negotiation with all possible diligence.[21]

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[17] The Continental Congress: Instructions to Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee as Commissioners to France, [24 September–22 October 1776], *PBF*, 22:624-30.
[18] Benjamin Franklin to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 8 Dec. 1776, *PBF*, 23:31.
[19] "The Mind of the French Court with regard to Prizes brought into their Ports is not yet known. It is certainly contrary to their Treaties with Britain to permit the Sale of them, and we have no regular Means of trying and condemning them." See Benjamin Franklin to John Hancock, 8 Dec. 1776, *PBF*, 23:31.
[20] Dull, *French Navy and American Independence*, 66.
[21] The Continental Congress: Instructions to Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee as Commissioners to France, [24 Sept. to 22 Oct. 1776], *PBF*, 22:630.

The commissioners were to try to either borrow or buy large French warships to operate off the coast of America. This was not an invitation for the French navy to take command of American coastal waters, but a decision that ships-of-the-line were needed in addition to sloops and row galleys. In other words, Congress was looking for hardware not easily obtained in America, and treating large warships like powder and cannon. These ships were to be "well manned," suggesting that just as Great Britain hired German soldiers, so the United States would hire French and Italian sailors. Congress also wanted to hire French warships to convoy war materials to America. The members of the Committee of Secret Correspondence were enthusiastic about the potential of a French alliance:

> For Reasons herein assigned, Gentlemen, you will readily discern, how all important it is to the Security of American Independence, that France should enter the War as soon as may be, and how necessary it is (if it be possible) to procure from her the Line of Battle Ships, you were desired in your Instructions to obtain for us, the speedy Arrival of which here, in the present State of Things, might decide the Contest at one Stroke.[22]

Congress offered more to the French than access to American trade and the favorable shift in the balance of power that American independence would bring. The Committee of Secret Correspondence noted that Britain had moved troops from the West Indies to the mainland colonies; a move that left the West Indian possessions vulnerable. If France would join the United States and support an attack on the British navy and army concentrated at New York, "The inevitable Consequence would be the quick Reduction of the British Islands in the West Indies."[23] Long before Franklin signed the Treaty of Alliance in 1778, Congress therefore was offering the West Indies to France in exchange for French support in ousting the British army and navy from America. But an invasion of the West Indies would require both warships and

[22] The Committee of Secret Correspondence to the American Commissioners, 21 [23] Dec. 1776, *PBF*, 23:624.
[23] Ibid.

transports, and, still in the midst of rebuilding its navy, France was not prepared to take advantage of the American offer to partition the British Empire in the Caribbean. The Franklin expedition therefore failed to obtain either a formal treaty or warships, but the French did agree to a loan and made some provisions for privateers.

Because Adams had already left before Congress issued the instructions, fellow Massachusetts delegate Elbridge Gerry wrote him a letter in early January to bring him up to date. Gerry's account of the proceedings differs from the instructions to the commissioners by both Congress and the Committee of Secret Correspondence in three important ways. First, Gerry included some points that had been stricken from the original version of the Instructions; second, he omitted some points that had been included; and third, he addressed some additional issues. Gerry's version of events included a much more active role for the United States in the division of the British Empire: not only was France to take the West Indies, but the United States would provide provisions and six frigates to assist in the attack. There was also to be a joint French and American attack on Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Cape Breton in order to force Britain out of the cod fishery, and both Newfoundland and the fishery would then be divided between France and the United States. To encourage Spain to declare war, the United States would assist in an attack on Pensacola, which Spain could then add to its possessions. France was to pressure the German states into refusing to supply any more troops, and to prevent troops from embarking. Congress was also to grant to Massachusetts the right and responsibility for an expedition against Halifax.[24]

If Adams replied to Gerry, his letter has not been found. He did, however, write two letters to Abigail in April where he addressed the Franklin expedition. Adams did not mention

[24] Elbridge Gerry to John Adams, 8 Jan. 1777, *PJA*, 5:64-68.

the option of joint operations against Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, despite his concern over the loss of the cod fishery and the requirement for France to renounce all claims to the American continent that he had included in the Model Treaty. Nor did he see an active role for French ships of the line in operations in American coastal waters. Instead, Adams envisioned the French and Spanish fleets as a useful diversion that would pin down the Royal Navy in European waters, and reduce the sailors available to man the transports that would supply the British troops in America. This threat would also force Lord Howe to keep his fleet together at New York, leaving the rest of the American coastline more accessible to privateers bringing in their prizes and transports bringing in war materials.[25] In his second letter, he concentrated on financial matters, noting that the King of Prussia was interested in a commercial treaty because he was "dreaming of making his Port of Embden, an Amsterdam," and that Dutch ports were open to Americans. He described the way loans were made, and the status of European states: "The Credit of France has been very low of late," but, on the other hand, that of Spain was "extreamly good."[26] Adams' letters to Abigail suggest that, despite the defeat at New York, he remained committed to reliance on American military institutions to achieve independence, and that he was more interested in European finances and trade prospects than potential military or naval assistance.[27]

"Surely it is become time that we had a French fleet to protect our coasts. On land we can defend ourselves."[28] So William Tudor argued in his letter to Adams in the fall of 1775 in the wake of attacks on coastal towns that occurred when George III withdrew his protection. Similarly, James Warren wrote to Adams, "I long to see a fleet of French and Spanish Men of

[25] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 2 April 1777, *AFC*, 2:195-96.
[26] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 3 April 1777, *AFC*, 2:197-99.
[27] "I am more concerned about our revenue than the aid of France." See John Adams to James Warren, 3 May 1777, *PJA*, 5:173.
[28] William Tudor to John Adams, 25 Oct. 1775, *PJA*, 3:251.

War on our Coast, and our harbours full of their Merchantmen."[29] But Adams had not been convinced a French fleet was either desirable or necessary.[30] He remained unconvinced despite the British victory at New York and the successes of the British blockade. Instead, Adams emphasized the limits of British power. As president of the Board of War, he needed to know if the powder was getting through, and he wrote James Warren that they had a plentiful supply on hand; all they needed was "patience."[31] He knew that South Carolinians had successfully shipped their indigo and rice, and that the Marylanders, Virginians, and North Carolinians were getting their tobacco past the blockade, and argued that "In one more Year I fancy Trade will be brisk in every Part of the Continent, except with Us;" "Us" being New England, which had lost the fishery. Privateers remained his answer, even for the fishery, along with his hopes of America building its own warships.[32] He also had personal success with shipping flour to his wife: "It is a great Pleasure to me to learn that your Flour has arrived. I begin to have some opinion of my good Fortune. If I could have been certain, of the Vessells escaping the many Snares in her Way, I would have sent a dozen Barrells."[33] After relating that the British had captured fifteen other ships, he concluded, "Your Flour was highly favoured with good Luck."[34]

Adams knew that not every cargo was as lucky as Abigail's flour, and he was frustrated with his successors in the naval department: "If the Affairs of the War Office did not take up every Moment of my Time, when I am out of Congress, and sometimes when I ought to be in it, I would make it my Business to search, this marine Affair to the Bottom." In contrast to his own careful administration, Adams, though unsure if a certain Mr. Cushing was in charge of building

[29] James Warren to John Adams, 22 Feb. 1777, *PJA*, 5:90-93.
[30] John Adams to John Winthrop, 23 June 1776, *PJA*, 4:333.
[31] John Adams to James Warren, 31 March 1777, *PJA*, 5:136.
[32] John Adams to James Warren, 6 April 1777, *PJA*, 5:146.
[33] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 6 April 1777, *AFC*, 2:201.
[34] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 6 April 1777, (Second Letter), *AFC*, 2:202.

ships, wrote that "If it is Mr. Cushing I am Sorry for it, because I don't think his Capacity, his Connections, or his Credit in Business Suitable for that Appointment."[35] Adams complained again to James Warren: "If I had the leisure to do, ignorant as I am of every Rope in the ship, I would perish if I did not put that Department in a respectable order." Adams thought that "there are Gentlemen enough of the Committee who understand the Business," and there was simply a lack of disciplined leadership.[36] He himself was too busy with the War Office, and sighed that he did not know whose fault it was, and besides, "It is enough for me to answer for my own Faults."[37]

Rather than alter his naval strategy to incorporate French warships, he focused on improving the army. Adams wrote to Gerry that "I hope every Gentleman, is now convinced that Discipline in the Army is necessary, and that a permanent Army must be had at all Events, and that temporary Draughts from the Militia will answer NO End but to undo Us."[38] Adams did not lay the blame solely on the militia and their lack of discipline. He also faulted the officers of those militiamen: "I conclude, that such detestable Behaviour of whole Brigades, could not have happened, without the worst Examples, in some Officers of Rank." He thought officers needed to be better educated in the art of war.[39] Adams remarked that "Our generals were out-generaled."[40] He wrote to Nathaniel Greene:

> If our Officers will not lead their Men I am for Shooting all who will not and getting a new set. It is high Time for Us to abandon this execrable defensive Plan….The Army that Attacks has an infinite Advantage, and ever has had from

[35] John Adams to James Warren, 18 March 1777, *PJA*, 5:116.
[36] John Adams to James Warren, 7 July 1777, *PJA*, 5:242.
[37] John Adams to James Warren 6 April 1777, *PJA*, 5:146.
[38] John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 31 Dec. 1776, *PJA*, 5:56.
[39] John Adams to William Tudor, 26 Sept. 1776, qtd. in *JADA*, 3:437.
[40] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 8 Oct. 1776, *AFC*, 2:140.

> the Plains of Pharsalia to the Plains of Abraham, the Plains of Trenton and Princeton.[41]

Adams decided not to send the letter.[42] But he was serious about his preference for Americans to go on the offensive: he noted that the British had withdrawn some of their men from Rhode Island, and urged an attack to drive them all out.[43]

Adams had already told James Warren that he preferred to rely on American troops, and Warren, though he was more inclined than Adams to accept French assistance, also agreed that French troops were better used against Britain elsewhere than in America.[44] Both Adams and Warren thought the French could be a useful diversion.[45] Although Adams wanted Americans to win their independence through their own efforts, he nevertheless was aware that a general war might break out in Europe.[46] He was concerned about the direction the war might take if France became more actively involved:

> I must confess, that I am at a loss to determine, whether it is good policy in us to wish for a war between France and Britain, unless we can be sure no other powers would engage in it. But if France engages, Spain will and then all Europe will arrange themselves on one side and the other, and what consequences to us might be involved in it, I don't know. If we could have a free trade with Europe, I should rather run the risque of fighting it out with George and his present allies, provided he should get no other.[47]

Adams had seen the French and Indian war spread to Europe, and the conflict in North America settled at the peace talks. In a general European war, the colonies in revolt could once more be

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[41] John Adams to Nathanael Greene, 13 April 1777, *PJA*, 5:150-152. Adams was referring to Pompey's inaction against Caesar at Pharsalia. See Plutarch's *Life of Pompey*.
[42] The letter contains the note: "Intended for G. Green but not Sent, being too unpolite." See Ed. note, *PJA*, 5:152.
[43] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 7 March 1777, *AFC*, 2:170.
[44] John Adams to James Warren, 16 April 1776, *PJA*, 4:121-123; James Warren to John Adams, 8 May 1776, *PJA*, 4:178.
[45] John Adams to James Warren, 31 March 1777, *PJA*, 5:136-37; John Adams to Abigail Adams, 2 April 1777, *AFC*, 2:201; James Warren to John Adams, 11 June 1777, *PJA*, 5:222.
[46] Benjamin Franklin had reported from Europe that "Both France and England are preparing strong Fleets, and it is said that all the Powers of Europe are preparing for War, apprehending a general one cannot be very distant." See Benjamin Franklin to John Hancock, 8 Dec. 1776, *PBF*, 23:31.
[47] John Adams to James Warren, 3 April [3 May?] 1777, *PJA*, 5:173.

treated as pawns rather than as an equal.[48] It would be impossible to predict the outcome of such a war; trying to predict what Howe might do in the summer of 1777 was hard enough.

Adams was confident that the British needed reinforcements to strike out from New York. But he argued that even if those reinforcements arrived and Howe tried to take Philadelphia, the city was not all that valuable anyway. Congress would simply move to another city, as they had been moving between Baltimore and Philadelphia. Philadelphia, like New York, would tie up troops and ships and leave the rest of the continent unmolested.[49] He explained to William Tudor: "I have learned from Marshall Saxe, and universal History, as well as the fatal Experience of the last Campaign a great deal of Contempt for Forts, and much more for long Lines."[50] He was confident that British troops could not operate inland because it would be too challenging for their logistics. Yet he found Howe enigmatic: "Howes Behaviour Strongly indicates a Want of system;" and, "What this Mans design is, cannot be conjectured. It is very deep or very Shallow."[51] As late as July 7, Adams still doubted that Howe would attack Philadelphia, or, if he did, that he would be able to take it.[52]

Warren alerted Adams that information gleaned from a prize ship suggested Howe was indeed aiming to take Philadelphia, but also told him of the victory of John Stark in New Hampshire, where Stark and his militiamen had crushed two columns of Hessians at the Battle of

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[48] A year later, Adams wrote to the President of Congress, "Let us above all things avoid as much as possible, entangling ourselves with their wars and politicks. Our business with them and theirs with us, is commerce, not politicks, much less war. America has been the sport of European wars and politicks long enough." See John Adams to the President of Congress, 18 April 1780, *PJA*, 9:148.
[49] John Adams to James Warren, 21 March 1777, *PJA*, 5:119-120; John Adams to Nathaniel Greene, 13 April 1777, *PJA*, 5:151.
[50] John Adams to William Tudor, 11 March 1777, *PJA*, 5:109. "Universal History" might be Polybius.
[51] John Adams to James Warren, 11 June 1777, *PJA*, 5:220; John Adams to James Warren, 12 Aug. 1777, *PJA*, 5:273.
[52] John Adams to James Warren, 7 July 1777, *PJA*, 5:242.

Bennington.[53] Whether Adams received this letter before Howe arrived is doubtful: on September 16, Adams wrote in his diary: "From whence is our Deliverance to come? Or is it not to come? Is Philadelphia to be lost? If lost, is the Cause lost? No—the Cause is not lost—but it may be hurt." This note is embedded in his hope that Washington might defeat Howe, and that "It is reported too that Mr. How [sic] lost great Numbers in the Battle of the Brandywine."[54] In another letter to Adams, Warren stated that the loss of Philadelphia would have "no effect that I know of here," but conceded that it would "operate much against our Interest in Europe." As for the British strike from Quebec, "all seem to Agree, that Burgoyne must retire, fight or starve." Warren was also optimistic about the naval war, "Many prizes and valuable Ones are frequently arriveing."[55] Two days later Warren wrote another letter, wondering about Philadelphia, but expecting that in the north, the Americans, with "A fine Army in high Spirits and well supplyed" would force Burgoyne to retreat. The assault on Rhode Island, on the other hand, suffered from "A want of vigour, and I think of Judgment." Warren did not send the letter right away, and added a note the next day: "We have Just received the Agreable News of A victory in the Northern department…. Our Joy however is A little damaged by hearing that fort Montgommery is taken."[56]

If Adams wrote to Warren, his reply has not been found. He did write to Abigail, and, like Warren, recognized the importance of the defeat of Burgoyne. He noted "the great and glorious Success of our Arms at the Northward," and also that "our Gallies disabled two Men of

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[53] James Warren to John Adams, 4 Sept. 1777, *PJA*, 5:281.
[54] John Adams, 16 Sept. 1777, *JADA*, 2:263. Adams was also aware of Stark's victory: "Just come in from Congress. We have within this Hour, received Letters of G[enerals] Schuyler and Lincoln, giving an Account of the Battle of Bennington, wherein Gen. Starks [sic] has acquired great Glory, and so has his Militia." See John Adams to Abigail Adams, 21 Aug. 1777, *AFC*, 2:322.
[55] James Warren to John Adams, 10 Oct. 1777, *PJA*, 5:312.
[56] James Warren to John Adams, 12-13 Oct. 1777, *PJA*, 5:313-315.

War a 64 and 20 Gun ship in such a Manner, that the Enemy blew them up." His New England pride is evident:

> Congress will appoint a Thanksgiving, and one Cause of it ought to be that the Glory of turning the Tide of Arms, is not immediately due to the Commander in Chief, nor to southern Troops. If it had been, Idolatry, and Adulation would have been unbounded, so excessive as to endanger our Liberties for what I know.[57]

Adams had already praised New England's privateers as those having "the most Skill or the most Bravery, or the best Fortune, of any in America." He had revealed his parochialism when he complained, "I dont like to hear that the continental Cruisers, have taken so many and the Provincial Cruisers and privateers so few Prizes. Our People, may as well fight for themselves as the Continent."[58] Adams also wrote to Gerry that on his return home he had enjoyed the change from the previous year: "The Tories are universally discouraged and there Appears not in the Minds of the People the least Doubt of the final success of our great and holy Cause."[59] Adams thought that the time to make a treaty was after a victory, from a position of strength, and he was well aware that Congress wanted him to replace Deane as commissioner to France.[60] The following spring, he would be in France.

Adams had initially not been interested in making a treaty with France of any kind, thinking that opening America's ports would be enough to encourage trade with the states of Europe. By the summer of 1776, he had come to accept that a formal commercial treaty with France would show Great Britain that a major European power acknowledged America's independence and was guaranteeing access to her ports. Congress had moved beyond his treaty

[57] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 26 Oct. 1777, *AFC*, 2:360-61.
[58] John Adams to Joseph Ward, 17 July 1776, *PJA*, 4:387
[59] John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 19 Nov. 1777, *PJA*, 5:331.
[60] Mercy Warren to John Adams, 10 Mar. 1777, *PJA*, 4:51.

in the instructions to the Franklin expedition. Adams may have been referring to this escalation of entanglement with France in a letter to Warren he wrote in the spring of 1777:

> Congress have done as much as they ought to do, and more than I thought they ought to have done, before they did it. I will hazard a prophecy for once, and it is this, that there will as certainly be a general war in Europe, as there will be a king of France or Spain.[61]

Even if Adams was not referring to the alterations Congress made to the Model Treaty, this cryptic passage reveals that Adams was not in complete agreement with Congress. This tension between how he thought America should achieve its independence and his role as an agent of Congress may help account for his conflicts with Benjamin Franklin and Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes.

Adams' voyage to France had been his first crossing of the Atlantic. He experienced first-hand both the danger of the Royal Navy and the excitement of capturing a prize.[62] He jotted in his diary an outline of what he would first do when he arrived in Europe:

> Whenever I arrive at any Port in Europe, whether in Spain or France, my first Enquiry should be concerning the Designs of the Enemy.—What Force they mean to send to America? Where they are to obtain Men? What is the State of the British Nation? What the State of Parties? What the State of Finances, and of Stocks?

Adams hoped that his ship would "make a Prize of an English vessel," and capture newspapers describing the campaign plans for spring. As when he was a member of Marine Committee and president of the Board of War, Adams wanted specific information about the armies and navies of Europe:

> Then the State of Europe, particularly France and Spain? What the real Designs of those Courts? What the Condition of their Finances? What the State of their Armies, but especially of their Fleets. What No. of Ships they have fitted for the

[61] John Adams to James Warren, 18 March 1777, *PJA*, 5:114.
[62] John Adams, 14 March 1778, *JADA*, 2:285. The prize ship, the *Martha*, was retaken by the British when the Americans attempted to sail her to America.

> Sea—what their Names, Number of Men and Guns, weight of Metal &c—where they lie? &c.

As he had written to Warren a year earlier, Adams remained concerned about the danger of a shift from a war of independence to a general European war: "The Probability or Improbability of a War, and the Causes and Reasons for and against each supposition."His attention to finances included the state of trade with France. The safe arrival of American goods such as tobacco, rice and indigo in Europe was crucial to the American war effort: "The Supplies of Cloathing, Arms, &c. gone to America, during the past Winter. The State of American Credit in France. What Remittances have been made from America, in Tobacco, Rice, Indigo, or any other Articles?" [63]

Two weeks later, after the capture of the British vessel, his intended "first enquiry" had shifted from the "designs of the enemy" to the state of American trade:

> My first Enquiry should be, who is Agent for the united States of America at Bourdeaux, at Blaye, &c—who are the principal Merchants on this River concerned in the American Trade? What Vessells French or American, have sailed or are about sailing for America, what their Cargoes, and for what Ports? Whether on Account of the united States, of any particular State, or of private Merchants french or American? [64]

Adams was attempting to gather the same sort of intelligence that he had needed as president of the Board of War. Perhaps he thought that if he were to successfully obtain all this information he would be well prepared to negotiate a formal treaty with France. That treaty, the Franco-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce, however, had been signed a little over a week before he had set sail for France.[65]

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[63] John Adams, 5 March 1778, *JADA*, 2:282.
[64] John Adams, 31 March 1778, *JADA*, 2:292.
[65] John Adams, 29 March 1778, *JADA*, 2:290-291. Adams had sailed on 15 Feb. 1778. The Treaty was signed on 6 Feb. 1778.

On 10 April, Benjamin Franklin informed Vergennes that "Mr. Adams, appointed by Congress to replace Mr. Deane, has arrived." He also gave a summary of the results of the latest campaigns in America: "Congress is detaining Gen. Burgoyne and his army for a breach of the convention, and has more than 10,000 prisoners on its hands; the other British troops, short of provisions, are penned in New York and Philadelphia."[66] As noted above, this optimistic description of the American loss of New York and Philadelphia was shared by Adams. The commissioners also contacted Charles Dumas, who had agreed to represent the Americans at The Hague, informing him of Adams' arrival, of the improving state of the war in America, including the capture of 10,000 British troops, and of a potential mission to the Dutch:

> Congress considered sending an envoy to the Netherlands but, for fear that he might be an embarrassment, decided to wait until Dutch views were known. He may be less so now that the French alliance has made our independence appear more stable; please find out.[67]

The next day, Adams met with Vergennes. He recorded in his diary that the French diplomat "hoped the Treaty would be agreable, and the Alliance lasting." Adams replied, "I told him I thought the Treaty liberal, and generous—and doubted not of its speedy Ratification."[68] Adams gave no indication at this time that he privately found fault with the Treaty.

1778 would prove to be a year of pleading by the commissioners for France to put some muscle into her alliance with America. On the nineteenth of April, the commissioners wrote Vergennes, drawing his attention to British barriers to trade between America and France:

> Many Adventures to America are discouraged by the high Price of Insurance, and the Number of Captures made by the English, which together have an Operation almost equal to an Embargo; so that the Commerce which might be so

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[66] The American Commissioners to Vergennes, 10 April 1778: résumé, *PBF*, 26:268-269.
[67] The American Commissioners to Dumas with a Covering Note and a Draft Letter to the Grand Pensionary, 10 April 1778: résumé, *PBF*, 26:267-68.
[68] John Adams, 11 April 1778, *JADA*, 2:298-99.

> advantageous, to both Countries, by supplying their mutual Wants, is obstructed, and the Intention of the late Treaty in a great Degree defeated.

This "embargo" was making the Treaty ineffective, but the commissioners had a solution: "Convoys that might secure the Merchant Ships from the Depredation of the Enemy; would immediately remove these Impediments, and open a considerable Commerce which waits only for that Protection."[69] This request for convoy had been part of the instructions to the Franklin expedition, and represented a significant escalation in the role Adams had envisioned for France. A year earlier, Adams had complained to Warren about "so many Whiggs groaning and Sighing with despondency and whining out their Fears that We must be subdued unless France should step in. Are We to be beholden to France for our Liberties?" Those groaning Whiggs needed to learn that "The surest and the only Way to secure her Arms in this Cause is for Us to exert our own."[70] Although Adams emphasized the success of American arms, as one of the commissioners, he asked France to extend its naval protection from its ports to across the Atlantic. Accepting a French convoy meant acknowledging the failure of the Model Treaty with its limitation of French involvement to safeguarding French ports. He also acknowledged the failure of American privateers to insure adequate supplies from Europe, and the failure of American shipbuilders to construct warships capable of providing the convoy. In addition, Britain could not tolerate supplies and munitions sailing for America under French protection, which meant she would probably declare war against France, with the result of a shift from a war of independence to a world war.

France of course had her own interests to consider, of which the division of the British Empire formed only a part. France had to consider issues to the east in Poland and Bavaria,

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[69] The Commissioners to Vergennes, 19 Apr. 1778, *PJA*, 6:42.
[70] John Adams to James Warren, 3 May 1777, *PJA*, 5:173.

possible threats to its own empire, and the challenge of managing Spain, which also had its own interests such as the recovery of Gibraltar and the Floridas.[71] Adams had written to Warren that "France and Spain, will act in concert and with perfect Amity, neither will take any Step without the other," but in reality, Vergennes was struggling to convince Spain to commit its fleet to the war and Spain had been willing to remain neutral in exchange for Gibraltar.[72] By the spring of 1778, the French were prepared, however, to send a squadron to "American waters," that is, either the North American coast or the West Indies. On April 13, a French fleet under the command of D'Estaing set sail, where he first tried to blockade the British at New York, then attempted to drive them from Rhode Island, but eventually sailed to the West Indies. The French fleet did encourage the British to abandon Philadelphia and retreat to New York, but the complete success envisioned in the instructions to the Franklin expedition did not materialize.[73]

The commissioners would also remind Vergennes that the French had agreed that "his Majesty has engaged to employ his good Offices and Interposition" with the Barbary States.[74] By October, they were asking the French to help them make treaties with the Barbary powers "through the Mediation, and under the Auspices of his Majesty."[75] The commissioners also suggested an attack on the British whale fishery off the coast of Brazil. According to their intelligence, around seventeen vessels had already sailed, and the British claim of convoy protection, used as a ruse the previous year, was again fraudulent. They argued that "a single Frigate or Privateer, of twenty four or even of Twenty Guns, would be quite sufficient" to seize the vessels and the valuable oil they carried, and win over the crews who were mostly Americans

[71] The standard work is Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence: A Study of Arms and Diplomacy, 1784*-1787 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).
[72] John Adams to James Warren, 31 March 1777, *PJA*, 5:136.
[73] James Warren described the cruise as "the Train of Misfortunes." See James Warren to John Adams, 7 Oct. 1778, *PJA*, 7:110.
[74] Commissioners to Vergennes, 28 Aug. 1778, *PJA*, 6:401.
[75] Commissioners to Vergennes, 1 Oct. 1778, *PJA*, 7:86.

anyway. They urged the French to make the attack in December, suggesting that they did not think an American privateer was capable of the task.[76] The "misfortunes" of D'Estaing did not prevent them from asking that another and larger naval squadron be sent "immediately to the Coast of America… to Secure a naval Superiority over the Ennemy in those Seas." Command of the sea would cut transports to the British armies in America, and open trade with the French West Indies, a trade that was vital to New Englanders who made their living from the sea. The maintenance of this fleet would provide coinage to cash-strapped Americans, who could then buy French goods, "thereby cementing the Connection and extending the Trade between the two Countries."[77] Adams had recently written to Congress that "nothing is clearer in my Mind, than that they [the British] never will quit the united States, untill they are either driven or starved out of them."[78] A year earlier, he had wanted to accomplish this feat with American arms; now he was willing to ask France for direct naval assistance, at least in his role as commissioner.

1779 would prove to be another year of pleading with French officials for naval support for the American war effort. But Congress named Franklin sole commissioner, and failed to give Adams a new appointment. In August, Adams returned to America, and shortly afterwards wrote a revealing letter to his friend Elbridge Gerry. He explained that he "laboured to convince them of the Policy and Necessity of sending Strong Reinforcements to the Compte D'Estaing." Mr. Genet had discussed the matter with Vergennes and Sartine, and they wanted him "to state his Reasons in Writing." Because Adams thought a united appeal from the commissioners to the French Court would be more effective than a letter to Genet, and would also prevent jealousy, he

[76] Benjamin Franklin and John Adams to Gabriel de Sartine, 30 October 1778, *PJA*, 7:176-178.
[77] John Adams' Draft of the Commissioners to the Comte de Vergennes, 20 Dec. 1778, *PJA*, 7:292-311.
[78] John Adams to the President of the Congress, 3 Dec. 1778, *PJA*, 7:247-48.

tried to get both Lee and Franklin on board. Adams described the process of writing drafts, and how they eventually agreed on a version to send to the French court. Adams concluded:

> Whether these Negotiations had any Influence at Court, I cant say, but it is certain that the Compte De Grass, was sent in December, with one Reinforcement to the Compte D'Estaing, and Mr. De la Motte Piquet, in the spring with another, besides some other scattering ships, and if the Compte D'Estaing is now upon this Coast, this fact may be another Commentary on the Letter.

Adams assured Gerry that he did not want to claim more than his due, but "nor would I wish to be thought by you and my other Friends to have been idle and Useless." He had worked hard, and done his best: "You can have no adequate Idea of the Difficulty We had in doing Business, while We acted together." Now that Franklin was to serve as sole commissioner, Adams hoped that Edmund Jennings would be appointed secretary to Franklin. Adams preferred Jennings not only for his abilities, but also because he was "not upon bad Terms with F. nor too much an Idolater of him."[79] Adams noted that in his attempt to convince the French to send reinforcements to D'Estaing, "Mr. Lee entered into it with Zeal, Dr. F. with Moderation." The implication is clear: it was possible that the Americans were directly responsible for the naval reinforcements, so Adams had been right; Franklin had been wrong.

Adams also told Gerry about a conversation he had had with the Marquis De la Fayette, and enclosed a copy of the letter he had written to him, outlining his reasons for naval reinforcement. He began with the issue of a loan, but pointed out that "without some other Exertions, even a Loan, perhaps would be but a temporary Relief: with them a smaller Loan might suffice." He then discussed those "other Exertions" and why they would be effective. The British were "at present very weak and in great Distress in every Part," and "An Strong Armament of Ships of the Line, with Five thousand Troops, directed against Hallifax, Rhode

[79] John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 11 Sept. 1779, *PJA*, 8:141-143.

Island or New York, must infallibly succeed. So it must against The Floridas. So it must against Canada, or any one of the West India Islands." It was not necessary to attack all of these places because "the British Possessions in America depend upon each other for reciprocal support." Interruption of the supplies would weaken places not directly attacked, causing collapse, either in part or in whole. Although Adams had advised troops as well as ships, he further noted that "five or six Thousand Troops, would be quite enough," and emphasized the naval arm of the operation. These warships would "co-operate with the Count D'Estaing and the American Army in some Expedition directed against New York Rhode Island or Hallifax or perhaps all of them in Course," as well as with privateers, which "would make such Havock among the Ennemies Transports."[80] It appears that Adams tried to steer the Marquis to directing French attacks against British possessions that were problematic for New Englanders, and in support of the American army and privateers.

After his return, Adams also wrote his friend Benjamin Rush. Adams brushed aside his recall, "Those who did it, are alone disgraced by it. The Man who can shew a long Series of disinterested Services to his Country, cannot be disgraced even by his Country." He then explained the "true method of conducting this War":

> It is not by besieging Gibralter nor invading Ireland, in my humble Opinion, but by sending a clear Superiority of naval Power into the American Seas, by destroying or captivating the British Forces here by Sea and Land, by taking the West India Islands and destroying the British Trade, and by affording Convoys to Commerce between Europe and America, and between America and the french and Spanish Islands.[81]

Adams explained that British armies in New York and Rhode Island meant Americans also needed to field armies to contain the British, and those armies cost money. Furthermore, those

[80] John Adams to the Marquis de Lafayette, 21 Feb. 1779, *PJA*, 7:421-23.
[81] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 19 Sept. 1779, *PJA*, 8:153-54.

armies could not drive out the British so long as the British were supplied from the sea. The solution was to starve them out by taking command of the sea:

> But if their Force was captivated in those Places, as it might easily be by a sea Force cooperating with the land Forces, We might reduce our Army, and innumerable other Articles of Expence. We need not emit any more Paper, and that already out, would depreciate no further.[82]

Adams' altered strategy still rested on American trade and privateers, but he had decided that New York had to be re-taken. He no longer wished the French to merely provide a diversion in Europe, but to support American troops on the Continent. As he had written six months earlier, the British troops must be starved out or driven out. Adams had preferred to starve them out, because American privateers could accomplish this policy by seizing British supply ships. Driving them out was more risky because it could require French troops and warships. Adams preferred to defeat the British through American arms, if at all possible. Adams also encouraged attacks in the West Indies, echoing Congress's instructions to Franklin in 1776. Because Congress had expanded the war, Adams expanded the role of the French. While he was escalating his demands on French naval support he was, at the same time, attempting to channel that support in ways that would enhance American independence. It appears that he was trying to avoid the sidelining of the American war of independence, which would be the result if France and Spain pursued other interests.

But just as Adams had thought the French could be a useful diversion, so the French could treat America as a diversion. 1780 would see France focus on an invasion of England, though she did send a small squadron under the command of Rochambeau to America. Adams probably could understand that the Spanish attack on Gibraltar was a diversion of British power from America. The trouble was that Spain was treating the American war of independence as a

[82] Ibid.

diversion of British troops and warships so as to secure her own interests, like the retaking of Florida, Minorca, and Gibraltar. The danger to America was that once those interests were secured, Spain would drop out of the war. On the other hand, if Spain focused on helping America secure its independence, it might gain Florida, Minorca, and Gibraltar at the peace talks. Adams insisted that "Gibralter must be taken in America, if ever."[83] Whether Adams genuinely believed that American independence was of greater interest to Spain than the acquisition of Gibraltar, he was attempting to convince France and Spain to make American independence their priority, and use the decline of British power as leverage to secure their other interests.

When Adams returned from Europe, he also wrote a formal letter to Congress, outlining "a few remarks… on the general state of affairs in Europe, so far as they relate to the interests of the United States."[84] Adams' letter to Congress is a fascinating combination of careful observation of the great powers and faulty predictions of the future. Adams wrote that Britain had not merely lost the 13 Colonies, but that "Her riches, in which her power consisted, she has lost with us, and never can regain. With us she has lost her Mediterranean trade, her African trade, her German and Holland trade, her ally, Portugal, her ally, Russia, and her natural ally, the House of Austria." While it is true that Portugal had settled her quarrel with Spain over a boundary dispute in Brazil, and Catherine would shortly announce the League of Armed Neutrality, Britain would recover its dominant role in America's oceanic trade and influence with Portugal. Adams did not foresee the establishment of the second British Empire nor the aggression of Catherine in Crimea that threatened the Ottoman Empire, an ally of France. Instead he forecast friendship between France and Russia, and the decline of Britain. On the other hand, he saw that Holland, despite "similitude of manners, of religion, and, in some respects, of

[83] John Adams to the President of Congress, 27 Feb. 1780, *PJA*, 8:372.
[84] John Adams to the President of Congress, 4 Aug. 1779, *Works*, 7:99.

constitution, the analogy between the means by which the two republics arrived at independentcy [sic], but above all, the attractions of commercial interest," could not make a commercial treaty with the United States because it was too dependent on Britain, but might consider a loan. He had hopes that the King of Prussia, who had performed well in the recent Barvarian crisis, would assist with Holland. He admitted that Spain "cannot determine upon war but in the last extremity, but even then she sighs for peace," and that Spain was not as committed to American independence as France. [85] Adams noted that "France deserves the first place among those powers with which our connections will be the most intimate," and that "we should multiply the commercial relations and strengthen the political connections;" but also warned that this policy depended on "prudence and resolution enough to receive implicitly no advice whatever, but to judge always for ourselves."

This letter gives insight into Adams' conduct when he returned to France in 1780. Aware that Spain had been a troublesome ally, he too would be troublesome. Considering that Spain had been willing to ally with Britain in exchange for Florida and Gibraltar, his alerting Vergennes to his appointment to make peace with Britain does not seem unreasonable. He was convinced that France understood the importance of American independence and was committed to it, so he saw no need to worry about losing the French alliance. He had suggested Congress send someone to Holland; when Henry Laurens was captured by the British**,** he himself went instead even though he held no official commission. And he exercised his own judgment, refusing to be ruled by Vergennes. Although Adams over-estimated the significance of American independence to the European balance of power, his view illuminates what he would later call the "stubbornness of

[85] John Adams to the President of Congress, 4 Aug. 1779, *PJA*, 8:108-20.

independence."[86] In the Model Treaty, he had envisioned America sitting at the table as one of the powers of the earth, free to make treaties with whoever it was in her interests to do so. He drew a sharp distinction between "my treaty" and the "other Peoples Treaty," and insisted that he had from the beginning maintained the principle that France did not need "any unequal Advantages in our Trade even over England."[87] Adams' comments are in the context of his encounter with the *Memorial* of former British governor Thomas Pownall, which he not only saw as expressing the same principles of free trade, but influenced by his own Model Treaty; and by his attempt to justify his wish to approach Britain with a potential treaty. Whatever else Adams compromised under the terms of the French alliance, he maintained his commitment to independence in American foreign policy. Congress apparently supported Adams' vision, for when he demanded the details of the accusations against him as commissioner, Congress instead gave him a new commission. He was to return to Europe and attempt to make a treaty with Great Britain.[88]

Adams' second journey to France was even more difficult than his first. He was forced to disembark in Spain and travel overland. But with New England free from British troops and privateers operating successfully due to increased French naval activity, Adams decided to give Vergennes advice on how to end the war. In his final letter before departing for Holland, he reminded Vergennes "that the Congress did, as long ago as the year Seventeen hundred and Seventy six, before Dr. Franklin was sent off for France, instruct him, Mr. Dean, and Mr. Lee, to solicit the King for Six Ships of the Line."[89] Furthermore, in 1778 and 1779, "a great variety of Arguments were adduced to show, that it was not only good Policy, but absolutely necessary to

[86] John Adams to Francis Dana, 17 Sept. 1782, *PJA*, 13:472.
[87] John Adams to Edmund Jennings, 18 July 1780, *PJA*, 10:8-11.
[88] John Adams to the President of Congress, 10 Sept. 1779, *PJA*, 8:138-39.
[89] John Adams to Vergennes, 27 July 1780, *PJA*, 10:48-51.

send a superiority of Naval Force to the Coasts of the Continent of America." Rather than look to a climactic seafight, the solution was control of the sea lanes:

> the Policy of keeping open the Communication between the United States and the French and Spanish Islands in the West Indies, so as to cooperate with France and the United States in the system of keeping up a constant Superiority of Naval Power both upon the Coasts of North America, and in the West India Islands. This is the true plan which is finally to humble the English and give the combined Powers the advantage.

Adams pointed out that the British had employed this policy successfully in the Seven Years' War:

> The English in the Course of the last War, derived all their Triumphs both upon the Continent of America, and the Islands, from the succours they received from their Colonies. And I am sure that France and Spain, with attention to the subject, may receive assistance in this War, from the same source, equally decisive.

Adams therefore did not favor the sort of combined operation of American troops, French troops, and the French navy that would occur at Yorktown. In December, he wrote to Franklin, "We don't need more troops, they do no harm that I know of but they are not wanted. All we want is money and ships… without ships, troops will do no good at all."[90] In a letter to William Carmichael, Adams outlined his alternate strategy:

> By a decided Superiority of naval force, upon the American Coasts and among the Islands, under active, vigilant and enterprizing Commanders, who will not think it beneath them to cruise for and watch the motions of transports and Merchantmen, the trade of America and the Islands would flourish, and the Supplies of the English totally cutt off.

If deprived of their transports, the British could be forced to abandon New York. If they tried to reinforce North America, their West Indian possessions would fall to France and Spain.[91]

Adams had once encouraged American troops to attack New York, and had once supported a combined French and American attack. Now he had returned to the indirect attack

[90] John Adams to Benjamin Franklin, 6 Dec. 1780, *PJA*, 10:392.
[91] John Adams to William Carmichael, 12 May 1780, *PJA*, 9:302-303.

that would depend on privateers. Warren confirmed its potential effectiveness, reporting that "Our Coast has not been much Infested with British Ships, and Privateers this Season. The French Fleet keep the British Men of War pretty much Collected, and from that Circumstance only great Advantages have been derived to our Trade."[92] When Adams wrote that "A Navy is our natural, and our only adequate Defence," he was thinking of privateers, not frigates and men-of-war. He explained:

> But We have but one Way to increase our shipping and Seamen, and that is Privateering. This abundantly pays its own Expences, and procures its own Men. The Seamen taken generally, enlist on board of our Privateers, and this is our surest Way, of distressing their Commerce, protecting our own, increasing our Seamen and diminishing those of the Ennemy. And this will finally be the Way, by capturing their supplies, that We shall destroy or captivate, or oblige to fly, their Armies in the United States.[93]

In his letter to William Lee, Adams noted further that "We need not march Armies nine hundred Miles, if We had a Navy."[94]

Vergennes brushed aside Adams' attempts to direct the French navy. He was also furious with Adams for downplaying the complaints of French merchants when Congress devalued the American dollar, for publishing opinions about the war in British newspapers, and for threatening to approach London to discuss a peace treaty.[95] Adams, aware that he was

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[92] James Warren to John Adams, 12 Oct. 1780, *PJA*, 10:262.
[93] John Adams to the President of Congress, No. 16, 14 Oct. 1780, *PJA*, 10:270.
[94] John Adams to William Lee, 6 Dec. 1780, *PJA*, 10:396-97.
[95] For treatments of the quarrel between Adams and Vergennes, see Jean Bauer, "With Friends Like These: John Adams and the Comte de Vergennes on Franco-American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 37.4 (2013): 664-692; John E. Ferling, "John Adams, Diplomat," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51.2 (1994): 227-252; James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 51-74; and Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 154-64. James H. Hutson thinks Vergennes tried to trap Adams when he contacted Adams regarding the devaluation of the American dollar; Jean Bauer disagrees. She emphasizes Vergennes' desire to treat the United States as a client state and prevent the re-emergence of the traditional trade between Britain and her former colonies. See Bauer, 671.24. Stourtz, comparing the caution of Benjamin Franklin with the aggressiveness of John Adams, writes, "Adams, much more than Franklin, believed in the efficacy of constant direct pressure, in the policy of the big stick, even if it had not yet grown big." See *Benjamin Franklin*, 162.

accomplishing nothing in France, decided to take over the mission to Holland that had been entrusted to Henry Laurens. Vergennes consented to Adams' departure for Holland, but he had already forwarded the letters Adams had written to him to Benjamin Franklin, and asked Franklin to send them to Congress. Franklin did so, and added this note:

> Mr Adams, on the other Hand, who at the same time means our Welfare and Interest as much as I, or any Man can do, seems to think a little apparent Stoutness and greater Air of Independence & Boldness in our Demands, will procure us more ample Assistance. It is for the Congress to judge and regulate their Affairs accordingly. M. De Vergennes, who appears much offended, told me yesterday, that he would enter into no further Discussions with Mr Adams, nor answer any more of his Letters. He is gone to Holland to try, as he told me, whether something might not be done to render us a little less dependent on France.[96]

Although Franklin did not agree with either Adams' views or methods, he did confirm that Adams was emphasizing independence from France in his diplomacy.

Adams would spend much of his time in Holland in his sickbed, and would later complain that he had ruined his health there. Yet he would also consider his Dutch enterprise the highlight of his diplomatic career and insist that the treaty he negotiated convinced Britain to accept American independence and sue for peace. He argued that had he submitted to Franklin and Vergennes, he would never have gone to Holland. The Dutch treaty was therefore not only another declaration of independence from Britain, but also from France. Adams wrote to Francis Dana, who was attempting to win recognition of American independence in Russia: "I lament the policy which has tied your hands. It is a bit of that web which you and I and every honest American in Europe has long been entangled. I broke through it as the whale goes through a

[96] Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Huntington, 9 Aug. 1780, *PBF*, 33:166.

net."[97] Here Adams revealed the danger of entangling alliances: the stronger European power would dictate American foreign policy. But he had refused the dictation of Vergennes, a policy he proudly described as "the triumph of stubborn independence, independence of friends or foes."[98] The Dutch treaty, which would be a commercial treaty between equals, was therefore consistent with the principles of the Model Treaty. So important did Adams consider the Dutch treaty that he refused to return to Paris to begin peace talks with the British until he had finalized his agreement with the Dutch.

Adams thought that the Dutch could be an ideal trade partner for the United States. The Dutch were primarily interested in commerce rather than conquest, their merchant marine was inadequate for the carrying trade, and they held no possessions on the North American continent. They also were an attractive source for financing, and Adams was able to negotiate a loan in addition to a treaty. On the other hand, although Adams insisted that he wanted to make treaties with non-Bourbon states, the Dutch were not free from the oversight of France. The French navy had re-taken the Dutch possessions St. Eustatius and Trincomali, and thus had leverage to negotiate on behalf of the Dutch in the peace talks with Great Britain.[99] Adams was also annoyed by the competition for Dutch support from the proposal for the Armed Neutrality: "Combinations, political arrangements, and magnificent parade" would not work; "Nothing but hard blows, taking their fleets of merchant ships, and burning, taking, sinking, or destroying their men-of-war, will bring them [the British] to reason."[100] Holland was therefore not only a

[97] John Adams to Francis Dana, 17 Sept. 1782, *PJA*, 13:471-73. See Henrietta Dana Skinner, "New Light on Revolutionary Diplomacy," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 104 (1901-02): 777-784.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Dull, *Diplomatic History*, 126.
[100] John Adams to M. Dumas, 6 Feb. 1781, *Works*, 7:367.

potential commercial partner, but also a warning of how a minor state could fall under the sway of France or Russia in its escape from the control of Great Britain.

Adams was in Holland when news reached him of the great victory at Yorktown. Although he rejoiced at the victory, and considered it an acceptable use of French naval forces, he nevertheless did not think it would be enough to end the war.[101] His skepticism is understandable: entrapping a British army in the field was not as difficult nor as important as forcing the British from New York. He had also seen Britain launch another campaign following the defeat of Gentleman Johnny. But the capture of Cornwallis signaled the failure of Britain's southern strategy, and Lord North's government fell. In March 1782, the House of Commons voted that "offensive war in America should end;" meaning that there would be no campaigning that year. In April, the Dutch recognized the United States. It appears that the Dutch did not recognize American independence until Britain did, albeit unofficially. Adams nevertheless considered his own efforts at securing a treaty in Holland of equal importance to Yorktown, and even more effective at forcing Britain to acknowledge American independence. He even suggested that his Dutch enterprise may have had some influence in the French decision to send de Grasse to the Cheasapeak.[102] With typical wit, Adams celebrated his diplomatic victory:

> Your Veterans in Diplomaticks and in Affairs of State consider Us as a kind of Militia, and hold Us perhaps, as is natural, in some degree of Contempt, but wise Men know that Militia sometimes gain Victories over regular Troops, even by departing from the Rules.[103]

His treaty with the Dutch demonstrated independence from France in a way the victory at Yorktown could not.

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[101] John Adams to John Jay, 28 Nov. 1781, *Works*, 7:486-87.
[102] John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, 21 Feb. 1782, *PJA*, 12:250-259. Adams also acknowledged that "A Man always makes an aukward figure when he is justifying himself and his own Actions, and I hope I shall be pardoned."
[103] Ibid.

Parliament's decision to not embark on a new campaign did not mean the troops abandoned New York. Having read and then translated the *Memorial* of former Governor Pownall, Adams was hopeful that Britain could be brought to terms by a reasonable appeal to her interests. He tipped his hand in the "Letters from a Distinguished American," which he wrote in the spring of 1782. Posing as an Englishman, Adams noted American independence was no threat to British manufacturing because cheap and plentiful land meant Americans would continue to buy European products. He emphasized that France sought only freedom of the seas, and quoted the French writer De Mably, "That the Project of being sole Master man of the Sea, and of commanding all the Commerce, is not less chimerical, nor less ruinous than that of Universall Monarchy on Land." Adams argued that the English no longer merely demanded that their "national Flagg be respected," but had graduated to terror, interfering with the liberty of France, Spain, and Holland. He noted that the United States could not be conquered:

> America not only has [resources] in plenty, but artists and seamen to employ them, fifteen hundred miles of sea coast, and a hundred excellent harbours to use them in, at three thousand miles distance from her enemy, who is surrounded by nations that are courting her friendship.[104]

Britain needed to accept American independence, and focus on her commerce. Adams echoed Pownall's *Memorial*, and made clear that it was in America's interests to have peace with Britain. It therefore is not surprising that Adams supported making a separate peace with Great Britain. He had not wanted to expand the war, and he realized that Britain would be America's largest trading partner. Even Vergennes was not offended, merely surprised at how much the Americans achieved at the bargaining table. The treaty that George III would sign a year later was substantially the same as the one negotiated in 1782. Adams would then seek the position of minister to Great Britain in order to negotiate a commercial treaty.

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[104] John Adams, "Letters from a Distinguished American," *PJA*, 9:561.

Adams focused on declaring independence from both Britain and France when he returned to Paris. He tried to win Canada, Nova Scotia, and Bermuda for America, as a way to counter British naval power. If Britain insisted on retaining the territory, he threatened "that in seven years we should break through all restraints and conquer from them the island of Newfoundland itself, and Nova Scotia too."[105] At the same time, he wanted Britain to agree to not keep a standing army in Canada.[106] He also became an advocate for the fishery. France had no interest in supporting an American fishery, but Adams was determined to regain what he insisted Americans had won through conquest in the colonial period. He also differed somewhat from the standard view of British thinkers who argued that the carrying trade was the foundation of naval power in that he identified the fishery as the nursery of the navy.[107]

By 1783, a frustrated Benjamin Franklin wrote to the president of Congress and complained about Adams:

> He thinks the french Minister one of the greatest Enemies of our Country; that he would have straitned our Boundaries to prevent the Growth of our people; contracted our Fishery to obstruct the Increase of our Seamen; and retained the Royalists amongst Us to keep us divided—that he privately opposes all our Negotiations with foreign Courts, and afforded us during the War the Assistance We received, only to keep it alive that We might be so much the more weakened by it. That to think of Gratitude to France, is the greatest of Follies, and that to be influenced by it, would ruin us.[108]

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[105] John Adams, 29 Nov. 1782, *JADA*, 3:84.
[106] John Adams to Benjamin Franklin, 16 April 1782, *PJA*, 12:411.
[107] N.A.M. Rodger explains: "To a greater and greater extent, Britain's real wealth was generated, and seen to be generated, from a maritime system in which overseas trade created the income which paid for the Navy, merchant shipping trained the seamen that manned it, so the Navy in turn could protect trade and the country. Much was still to be learned about how best to do both, but few informed observers in 1714 would have disputed Lord Haversham's judgement that 'Your trade is the mother and nurse of your seamen; your seamen are the life of your fleet; and your fleet is the security and protection of your trade: and both together are the wealth, strength, security and glory of Britain.'" See p. 180. Concerning the idea that the fishery was also a nursery for the navy, he writes: "Its [Parliament's] especial favourites were those trades supposed to be 'nurseries of seamen', above all the Newfoundland fishery, which annually took several thousand landmen across the Atlantic to spend a summer line-fishing from small boats, or working ashore splitting and drying the cod—an experience believed on rather slender grounds to turn them into seamen." See p. 207. Adams appears to have been thinking instead of the fishery as the way New England boys were first introduced to the sea, and then, as they matured, joined the merchant marine.
[108] Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, 22 July 1783, *WBF*, 9:62.

Franklin was frustrated that Adams considered him and Vergennes to be his enemies, and concluded, "Persuaded however that he means well for his Country, is always an honest Man, often a Wise one, but sometimes and in somethings absolutely out of his Senses."[109] While Franklin may have been correct that Adams had not grasped the difficulty France had had in meeting the demands of the American revolutionaries, his own conduct in France has also been criticized, both by his contemporaries and modern historians. Adams was not alone in considering Franklin his foe. When James Warren informed Adams about Franklin's criticism, he noted that it came from Adams' "determin'd Enemy;" and he and Gerry, Adams' fellow Massachusettsmen, shared Adams' distrust of Franklin.[110]

Adams expressed his frustration with Congress, Franklin, and France in a series of letters to James Warren in the spring of 1783. He did not want to limit commerce to France but wished for America to be "impartial," and "be drawn to no Country by any other Attraction than the best Bargains." Impartial trade was "the only principle, which can warrant Us from too close an Attachment to one Scale in the Ballance of Europe." He reminded Warren that he had been arguing for this impartiality in 1775 and 1776, and argued that had the American ministers held to it, "many thousands of Lives would have been saved, many Millions of Money, and the War would have come to a Conclusion much sooner, upon Terms quite as advantageous to America, more equitable to Holland, and more glorious for France." By expanding the war, and changing the role of France, Congress had endangered American independence. Adams blamed Congress, but he also blamed France: "I must and do most solemnly deliver it as my Opinion, that French

[109] In his criticism of Adams during the Quasi-war, James Madison recalled Franklin's comment: "He [Adams] is verifying compleatly the last feature in the character drawn of him by Dr. F. however his title may stand to the two first. 'Always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes wholly out of his senses.'" See James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 10 June 1798, *PJM*, 17:150-51.

[110] James Warren to John Adams, 27 Oct. 1783, *PJA*, 15:321-25. Abigail also passed a copy to her husband, noting, "I inclose it; least you should think it much worse than it really is." See Abigail Adams to John Adams, 15 Dec. 1783, *AFC*, 5:278-282.

Policy has obstructed the progress of our Cause in Europe, more than British."[111] Adams therefore saw no reason to be grateful to France for her assistance in the war, and he feared that France would continue to interfere in American foreign policy and in her military institutions. [112] Although Adams tried to make a commercial treaty with Britain, he eventually understood that a stronger central government was needed for a unified trade policy for the former colonies.

Adams' service as American commissioner appears to support his claim that he had formed his "system" and held to it through the Revolution. He had not wanted to make a treaty with France, unless "driven by necessity." He disagreed with Congress that events had reached the point where an entangling treaty with France had become "necessary." Adams appears to have believed that limiting the war had been possible.[113] But it is difficult to see how Adams could have kept the war from expanding even had his indirect strategy of starving out the British been adopted. French and Spanish naval support was needed to support American privateers, and France could not pretend to be neutral if she convoyed merchantmen carrying war materials from Europe to America. The war lasted longer than Adams had anticipated, and he had underestimated the effectiveness of both the British troops and navy, and the will of Parliament to withstand the damage done to British trade. He had overestimated the potential of Ireland to achieve its independence, and the attractiveness of American trade to France. Furthermore, the British were never forced from New York, and the Dutch treaty that he was so proud of depended on the change in British policy brought about by Yorktown. But whatever his

[111] John Adams to James Warren, 20 March 1783, *PJA*, 14:345-49.
[112] John Adams to James Warren, 16 Apr. 1783, *PJA*, 14:417-419.
[113] Adams' emphasis on the differences between his Model Treaty and the Treaty of Commerce and Alliance can also be attributed to his attempt to demonstrate independence from France, rather than objective analysis of the strategic challenge. This view also permitted him to attack Benjamin Franklin and justify his own reputation. But his attempt to limit the conflict with France in 1798 and his advocacy of a naval option against Britain in 1812 suggest that he genuinely believed that it had been possible to fight a limited naval war during the Revolution.

mistakes, misunderstandings, or miscalculations, Adams nevertheless could consider his wartime diplomacy a success: America had achieved her independence and had begun to make commercial treaties with other European states. He knew that the struggle, however, was not over: "We are at Peace, but not out of Danger." When Adams penned those words, he had been thinking of France.[114] But on the eleventh of October, 1784, another enemy struck at America.

[114] John Adams to James Warren, 16 Apr. 1783, *PJA*, 14:417-419.

Chapter Four: The Wild East

The last have more spirit than prudence. As long as France, England, Holland, the Emperor, &c., will submit to be tributary to these robbers, and even encourage them, to what purpose should we make war upon them? The resolution might be heroic, but would not be wise.[1]

John Adams to John Jay, 1784

In October 1784, Moroccan corsairs, acting under the orders of Mawlay Muhammad, the emperor of Morocco, seized the *Betsey*, an American merchantman. It appears that the emperor had decided that drastic action was needed to get the attention of the Americans. Though he had recognized American independence in 1778, the revolutionaries had not responded. But he was not demanding tribute, and he even returned the captured ship and crew. Congress apologized to the emperor, and blamed "the occupations of the War and the Distance of our Situation" for their tardy response.[2] John Adams, focused on his diplomacy with Great Britain and France, nevertheless was aware of the need to deal with the Barbary powers. Historians have tended to focus on Thomas Jefferson and the First Barbary War, and only include Adams where he suggested the alternative of paying the Barbary States rather than fighting them.[3] But in his diplomatic career, Adams would address the challenge of the Barbary corsairs during the American Revolution, during his years as minister to Great Britain, during the Algerian crisis of 1793 when he was vice-president, and during the Quasi-war, when he was president. The

[1] John Adams to John Jay, 15 Dec. 1784, *Works*, 8:217.
[2] John Jay to the American Commissioners, [11] Mar. 1785, *PTJ*, 8:19-22.
[3] James A. Field illustrates this use: "The efforts of Adams and Jefferson to open the Mediterranean to their country's commerce had at least demonstrated one of the abiding realities of American history. The practical men, the realists, are willing to make deals. It is the ideologues, even the peaceful ones, who will fight." See *America and the Mediterranean World 1776-1882* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 35.

Barbary States therefore serve as a useful case study for the position of minor powers in Adams' system of neutrality.

The Barbary States included the Empire of Morocco, and the regencies of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli.[4] The latter three were nominally part of the Ottoman Empire, but were practically independent. In 1756, Algiers captured Tunis, and thereafter treated it as its vassal. For most of the eighteenth century, Algiers also dominated Tripoli. As part of Algerian preeminence, the Dey of Algiers would intercede with Tunis and Tripoli on behalf of weak powers like the United States who were seeking treaties. All four of the Barbary States engaged in commercial trade as well as seizing passing merchantmen. Tunis, for example, was a bread-basket for Europe, and Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers acted as carriers for French and Italian cities. All four were heirs to a special form of sea raiding that was, strictly speaking, neither piracy nor privateering, called the *corse*. From the Latin "cursus," the *corse* had developed in the Mediterranean after the Arab conquests of the seventh century. Both Christians and Muslims preyed on rival shipping and also raided settlements for captives who would either be ransomed or permanently enslaved. Unlike typical pirates, these corsairs were agents of the state and brought their prizes into port for judgment at court. Unlike typical privateers, the corsairs did not seize prizes in an attempt to weaken a state with which they were at war; their aim was not a means to an end, but an end in itself. Morocco, with its strategic location on the edge of Africa, threatened not only the Mediterranean trade but also the Atlantic. Algiers also sent its cruisers through the Straits to seek prizes on the Atlantic.[5]

[4] See Map, p. 232, below.
[5] The most comprehensive study of the Barbary corsairs is Daniel Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs: the End of a Legend, 1800-1820* (Translated by Victoria Hobson, Leiden: Brill, 2005). For a broader study of the Barbary powers see

The Barbary States were willing to forego their raids if Europeans agreed to pay them for protection instead. Great Britain signed treaties with Algiers in 1622, Tripoli in 1658, and Tunis in 1662, and continued to renew them. After Britain took Gibraltar in 1704, Morocco became the key supplier of wheat and fresh fruits and vegetables for the garrison. Cattle could be economically shipped to the island and slaughtered as fresh beef. Similarly, the capture of Minorca in 1708 made Britain a customer for Algerian wheat. Algiers remained friendly with Britain during the War of Independence, and if Americans considered her to be Britain's partner in the Mediterranean, their view was not unfounded. Because Algiers routinely honored British passes, captains of ships of nations at war with Algiers—including Americans after independence—would fraudulently use them.[6] American merchants could also try to claim status as British subjects by forming partnerships with bona fide British firms, or form their own insurance companies in the United States that would be willing to insure their cargoes for reasonable rates. They could also accept the loss of the Mediterranean trade, and aim for safer, if less lucrative, destinations. These grass roots responses to the Barbary threat lessened the urgency of governmental action, but did not eliminate it. The American colonists had been protected in the Mediterranean as part of Britain's treaties with the Barbary States; with independence, either another European power needed to assume that role or the Americans had to make their own treaties. Adams therefore included the Barbary States in his foreign policy during both the Revolution and his presidency.

Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For a study of the Knights of St. John based at Malta see Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: a Maritime History of the Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). For a brief overview see Martin N. Murphy, "The Barbary Pirates," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 24.4 (2013): 19-42.

[6] M. S. Anderson, "Great Britain and the Barbary States in the Eighteenth Century," *Historical Research* 29.79 (1956): 93-99.

Adams' Barbary policy can be difficult to explain. The same man who would later be a powerful advocate of a naval response to France in the Quasi-war and to Britain in the War of 1812 insisted on paying tribute to Algiers rather than fighting her. The same man who opposed building frigates to fight Algiers in 1794 would later claim that "without me… there would have been no navy, and the Barbary powers would have captivated and plundered."[7] Attention to Adams' system, however, dissolves some of the confusion, as does awareness of his view that the United States could not deal with the Barbary States as isolated powers. Adams referred to the foreign relations of European powers as the "system of Europe," and located the "African states" in that system.[8] European powers such as Britain, Holland, France, and Spain used and abused Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli as a way to corner the carrying trade in the Mediterranean. The gift of a Spanish warship, for example, could equip Algiers for attacks on Spain's enemies. Conflicts between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire affected relations not only between the two empires but also between the Porte and the Barbary States. Minor powers such as Sweden, Denmark, Naples, and Portugal also played roles in this complex arena. Adams' policy towards the Barbary powers illustrates the place of minor powers in his system: here the "system of neutrality" engaged "the system of Europe." It is therefore useful to trace Adams' encounter with the Barbary States from the revolution to his retirement.

In 1776, when Adams penned the Model Treaty, he included Article 6, which obliged France to assume responsibility for protecting American merchantmen from the Barbary corsairs. Although there is no direct evidence for his thinking on this matter, it is possible to identify a

[7] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 23 Mar. 1809, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[8] For an overview of how Europeans viewed the Barbary States, including in terms of geography, see Ann Thomson, *Barbary and Enlightenment: European Attitudes Towards the Maghreb In the 18th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1987).

few reasons for his inclusion of this article. First, in purely practical terms, American merchantmen needed protection, and America had no navy. Article 3 therefore obliged the king of France to protect American merchantmen in his ports and Article 5 required him to close his ports to pirates and restore any ships or merchandise taken by them. Second, in the colonial period, Britain's treaties with the Barbary pirates had included protection for American merchantmen, and with the withdrawal of British protection, a vacuum needed to be filled: markets in the Mediterranean accounted for one-sixth of all American trade by 1776. Adams noted in Article 6 that the "King and Kingdom of Great Britain, before the Commencement of the present War, protected, defended, and Secured the People… their Vessells and Effects, against all Such Attacks."[9] He therefore transferred this responsibility to France. Third, some of the Mediterranean ports were French, so this Article included a clarification of his policy of expecting European powers to keep their ports open for the American shipping that they welcomed.

In the 1778 Treaty of Amity and Commerce, the obligation of the French king had been reduced considerably. Gone was the obligation to assume the former responsibility of the British king to actively protect American shipping. Instead, under the terms of Article 8, the French king was to "employ his good Offices and Interposition" with the leaders of the Barbary powers. During the Revolutionary War, the French failed to do even this: in August of 1778, Ralph Izard informed the commissioners that a certain Captain Woodford was "apprehensive of meeting some of the Cruizers belonging to the States of Africa." Izard reminded them that the French king was obligated to intercede with the leaders of the Barbary States, and concluded: "You will be so good as to inform me whether any steps have been taken by the Court of France, for the

[9] John Adams, "Plan of Treaties," *PJA*, 4:265-68.

security of the inhabitants of the United States."[10] A few days later, the commissioners relayed Izard's concerns to Vergennes: "We therefore request your Excellencys Attention to this Case; and such Assistance from his Majestys good Offices as was intended by the Treaty."[11] A little over a month later, they explained that they did not have the power to negotiate treaties between the United States and the Barbary powers, and repeated their "request [for] help in obtaining passes."[12] Their requests fell on deaf ears.[13]

It therefore is not surprising that when France failed to assist the United States, Adams turned to Holland. Adams' dealings with the Dutch in 1782 reveal a significant shift in his thinking about the challenge to America from the Barbary powers. When Adams began negotiating the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the Dutch, he included an article regarding the Barbary powers. He had initially proposed similar wording to the Treaty of 1778, which had already reduced the obligation of a European power to protect American shipping from his initial expectation of active protection in the Model Treaty. The Dutch suggested alternative language which further lessened their involvement. The revised Article 23 states that "If at any Time the United States of America, shall judge necessary, to commence Negotiations" with the Barbary powers, the Dutch would, if the Americans asked, "Second such Negotiations, in the most favourable manner, by means of their Consulls residing near the said King Emperor and Regencies."[14]

Adams accepted this revision, noting that

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[10] Ralph Izard to the Commissioners, 25 Aug. 1778, *PJA*, 6:392-394.
[11] The Commissioners to Vergennes, 28 Aug. 1778, *PJA*, 6:401-405.
[12] The Commissioners to Vergennes, 1 Oct. 1778, *PBF*, 27:481-482.
[13] Adams later blamed Franklin: "As long ago as 1778 I engaged earnestly in the Business of Treating with the Barbary Powers: but Dr. Franklin's opinion allways was that the Freedom of the Navigation of the Mediterranean was not worthy the Presents, and everything allways withered more or less that Dr. Franklin blasted." See John Adams to Stephen Higginson, 4 Oct. 1785, Adams Papers, Reel 107.
[14] "V. Proposed Amendment to Article 24: A Translation, 22- 29 August 1782," *PJA*, 13:344. The Dutch original is included on the same page.

> As this Article, binds their High Mightinesses to no particular Expence and to no particular Service, it is rather a general Expression of Benevolence, like the Same Article in the Treaty with France, than any Thing more. As Mediterranean Passes must Sometime or other be had for American Vessells, the Countenance and Good Will, or in other Words the good offices of their High Mightinesses added to those of his most Christian Majesty, might Still, facilitate the Negotiation, whenever it may be begun.[15]

Adams appears to have seen no practical difference between this wording and that in the treaty with France, perhaps because France had not taken action.[16] But it is clear that the Dutch expected the United States to take charge of its own diplomacy with the Barbary States: when Americans decided to negotiate, the negotiations would commence; if American officials judged it useful, the Dutch consuls stationed in the Mediterranean might be asked to assist.

Adams accepted a similar reduction in the role he constructed for Great Britain. In his July 1783 draft of a new treaty between the United States and Great Britain, he included Article 10, and used the same language in the Treaty of 1778 with France, and what he had suggested to the Dutch.[17] Around the same time as he was writing the draft, he penned a letter to Robert Livingston, recounting his interview with the Austrian ambassador, Florimond Claude Mercy d'Argenteau:

> I asked him what we should do with the Barbary Powers. He said he thought all the Powers of the world ought to unite in the suppression of such a detestable race of Pirates. That the Emperor had lately made an insinuation to the Porte upon the Subject. I asked him if he thought France & England would agree to such a project—that I had heard that some Englishmen had said, "If there were no

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[15] "John Adams' First Reply to the Dutch Remarks on and Suggested Changes to His Draft Treaty of Amity and Commerce," 21 May-22 August 1782, *PJA*, 13:331-344. The High Mightinesses were the Estates-General of the Dutch Republic.

[16] Adams, despite his legal background, may not have been particularly interested in precise language. He would later scoff at the quarrel over the difference between a "right" and a "liberty" with regards to American access to the fishery. See John Adams, 30 July 1811, *Works*, 6:14.

[17] "Draft Definitive Peace Treaty between the United States and Great Britain, [ante 19 July 1783]," *PJA*, 15:151-161.

> Algiers, England ought to build one"— He said he could not answer for England.[18]

Adams had been hoping that America and Great Britain would resume commercial relations, in part because this would put pressure on France to also open their West Indian possessions to Americans. He was certain that neither Britain nor France would condone a completely free trade. He concluded that "It must, however, be the care of the Minister, who may have to negotiate a Treaty of Commerce with Great-Britain, to obtain as ample Freedom in this Trade, as possible."[19] His letter to Livingston, and his experience with the French and the Dutch, suggest that Adams did not expect meaningful assistance from Great Britain for American dealing with the Barbary States. In the 1783 Definitive Treaty of Peace he actually signed, his Article 10 had disappeared. Despite his efforts, the United States did not obtain a commercial treaty with Britain until 1794, and Jay's Treaty did not mention the Barbary States. It did, however, include Article 20, which obligated both parties to refuse haven to pirates, and to restore any property they had taken.[20] Because Britain held possessions in the Mediterranean, this provision, if enforced, could provide some protection for American merchantmen.

So if neither the French, the Dutch, nor the British could be relied on to provide protection from the Barbary pirates nor to intercede with their leaders, what were the Americans to do? As Daniel Leonard had warned in 1775, the loss of the protection afforded by the Royal Navy was indeed the dark side of independence. In December of 1784, a couple of months after

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[18] John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, 3 July 1783, *PJA*, 15:76-81. Benjamin Franklin expressed similar concerns: "You will see by the enclosed copy of a letter I received from Algiers the danger two of our ships escaped last winter. I think it not improbably that those rovers may be privately encouraged by the English to fall upon us, and to prevent our interference in the carrying trade; for I have in London heard it is a maxim among the merchants that if *there were no Algiers it would be worth England's while to build one*. I wonder, however, that the rest of Europe do not combine to destroy those nests, and secure commerce from their future piracies." [Italics in original.] See Benjamin Franklin to Robert Livingston, 22 July 1783, *RDC*, 6:587.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Hunter Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, 8 vols. (Washington DC.: Government Printing Office, 1931), 2:260.

the *Betsey* was captured by Moroccan corsairs, Adams wrote to John Jay, whom he hoped was now minister of foreign affairs. Adams told Jay that the Moroccan ambassador had demanded and received warships from European powers, and was now attacking American shipping. As a result, one merchantman had been captured, and insurance rates were rising. Adams concluded, "Something should be soon done." But he immediately cautioned, "There is danger of our making mistakes."[21] These mistakes could come from two different directions. The first was from those who did not realize the value of the Mediterranean trade, and also failed to understand that these attacks on trade would not be confined to the Mediterranean. If American shipping was not protected by treaty, insurance rates would skyrocket. Giving presents to the corsairs was part of the cost of doing business, and would be more than compensated for by the profits.[22]

The second was from those who recognized the necessity of protecting American shipping, but wanted to fight the Barbary powers. Adams said these had "more spirit than prudence," and that "the resolution might be heroic, but would not be wise." He observed that the Barbary powers could take rich prizes and captives, but had nothing worth seizing: "a bad vessel fit only to burn," and they would not pay ransoms for captives nor care if the Americans burned their towns. He also noted that fighting them was pointless so long as the European powers were supporting them.[23] He argued that "Unless it were possible, then, to persuade the great maritime powers of Europe to unite in the suppression of these piracies," any attempt to fight them would merely result in "increasing their insolence and their demands." He conceded

[21] John Adams to John Jay, 15 Dec. 1784, *Works*, 8:217-218.
[22] Adams was convinced that American profits justified paying tribute. Benjamin Franklin was less certain: "The other Barbary states, too, seem to require consideration, if we propose to carry on any trade in the Mediterranean; but whether the security of that trade is of sufficient importance to be worth purchasing at the rate of the tributes usually exacted by those piratical states is a matter of doubt, on which I cannot at present form a judgment." See Benjamin Franklin to the President of Congress, 25 Dec. 1783, *RDC*, 6:742.
[23] Ibid., 218.

that though the solution was to give them presents, the problem was the lack of funds.[24] He had written to the president of Congress a month earlier, noting that "It will be not only in vain, but dangerous and detrimental to open negotiations with these powers, without money for the customery presents."[25] In dealing with the Barbary corsairs, Adams considered both his system of neutrality and the system of Europe. So long as European powers like Britain supported the Barbary States, it was pointless for America to fight them. Until America secured another loan from the Dutch, it was pointless to negotiate a treaty. In January 1785, Adams reported to Congress that he had arranged two loans, totaling seven million guilders, and "It furnishes us the means of treating with the Barbary powers if congress should authorize us to make the necessary presents."[26] Congress, however, authorized only eighty thousand dollars for all expenses relating to the negotiations with the Barbary States.

Adams' view that the Barbary challenge had to be met with attention to the system of Europe was justified by events in 1785. How Austria, Russia, Spain, and Portugal handled their relations with the Barbary powers affected the United States. In March he wrote to Jay, outlining his views on a possible joint Austro-Russian plan to attack the Ottoman Empire:

> I cannot find it in my heart to wish ill-success to the two empires, if they really have, as they are suspected to have, the project of driving wholly out of Europe the Turkish empire, because the Barbary powers and their hateful piracies would probably come to an end at the same time.

Adams betrayed no interest in forming an alliance with the two empires, or taking an active role in supporting their attack. Adams also believed that the Barbary States needed to be treated as a unit. He wrote, "We wait for orders relative to those States, thinking it dangerous saying a word

[24] Ibid., 219.
[25] John Adams to the President of Congress, 3 Nov. 1784, *Works*, 8:211.
[26] John Adams to the President of Congress, 10 Jan. 1785, *Works*, 8:221.

to Morocco before we are ready to treat with all."[27] He spent the early months of 1785 examining treaties that European powers had made with the Barbary States. Adams' letter to Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson reveals that he had been investigating "the treaties between the several Christian powers and the Barbary States." He asked Vergennes whether the 1684 treaty between France and Algiers had been renewed, and what the terms were. Such details would be helpful for Congress in its own negotiations. But Vergennes brushed off his inquiries as "not his department."[28] Adams would eventually concede that "We never Shall have Peace, though France, Spain, England and Holland Should use all their Influence in our favour without a Sum of Money."[29] A few weeks later, Adams wrote to Jay that although "we must proceed slowly and cautiously" he was convinced that the Mediterranean trade was important to the United States, and that problems with both insurance and captives needed to be addressed.[30]

The emperor of Morocco kept his word and captured no more American ships. But in the fall of 1785, a truce between Spain and Algiers led to Algiers capturing two American ships, the *Maria* and the *Dolphin*. Adams wrote Jefferson that "Agents of insurance offices in London, or of merchants trading in fish, &c., in the Mediterranean, may stimulate the corsairs, by exaggerated representations of our wealth, and the riches of our prizes."[31] Adams therefore thought that rumor was an important factor in aggravating Barbary aggression. On February 16,

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[27] John Adams to John Jay, 9 March 1785, *Works*, 8:226-229.
[28] John Adams to Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, 20 March 1785, *Works*, 8:230-31.
[29] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 3 July 1786, *Works*, 8:406-07. Adams evaluation of France appears to be correct. On 31 Oct. 1785, Vergennes wrote to De Kercy, "You will easily sense that there is no advantage to us in their [the Americans] procuring a tranquil navigation in the Mediterranean." See Parker, 216-219.
[30] John Adams to John Jay, 13 April 1785, *Works*, 8:23. Adams' emphasis on the problems with insurance was shared by Stephen Cleveland Blyth, who wrote an early history of the First Barbary War: "Intelligence was brought in October, 1785, of two more American vessels having been captured by the Algerines. Ten per cent. had been asked to insure a ship bound to Boston, although she was to come north about. The prospect before us was melancholy enough, and the question was earnestly asked, what was to become of our scanty remittances to Europe, and encumbered with such a heavy insurance." See *History of the war between the United States and Tripoli, and other Barbary powers To which is prefixed, a geographical, religious, and political history of the Barbary States in general* (Printed at the Salem Gazette Office, Salem, Mass., 1806), 44.
[31] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 2 October 1785, *Works*, 8:317.

1786, Adams wrote John Jay that while the rising insurance, difficulty in trade, and concern for the captives was legitimate, it was important to keep events in perspective: only three vessels had been captured. One solution would be for Americans to start their own insurance companies, and bypass Lloyds Coffeehouse.[32]

In the same letter, Adams mentioned that he had noticed the Tripoline ambassador at court, but had not spoken to him. But Adams had heard that the ambassador had said that Tripoli and America were at war, and that peace could be had for one hundred thousand dollars per year. Adams was reluctant to approach the ambassador because an interpreter was needed, and because he did not want to offend Morocco and Algiers.[33] In his next letter, Adams explained to Jay that "there are not wanting, Persons in England, who will find means to Stimulate this African to Stir up his Countrymen against american Vessells." He thought the ambassador might be present either to discuss terms with the United States, or "to obtain Aids from England to carry on a War against Us." Although Adams found the presence of the ambassador "ominous," having noted that "all the other foreign Ministers had made their visits," he decided to no longer avoid him, and the next evening called on him. He reported that the ambassador "appears to be a Man of good Sense and temper," and they were able to converse using bits of Italian, French, and English. The ambassador confirmed that his state was at war with America because "Turkey Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers and Morocco, were the Sovereigns of the Mediterranean, and that no nation could navigate that Sea, without a Treaty of Peace with them." America was to first make a treaty with Tripoli, then with the others. He invited Adams to return with an interpreter and discuss terms.[34] In his letter to Jefferson, Adams described how he and the ambassador smoked

[32] John Adams to John Jay, 16 Feb. 1786, *DCUS*, 2:566-67.
[33] Ibid.
[34] John Adams to John Jay, 17 Feb. 1786, *DCUS*, 2:567-68.

"in aweful Pomp" from long-stemmed pipes and drank coffee. Adams admitted that "The Relation of my Visit is to be sure, very inconsistent with the Dignity of your Character and mine," but asked, "How can We preserve our Dignity in negotiating with Such Nations?" He nevertheless had preferred not giving offense to preserving his dignity, and he noted that one of the ambassador's secretaries, admiring him, had said, "Monsieur votes etes un Turk!"[35]

On the nineteenth of February, the ambassador, accompanied by an English Jew as his interpreter, called on Adams. The ambassador explained that with the English hostile to the Americans, he preferred not to use the court interpreter. He told Adams that it was better to make a treaty now, for two reasons. The first, that delay would increase the cost; the second, that if the Algerines took "a considerable number" of prizes, it would be much more difficult to stop them, especially since they now had "more and larger ships than usual." The ambassador explained:

> A War between Christian and Christian was mild and Prisoners on either Side were treated with Humanity: but a War between Turk and Christian was horrible, and Prisoners were Sold into Slavery. Although he was himself a Mussulman he must Still say he thought it a very rigid Law, but as he could not alter it, he was desirous of preventing its operation, or at least of Softening it, as far as his Influence extended.

The ambassador noted the close relationships between the Barbary States, and assured Adams that a treaty with Tripoli would convince Algiers also to make peace. Adams then told him the Americans were already discussing terms with Morocco. The ambassador appeared pleased and forecast success, "as the Emperor was a Man of extensive Views, and much disposed to promote the Commerce of his subjects." Adams decided that he could deal with the ambassador and told Jay, "This Man is either a consummate Politician in Art and Address, or he is a benevolent and wise Man."[36]

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[35] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 17 Feb. 1786, *PTJ*, 9:285-288.
[36] John Adams to John Jay, 20 Feb. 1786, *DCUS*, 2:568-71.

But peace with the Barbary States would be costly: after his next meeting with the ambassador, Adams wrote to Jay: "It may be reasonably concluded, that this great Affair cannot be finished, for much less than two hundred Thousand Pounds sterling." [37] Adams thought the sum, although daunting, could nevertheless be covered by a Dutch loan. The alternative would be much more costly:

> If it is not done, this War will cost Us more Millions of sterling Money in a short time. besides the miserable Depression of the Reputation of the United States and the cruel Embarrassment of all our Commerce, and the intollerable Burthen of Insurance, added to the Cries of our Countrymen in Captivity.

To John Adams, the alternatives were not either to fight them or pay them, but either to pay them straightaway, or fight them, watch the insurance rates skyrocket, watch them take captives, and then pay them. Either way, they would be paid, and the costs associated with fighting them, both financial and human, would be substantially higher.

After Thomas Jefferson arrived in London, he and Adams discussed terms with the ambassador. They also interrogated him on Tripoli's justification for war against America. They explained that the default condition of the United States was peace with all nations unless specifically wronged:

> The Ambassador answered us, that it was founded on the law of their great Profet: that it was written in the Koran, that all Nations who should not have acknowledged their Authority were sinners: that it was their right & duty to make war upon them whenever they could be found, & to make slaves of all they could take as prisoners; & that every Mussalman who should be slain in battle was sure to go to Paradise.[38]

Adams was already aware that "some Englishmen" had said, "If there were no Algiers, England ought to build one."[39] He may also have been aware of the joke that "Money is the god of

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[37] John Adams to John Jay, 22 Feb. 1786, *DCUS*, 2:571-73.
[38] The American Peace Commissioners to John Jay, 28 Mar. 1786, *PTJ*, 9:357-359.
[39] John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, 3 July 1783, *PJA*, 15:76-81.

Algiers," and thus considered the "great Profet" to be the great profit earned from seizing valuable merchantmen, and demanding ransoms for prisoners.[40] In their letter to Jay, he and Jefferson hoped that they could secure a Dutch loan and "remove this formidable obstacle out of the Way of the Prosperity of the United States."[41] It is true that a frustrated Adams had complained that "The Policy of Christendom has made Cowards of all their Sailors before the Standard of Mahomet."[42] But Adams tended to refer to the Barbary States as the "Affricans" and had initially referred to the ambassador as "this African" rather than "this Mussleman," which suggests he saw the conflict primarily in geographical terms: the Barbary states occupied a strategic place that gave them access to Mediterranean trade.[43] Adams tended to class Islam with Roman Catholicism as a religion that fostered superstition.[44] In his old age, he complained that "these Bible Societies have been invented by deeper Politicians still to divert mankind from the study and pursuit of their Natural Rights. I wish Societies were formed in India China & Turkey to send us gratis translations of their Sacred Books one good turn deserves another."[45] To Adams, Mohammed was not so much a prophet as a great military leader, in the ranks of "Alexander, Cæsar, Zingis, Tamerlane, Mahomet, Cromwell Marlborough;" or a tyrant backed by an army, in the ranks of "Alexander Caesar, Zingis, Mahomet Cromwell, Napoleon, Hamilton or Burr." [46]

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[40] Richard O'Bryen and Others to Thomas Jefferson, 8 June 1786, *PTJ*, 9:614-22.
[41] The American Peace Commissioners to John Jay, 28 Mar. 1786, *PTJ*, 9:357-59.
[42] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 3 July 1786, *PTJ*, 10:86-87.
[43] John Adams to John Jay, 17 Feb. 1786, *Works*, 8:372-73.
[44] For example, Adams growled that "Misinterpretations of the Old and New Testament have founded Synagogues Mosques and Cathedrels." See John Adams to William Sumner, 28 March 1809, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[45] John Adams to David Sewall, 30 May 1821, Adams Papers, reel 124.
[46] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 22 April 1812, Adams Papers, reel 118; John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 10 July 1812, Adams Papers, reel 118. Denise A. Spellberg suggests Adams did see the conflict at least partly in religious terms. Spellberg notes that Adams wrote, "The policy of Christendom has made Cowards of all their Sailors before the Standard of Mahomet," and she uses this quote as one of the epigraphs that open her chapter, "Jefferson Versus John Adams." This quote is the basis for her view that "It would be Adams, not Jefferson, who emphasized religion in his perceptions of the enemy," and that "John Adams, unlike Jefferson, saw the conflict as a religious one."

In the summer of 1786, Adams exchanged a series of letters with Thomas Jefferson. In his letter of July 3, Adams discussed his view of the Barbary challenge. He agreed that the transfer of the western posts was "important, [but] the war with the Turks is more So." He then outlined four "propositions":

> 1. We may at this Time, have a Peace with them, in Spight of all the Intrigues of the English or others to prevent it, for a Sum of Money.
> 2. We never Shall have Peace, though France, Spain, England and Holland Should use all their Influence in our favour without a Sum of Money.
> 3. That neither the Benevolence of France nor the Malevolence of England will be ever able materially to diminish or Increase the Sum.
> 4. The longer the Negotiation is delayed, the larger will be the Demand.[47]

Adams was aware that Jefferson had been discussing the Barbary challenge with Lafayette, for he himself had written on June 26 to the Frenchman. In that letter, Adams explained that he was "in favour of a Negotiation with the Turks, & averse to all proposals of blocking them up fighting them." He defended his preference for negotiations, first, because the accounting justified it; second, because fighting them would "only enhance their demands," and third, because the Southern states would not support a war. He said that he "would not give a farthing for all the assistance that could be afforded us by Portugal & Naples," and insisted that "The Glory of Wit & Wisdom is as prescious as that of Valour & Arms."[48] He now asked Jefferson and "our noble Friend the Marquis" to consider "these four Propositions." Adams doubted the Southern states would be willing to fund a navy; otherwise, "It would be a good occasion to begin a Navy."[49]

Spellberg does not address the possibility that the quote is a colorful description rather than a serious analysis on the part of Adams. She also concedes that "The primary obstacle to establishing peace, for Adams, was fiscal." See *Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an: Islam and the Founders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 124-127, 136. For a critical review of Spellberg, see Robert Allison, "Jefferson's Jihad," *Reviews in American History* 42.4 (2014): 630-637.

[47] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 3 July 1786, *PTJ*, 10:86-87.

[48] John Adams to the Marquis de Lafayette, 26 June 1786, Adams Papers, reel 113.

[49] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 3 July 1786, *PTJ*, 10:86-87.

In his reply to Adams, Jefferson wrote that he agreed with the first three propositions, and modified the fourth: "the longer the negotiation is delayed the larger will be the demand, this will depend on the intermediate captures: if they are many & rich the price may be raised; if few & poor it will be lessened." He then set out his rationale for fighting Algiers:

> 1. Justice is in favor of this opinion. 2. Honor favors it. 3. It will procure us respect in Europe; and respect is a safeguard to interest. 4. It will arm the federal head with the safest of all the instruments of coercion over its delinquent members, and prevent it from using what would be less safe. I think that so far, you go with me. But in the next steps, we shall differ. 5. I think it least expensive. 6. Equally effective.[50]

Jefferson had initially opposed both paying tribute and blockade accompanied by bombardments, and advocated "constant cruising." It appears that he envisioned American warships conveying merchantmen and fighting any corsairs who dared approach. In a letter to James Monroe, in 1784, Jefferson outlined his plan:

> I am of opinion Paul Jones with half a dozen frigates would totally destroy their commerce: not by attempting bombardments as the Mediterranean states do wherein they act against the whole Barbary force brought to a point, but by constant cruising and cutting them to peices by peicemeal. [sic][51]

By 1786, Jefferson was discussing a joint operation with Vergennes, the Count D'Estaing, John Paul Jones, and Lafayette. Jefferson was now in favor of a blockade, and wanted to form a coalition of all the minor powers to conduct that blockade.[52] Jefferson's evidence for an "effectual" war was the example of France:

> About forty years ago, the Algerines having broke their treaty with France, this court sent Monsieur de Massiac, with one large, and two small frigates; he blocaded the harbor of Algiers three months, and they subscribed to the terms he proposed.

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[50] Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 11 July, 1786, *PTJ*, 10:123-25.
[51] Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 11 Nov. 1784, *PTJ*, 7:510.
[52] For the text of Jefferson's "Convention Against the Barbary States," and the editorial note discussing its composition, see *PTJ*, 10:560-68.

Jefferson was confident that just as de Massiac had successfully blockaded Algiers, so the new coalition could deal with the present Dey. Jefferson calculated that necessary force by number of guns—one hundred and fifty, though he did not specify the size of the guns—and pointed out that because it was "proper and necessary" for the United States to have "a small marine force" anyway, only half the cost should be attributed to the force against Algiers. Furthermore, he was convinced that Naples and Portugal would join in the war, and that "many, if not most of the powers of Europe, (except France, England, Holland, and Spain, if her peace be made) would sooner or later enter into the confederacy."[53]

Adams replied to Jefferson, conceding some benefits in the use of force:

> The resolution… would raise the spirits and courage of our countrymen immediately, and we might obtain that glory of finally breaking up these nests of banditti. But congress will never, or at least not for years, take any such resolution, and in the mean time our trade and honor suffers beyond calculation. We ought not to fight them at all, unless we determine to fight them forever.

Adams agreed that the United States needed a navy, but thought Algiers was the wrong target. Adams also pointed out, "Did any nation ever make peace with any one Barbary state without making the presents? Is there an example of it? I believe not, and fancy you will find that even Massac [sic] himself made the presents." Furthermore, he explained, Algiers in 1786 was a much more formidable power than the Algiers Massiac had faced: more gun-boats and a better fortified harbor.[54] Adams may have been more right than he knew. It appears that Jefferson had misunderstood the Count D'Estaing. The count had written to Jefferson that Massiac had *proposed* blockading Algiers as a more effective option than bombarding the city:

> M. de Massiac who was secretary for the department of marine and afterwards vice admiral, while a captain in the navy was chosen to command an expedition to bombard Algiers. But he conceived a mode might be adopted which would be less

[53] Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 11 July 1786, *NDBW*, 1:10-11.
[54] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 31 July 1786, *NDBW*, 1:12.

> expensive and more certain of success. He proposed to blockade Algiers with a vessel of 64 guns and two frigates by anchoring nearly on the bar with chains and kedge anchors that if it was necessary he could be able to pass the winter in this situation and the sick officers and sailors should be replaced. This mode is the most certain and at the same time the most distressing to the enemy as it will prevent almost entirely all communication. The ship and two frigates are superior to all the Barbarian marine. A constant readiness for action, a strict discipline, and proper guard boats to make the rounds during the night form the main principles of these kind of expeditions. Perseverance insures success. It is the opinion of the Count D'Estaing that the plan of Mr. *de Massiac is not only* practicable but is the only mode of reducing those Barbary powers against which it is directed. He thinks if it was put in practice against all of them they would soon cease to be a nation of pirates and become a commercial people.[55]

In the opinion of the Count, what Massiac had proposed would indeed work. Whether Massiac had actually made this proposal to blockade Algiers is unclear, but there is no evidence that he had ever carried it out. In the recorded dealings Massiac had with Algiers in 1742, he had simply returned to the Dey an Algerian ship that had been taken prize by the Spanish, and had given presents as well.[56]

Adams was also wary of depending on Naples or Portugal; but regardless, even if Algiers were brought to terms, Morocco remained a threat. Adams acknowledged that this exchange of opinions between Jefferson and himself was of limited value: "I perceive that neither force nor money will be applied… your plan of fighting will no more be adopted, than mine of treating."

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[55] Count D'Estaing to Thomas Jefferson, 17 May 1786, *PTJ*, 9:542-544; English translation is from the editorial note for Lafayette to Thomas Jefferson, [c. 6 March 1786], *PTJ*, 9:320. It is unclear whether Jefferson relied on the original French or the contemporary English translation. Jefferson also discussed the example of de Massiac with Vergennes: "I mentioned to him that considering the incertainty of a peace when bought, perhaps Congress might think it more eligible to establish a cruise of frigates in the Mediterranean and even to blockade Algiers. He supposed it would require ten vessels great and small. I observed to him that Monsr. de Massiac had formerly done it with five; he said it was true, but that vessels of relief would be necessary. I hinted to him that I thought the English capable of administering aid to the Algerines. He seemed to think it impossible, on account of the scandal it would bring on them. I asked him what had occasioned the blockade by Mr. de Massiac. He said, infraction of their treaty by the Algerines." See Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, 23 May 1786, *PTJ*, 9:567-570.

[56] Eugène Plantet, ed., *Correspondance des Deys d'Alger avec la Cour de France, 1579-1833, Recueillie dans les Dépôts d'Archives des Affaires Etrangères, de la Marine, des Colonies et de la Chambre de Commerce de Marseille*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1889), 2:193-196.

He did not think an effective American government would operate for years.[57] Because Adams emphasized the need for adequate funds in hand before negotiating with the Barbary States, he did not expect anyone to be successful.[58] He was also well aware of how difficult negotiations could be, having seen the sluggishness of the treaty process with the French and the Dutch. Furthermore, although the Marquis de Castries, French minister of the navy, gave John Lamb, an agent sent by Congress, an official recommendation letter instructing the French consul in Algiers, Jean Baptiste Michel Guyot de Kercy, to assist the American as per the terms of the 1778 Treaty, de Castries also included a note in cipher: "You will easily sense that there is no advantage to us in procuring for them [the Americans] a tranquil navigation in the Mediterranean," and instructed Kercy to merely appear to help.[59] Adams was not aware of de Castries' duplicity, but he was not surprised Lamb failed to secure either the liberty of the American captives or a treaty with Algiers. He did not dispute Lamb's lack of competence, but merely noted that he was appointed by Congress, not by himself or Jefferson, and that he had never met the former mule trader. Adams concluded, "There is no harm done.—if Congress had Sent the Ablest Member of their own Body, at Such a Time and under Such pecuniary Limitations he would have done no better."[60]

As it turned out, neither funds nor arms were needed. Adams' original solution, envisioned even before he penned the Model Treaty—that the state that benefited from American

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[57] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 31 July 1786, *NDBW*, 1:11-12. Before he wrote to Adams, Jefferson had consulted with Vergennes, the Count D'Estaing, John Paul Jones, and Lafayette about the effectiveness of blockading Algiers. He was unconvinced by Adams, for in 1792 he wrote to George Washington that one option to securing peace was "by war: that is to say by constant cruizes in the Mediterranean. this proved practicable by the experiment of M. de Massiac [and] by the Portuguese cruises." See Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 1 April 1792, *PGW-PS*, 10:185-86. Jefferson did not seem to draw a distinction between cruising and blockading.
[58] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 11 Sept. 1786, *Works*, 8:414; John Adams to John Jay, 24 Jan. 1787, *Works*, 8:422.
[59] Parker, 216-219.
[60] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 25 Jan. 1787, *PTJ*, 11:65-67.

trade should take on the responsibility of protecting it—found fruition. The Chevalier De Pinto, the Portuguese ambassador to Great Britain, informed Adams that the queen of Portugal had "Sent a Squadron to cruise in the Mouth of the Streights with Orders to protect all Vessells belonging to the United States of America equally with those of her own Subjects." The queen had indicated she "would continue those orders as long as they Should be agreable to Congress."[61] Congress found her orders quite agreeable, and sent a message of thanks. In addition, Adams signed a treaty with Morocco on January 25, 1787. Even though he thought that the emperor eventually would demand presents, the emperor never did.[62] Between the queen of Portugal and the emperor of Morocco, those "Algerian banditti" were at least penned in the Mediterranean. The captives remained unransomed, but they were no longer his department; in January of 1787, Adams requested to be released from his commission.[63] In April 1788, he left England, the revolutionary phase of his diplomatic career at an end.

The Barbary pirates stormed back on to Adams' radar in 1793, when Britain arranged a truce between Portugal and Algiers. Britain needed the Portuguese navy to assist in its war against the French, and also wanted Portugal to give Algiers a free hand to attack French merchantmen. Adams was not surprised; he told his son that "The Event has been daily expected, for Years, as it has been known that Portugal has been all along Suing for Peace, without offering Money enough to Satiate the Avidity of the hungry Barbarians."[64] In March 1794, the queen of Portugal resumed her war against Algiers, but the damage had been done: in the fall of

[61] John Adams to John Jay, 27 June 1786, *DCUS*, 2:578. Jefferson reported to Adams that a treaty with Morocco was imminent, and "this event, with the naval cruises of Portugal, will, I hope quiet the Atlantic for us, [and] insurance is made at Lorient on American vessels…at the price usually paid for risks at seas alone." See Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 27 August 1786, *Works*, 8:412.
[62] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 11 Sept 1786, *Works*, 8:414.
[63] John Adams to John Jay, 24 Jan. 1787, *Works*, 8:421-24.
[64] John Adams to John Quincy Adams, 14 Dec. 1793, *AFC*, 9:469-470.

1793, the Algerian corsairs sailed into the Atlantic, capturing eleven unsuspecting merchantmen. This sudden attack convinced George Washington that the United States could no longer depend on Portugal, and Congress began to debate the genesis of a new American navy.

In a letter to Abigail, Adams revealed that he held the same attitude to the navy as he had expressed in 1786: that while it would be good for the United States to have a navy, the purpose was misguided: "We ought to authorize the President in perfect Secrecy to go as far as two hundred Thousand Pounds to obtain a perpetual Peace with the Algerines. Build a few frigates if you will but expect they will be useless because unmanned."[65] He still preferred to pay for peace, but was now calculating two hundred thousand pounds for Algiers alone. He nevertheless insisted fighting them would be followed by paying them anyway: "We may curse them, as much as We please and fight them as long as We will and after all We must advance them the Cash." He concluded: "This has long been my Opinion but I could not be believed."[66] Whether the Federalists believed Adams or not, Washington continued to work for a treaty with Algiers. In 1796, the Senate approved not only the Algerine treaty, but also treaties with Spain and Britain. Adams wrote his wife about all three: "The Treaty with Spain is arrived and is according to our Wishes. The Algerine Treaty is horridly Costly. It is worse than the British: but will not be so fiercely opposed."[67] The Dey had agreed to peace at a cost of six hundred thousand dollars and an annual tribute in naval stores valued at "12,000 Algerine Sequins." [68]

Although the Naval Act of 1794 had included a provision to stop construction of the frigates if a treaty was signed, Washington asked Congress to permit the construction of three of

[65] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 22 Jan. 1794, *AFC*, 10:48-49.
[66] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 6 Jan. 1794, *AFC*, 10:29-31.
[67] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 27 Feb. 1796, *AFC*, 11:186.
[68] Twelve thousand Algerine sequins was about $21,600. The Senate calculated the total cost to be $992,463.25, or about 220,500 pounds. The text of the treaty, in both the original Turkish and in English translation, as well as the cost of the treaty, are available in Miller, 2:275-317.

the frigates to continue, and Congress agreed. The peace treaty with Algiers was soon followed by treaties with Tripoli and Tunis. Adams signed a new treaty with Algiers in 1797, and it appeared that his preferred policy of 1786 had secured the Mediterranean. He would use the new American navy for another purpose. In his inaugural speech, Adams referred to maintaining "that system of neutrality and impartiality among the belligerent powers of Europe."[69] His focus here was on France, and so it remained throughout his presidency.

Adams inherited Timothy Pickering as secretary of state and James McHenry as secretary of war. Washington had had great difficulty filling these posts, and Adams did not try to find replacements. He did, however, create a new post for a secretary of the navy, and asked George Cabot to accept the position. When Cabot refused, Adams turned to Benjamin Stoddert, a merchant from Maryland. Stoddert proved to be a capable secretary, and Adams left the day to day operation of the navy in his hands. Adams also relied on his son, John Quincy, who held the post of minister to Berlin. The important post of minister to Madrid was in the hands of David Humphreys. In the early years of Adams' presidency, Joseph Ingraham reported from Tripoli, and Joel Barlow from Algiers. Adams decided that each of the Barbary States should have a consul. Richard O'Brien was named Consul General at Algiers, William Eaton, a protégé of Timothy Pickering, became Consul at Tunis, and James Cathcart, a former captive, became Consul at Tripoli.

The friction between the consuls reads like a soap opera. O'Brien and Cathcart were feuding over O'Brien's marriage to Cathart's maid, with Eaton trying to mediate the quarrel. But

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[69] John Adams, 4 Mar. 1797, *The Speeches, Addresses and Messages of the Several Presidents of the United States, At the Openings of Congress and At Their Respective Inaugurations: Also, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and Washington's Farewell Address to His Fellow-citizens: Embracing an Official Summary of the National Events of the First Half Century of the Union: Embellished with Miniature Likenesses of the Presidents, and Fac Similies of the Sages of the Revolution, Signers to the Declaration of Independence* (Philadelphia: Robert Desilver, 1825), 122.

the inadequacy of the American consuls in the Barbary States was not unique. British consuls likewise tended to be lackluster: described by one historian as mostly "bankrupt merchants and mediocre officials, often with little knowledge of the area."[70] They too were plagued with financial problems and struggled to deal with the language barrier. Yet British consuls generally delivered what Britain needed: supplies for its Mediterranean possessions and safety for its merchantmen. The American consuls at least made some effort to keep David Humphreys in Portugal as well as the secretary of state informed.[71]

If Adams read all the correspondence from the consuls in Barbary, he would have been overwhelmed by a cacophony of doomsayers. According to Joseph Ingraham and James Cathcart, Tripoli was "on the rise" and its aggressive Bashaw had already attacked the Swedes and the Danes.[72] According to O'Brien, the Dey of Algiers, annoyed at the lateness of his tribute, was on the verge of declaring war, and because Algiers had guaranteed the treaty with Tripoli, remaining on good terms with the Dey was paramount.[73] According to William Eaton, war with Tunis was imminent, and "we owe our peace at this moment to the victory of Lord Nelson."[74] But Adams had met the Tripolitan ambassador, and understood that war was the default condition of relations between the Barbary States and the Christian powers; a declaration of war signified dissatisfaction with the treaty and could therefore be resolved by diplomacy and negotiation rather than a military or naval response. Furthermore, relations with Great Britain were reasonably good in the wake of the Jay Treaty and during the Quasi-war with France. Britain was also now allied with the Ottoman Empire, and the Sultan ordered the Dey of Algiers

[70] M.S. Anderson, "Great Britain and the Barbary States in the Eighteenth Century," *Historical Research* 29.79 (1956), 106.
[71] Allison, 153-185.
[72] Joseph Ingraham to David Humphreys, 4 Oct. 1797, *NDBW*, 1:217.
[73] Richard O'Brien to the Secretary of State, 14 Oct. 1798, *NDBW*, 1:262.
[74] William Eaton to the Secretary of State, 15 June 1799, *NDBW*, 1:328.

to attack French shipping, and the Dey in turn ordered Tunis to do likewise. O'Brien reassured Humphrey that "all the Barbary States and the Ottoman Empire is at war with the terrible Republic of France."[75]

Tripoli could be a more serious problem because it was not a British ally like Algiers. According to Joel Barlow, the Bashaw of Tripoli, Yusef Karamanli was enjoying the favor of the Porte, and was building his navy to the point where it equaled that of Algiers.[76] Barlow described the futility of a Danish blockade of Tripoli, of Danish attempts to negotiate with Tripoli, and of Danish appeals to the Dey of Algiers to intercede with Tripoli on their behalf.[77] According to Joseph Ingraham, the Bashaw was eager to declare war, and warned, "This regency, when I first arrived here, was in a poor state, but now it is on the rise, growing very powerful."[78] Ingraham advised either paying the tribute in arrears and even offering extra presents to show the Bashaw their respect, or else sending at least three warships into the Mediterranean to regularly visit the Barbary ports.[79] O'Brien warned that Tripoli "seems to be a new Algiers."[80] The consuls were clear that the United States should no longer depend on Algiers to restrain Tripoli, despite the guarantee in the 1797 Treaty between Algiers and the United States.

The Bashaw did become impatient and declared war on the United States. According to Joseph Ingraham, when Yusef Karamanli heard that Tunis had received its tribute, "he thought himself greatly offended and neglected by our government, and gave immediate orders to fit out

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[75] Richard O'Brien to David Humphreys, 27-30 Dec. 1798, *NDBW*, 1:286-287.
[76] Although Tripoli was on the rise, it does not appear to have equaled Algiers. On 1 Mar 1798, O'Brien reported that Algiers had 12 warships of various sizes with a total of 238 guns; by 23 Sept. 1800, Algiers had 15 warships of various sizes mounting 296 guns. In comparison, on 14 August 1800, Cathcart reported that Tripoli had 11 warships of various sizes with a total of 150 guns. Even if the guns were of comparable size, Algiers always had more and larger warships mounting more guns. See *NDBW*, 1:368, 371.
[77] Joel Barlow to the Secretary of State, 18 Aug. 1797, *NDBW*, 1:207.
[78] Joseph Ingraham to David Humphreys, 4 Oct. 1797, *NDBW*, 1:217.
[79] Joseph Ingraham to David Humphreys, 19 July 1798, *NDBW*, 1:255.
[80] Richard O'Brien to Secretary of State, 14 Oct. 1798, *NDBW*, 1:262.

his Crusiers to make reprisals on American vessels."[81] The British consul at Tripoli, B.W. McDonough, however, interceded with the Bashaw on behalf of the Americans. According to McDonough, Karamanli said:

> That he thought himself not treated like a Sovereign, being so long neglected by the United States, that he was credibly informed from Algiers that his cruisers dare not presume to molest the Commerce of America without the consent of the Algerines, but now he was determined to let them and all Europe know what the Bashaw of Tripoli could do, and that he was not to be intimidated by any power or state."[82]

McDonough let the Bashaw rant, then calmly explained to him that in these times of war, "he must not attribute such ideas to any neglect on their part, likewise he must consider the distance from America to Tripoli."[83] James Cathcart tried deceit, claiming American warships already were "in the Mediterranean to protect their commerce against the depredations of the French." It appears that Karamanli calmed down, and decided that he was now at peace with the United States.[84] On 15 April 1799, the Bashaw wrote to John Adams, expressing his annoyance at the delay in receiving his presents. He noted the intercession of McDonough, and that he had agreed to accept hard cash in place of ammunition and a brig. He warned Adams that he expected to be treated "as you do the two other Regencies, without any difference being made between us."[85] What Adams thought of his brief war with Tripoli has not been found.

O'Brien, Cathcart, and Eaton all recommended a show of force in the Mediterranean, and the Adams administration was considering the option. Timothy Pickering wrote to the American consul at Lisbon that "The expectation long since formed and so often repeated, of two of our frigates visiting the European seas and entering the Mediterranean is again disappointed."

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[81] Joseph Ingraham to David Humphreys, 18 March 1799, *NDBW*, 1:313.
[82] B.W. McDonogh to David Humphreys, 9 Feb. 1799, NDBW, 1:298.
[83] Ibid.
[84] James Cathcart, "Journal," 8 April 1799, *NDBW*, 1:310.
[85] Yusef to John Adams, 15 April 1799, *NDBW*, 1:323.

Pickering explained that the *Philadelphia*, "nearly ready [and] destined for that cruise" was needed elsewhere. The *Constellation* had been damaged in a seafight, so the *Philadelphia* was to sail to Guadaloupe. A second warship intended for the Mediterranean, the *Chesapeak*, would probably need to take over for the *Congress*, which had been damaged in a storm.[86] But a little over a month later, the secretary of state wrote to Cathcart at Tripoli:

> Should the pending negociation with France produce peace between her and the United States, it will be in the power of the U.States to send into the Mediterranean a naval force sufficient to combat and destroy the marine of all the Barbary Powers: and should the necessity of the measure occur, it is to be hoped there will be no hesitation in doing it.[87]

The secretary then referred to the example of Commodore Donald Campbell, a British naval officer assisting Britain's Portuguese ally:

> The efficacy and even economy of such a measure have been incontrovertibly proved by Commodore Campbell, with his single ship of the line, in reducing the Bey of Tripoli to absolute submission; not only to make peace, but, what is perhaps without example, to *purchase* it of a Christian Power—and that power possessing so small a marine as Portugal.[88]

Campbell at Tripoli had outdone Massiac at Algiers: one ship instead of five, and forcing the Bashaw to pay rather than paying the Dey. The secretary was confident that Tripoli could easily be forced to submit, even though the Americans, unlike Campbell, would not be armed with a letter from Admiral Horatio Nelson.[89] Cathcart and Eaton were likewise confident: "two of our frigates and four of our gunboats would bring the Bashaw of Tripoli to terms."[90] The Republican Albert Gallatin would agree; in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, he noted that "From Eaton's last

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[86] Timothy Pickering to William Smith, 22 March 1800, *NDBW*, 1:351-52.
[87] The Secretary of State to James Cathcart, May 1800, *NDBW*, 1:355. Adams dismissed Timothy Pickering on May 12, 1800, and nominated John Marshall in his stead. Marshall began his duties on June 6, 1800.
[88] Ibid. See also James Cathcart, *Tripoli: First War with the United States. Inner History* (Compiled by J. B. Cathcart Newkirk, 1901), 41.
[89] Carr, 249.
[90] William Eaton to the Secretary of State, 24 June 1800, *NDBW*, 1:358. See also James Cathcart to Secretary of State, 27 May 1800, *NDBW*, 1:356.

dispatches, & O'Brian's letter announcing that the Dey of Algiers had written to Tripoli, I am apt to think that there will be no fighting in the Mediterranean, & that the sight of our Frigates will be sufficient to arrange matters there."[91] Victory over Tripoli would be a mere matter of sailing.

But like his predecessor, John Marshall gave priority to the war with France. He wrote to John Quincy Adams, explaining that although the elder Adams was "far from pleased with the state of our affairs with the Barbary powers," he was not yet willing to join with Sweden and Denmark "in appointing, in concert with them, convoys for their and our trade." The United States simply could not risk its frigates in the Mediterranean, "until actual hostilities shall cease" between the United States and France.[92] Marshall here suggested that the elder Adams was thinking in terms of convoying merchantmen, rather than blockading Tripoli.

By November, Cathcart reported that the Bashaw was at war again with Sweden and that "the United States are destined to be the next victim." The Bashaw also had his eye on the Danes and the Dutch, and all these nations were targets because "his revenues not being equal to his expenditures." [93] November also saw the arrival of the *George Washington* at the Porte. What had begun as a humiliating errand for the Dey of Algiers ended with the United States flag "treated with the greatest respect."[94] When the Americans announced themselves to the officials, the Turks replied that "they knew no such place as America." It appears that although they were familiar with the New World, they had not heard the term before. Captain Bainbridge then changed the subject in his report to adding his support to the view that warships were preferable to treaties.[95] The Bashaw, however, preferred to be paid. In March of 1801, Yusef Karamanli

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[91] Albert Gallatin to Thomas Jefferson, 18 August 1801, *PTJ*, 35:107.
[92] John Marshall to John Quincy Adams, 24 July 1800, *NDBW*, 1:364-65.
[93] James Cathcart to Charles Lee, 1 Nov. 1800, *NDBW*, 1:396.
[94] William Bainbridge to James Cathcart, 10 Jan. 1801, *NDBW*, 1:410.
[95] William Bainbridge to Benjamin Stoddert, 17 Nov. 1800, *NDBW*, 1:401.

declared an end to his treaty with the United States, and he demanded $225,000 immediately and an annual tribute of $20,000.[96] But John Adams was no longer in charge. He had lost the election to Thomas Jefferson, and retired to private life.

Thomas Jefferson now had his navy and an opportunity to try his hand at fighting the Barbary corsairs. In his message to Congress, he dismissed Tripoli as "the least considerable of the Barbary States."[97] He then outlined his plan of action:

> To secure our commerce in that sea, with the smallest force competent, we have supposed it best to watch strictly the harbor of Tripoli. Still, however, the shallowness of their coast, and the want of smaller vessels on our part, has permitted some cruisers to escape unobserved: and to one of these an American vessel unfortunately fell a prey.[98]

Jefferson did not mention de Massiac as the inspiration for his blockade of Tripoli, and he may have forgotten that Adams had warned him that blockading Algiers would be no easy matter. Tripoli proved no easier: the American squadron was unable to mount an effective blockade. Tripoli continued to trade with the other Barbary States, both by sea and by land, and her cruisers found refuge at Algiers.[99] The British had taken possession of Malta in 1800, and had quickly formed a partnership with the Bashaw. Just as Morocco supplied Gibraltar, so Tripoli supplied Malta. The British consul on Malta cheerfully requested that the U.S. Navy permit ships carrying Tripolitan cattle to sail through the blockade, and this request was granted. It could hardly be otherwise, when the United States depended on British ports, including Malta, to refit their warships. Tripolitan corsairs managed to slip past the American warships and even captured and

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[96] William Eaton to presumably the Secretary of State, 21 March 1801, *NDBW*, 1:425.
[97] Thomas Jefferson, 8 Dec. 1801, *Speeches of the Presidents*, 168.
[98] Ibid., 180.
[99] The Swedish agent at Algiers wrote to Swedish agent at Genoa, informing him that two Tripolitan cruisers had "escaped the blockade" and were now in Algiers, where "they publicly say that they intend to cruise for Swedish & American vessels, that may be without Convoy." See Extract from letter to the Swedish Consul at Genoa from the Swedish Agent at Algiers, 14 June 1802, *NDBW*, 2:174.

brought in an American prize, the *Edwin*. Sweden, although it participated in the initial blockade, soon admitted defeat, and, along with Holland and Denmark, made peace with Tripoli, and paid tribute. The Bashaw took that tribute, added it to his profits from trading, and used the funds to outfit more corsairs and hire mercenaries.[100] When the war officially ended in 1805, Jefferson agreed to pay $60,000 to ransom the American captives.[101] He had failed to break the tradition Adams had warned him about of fighting a Barbary State, and paying at the end.[102]

Jefferson's war did not end attacks by Barbary corsairs. In 1812, the Dey of Algiers, with the encouragement of Britain, expelled Tobias Lear, the same American consul who had negotiated the treaty with Tripoli in 1805, and declared war on the United States. Just as Adams had prioritized the war with France, so did James Madison the war with Great Britain. Once the war with Britain ended, Madison sent Stephen Decatur to the Mediterranean. Decatur had the great luck of catching the Algerian fleet at sea, where his warships were clearly superior. Although a treaty was signed between Algiers and the United States, Madison left a squadron to cruise the Mediterranean. As Adams had observed, the Barbary States remained a problem so long as they had the backing of Britain. But after Britain defeated Napoleonic France, she had no need to supply armies on the Continent, and the Barbary States assumed less importance as sources of grain and meat. In addition, negotiations at the Congress in Vienna in 1815 were fostering a policy of co-operation that lessened the appeal for Britain to use the Barbary States

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[100] Koya Folayan, "Tripoli and the War with the U.S.A., 1801-5," *Journal of African History* 13.2 (1972): 261-270.
[101] For comparison, in 1802, Sweden had agreed to pay $158,000 and Holland and Denmark had each agreed to pay $40,000. See Folayan, 269.
[102] Robert Tucker and David C. Hendrickson relegate Jefferson's war to a six-page footnote where they described the war as a "police action." See *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 294-99. Francis D. Cogliano, who devotes two chapters to Jefferson and the Barbary states, judges the war "a qualified success." He nevertheless quotes Jefferson: "Their system is a war of little expense to them, which must put the great nations to a greater expense than the presents which would buy it off," then comments, "This was precisely the argument that John Adams had made to Jefferson in 1786." See *Emperor of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson's Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 159, 170.

against her rivals. Third, in 1807, Britain had ended the African slave trade, and Parliament was now considering an end to the white slave trade in the Mediterranean. Fourth, British newspapers held up the American example of resisting the Barbary states to the point of securing freedom not only for her own citizens, but even for those of other nations, as one that Britain should emulate. In 1783, had Algiers not existed, Britain would have built it; in 1816, the time had come to dismantle it, and a combined British and Dutch expedition reigned in the Dey.[103] As Adams had observed, the Barbary States were indeed part of the system of Europe.[104]

Adams wrote little about Jefferson's war, though he did make a few remarks after it was over. In a letter to Benjamin Rush in 1806, Adams revealed that he was again taking an interest in politics "because we seem to be in some immediate danger."[105] His cryptic remarks suggest that the attempt to negotiate a renewal of the Jay Treaty had caught his interest and made him more attentive to foreign policy. He took note of the adulation of the heroes of the Barbary War and faulted Jefferson for his treatment of the unsung heroes of the Quasi-war:

> I have no objections to the respects shewn to Moreau and I am pleased with those to Eaton and Decatur: but I mourn over the neglect of Talbot, Truxton, Little and Decatur the Father. Our Statemen committed a most egregious, pernicious, and indeed malicious Error, in discouraging those officers, and mismanaging the ships.[106]

Adams mentioned Eaton again when discussing with Benjamin Rush the charges against Aaron Burr: "But why is he called General Eaton? Our Laws forbid any Commission to be taken under a foreign Power. He had no Commission from the President. He was only appointed by the Ex Bashaw."[107] Adams therefore was unaware of the arrangements Jefferson had made with Eaton,

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[103] Frederick C. Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror: America's 1815 War Against the Pirates of North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 151-174.
[104] John Adams to John Jay, 15 Dec. 1784, *Works*, 8:217.
[105] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 25 Jan. 1806, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

and it appears that he could not even imagine the United States government assisting in the overthrow of Yusef Karamanli. It is not clear that Adams ever studied the conduct of the war. It is, however, possible to evaluate Jefferson's war in the light of Adams' views.

Although there is no direct evidence, it is doubtful that Adams would have tried to blockade Tripoli. First, he had always stressed the Barbary States as part of the system of Europe, and Europe was more entangled in the Mediterranean than ever. Napoleon invaded Italy in 1796 and Egypt in 1798. The increased French presence brought an increase in British activity: Britain, already holding Gibraltar, took Minorca in 1798 and Malta in 1800. These British possessions needed Barbary cattle, grain, and vegetables, and Britain therefore would not support an American blockade, especially when the Americans needed to use British ports like Malta as bases in the Mediterranean. Second, Adams had not believed that de Massiac had successfully blockaded Algiers and forced her to terms. Third, Adams had not tried to blockade any French ports during the Quasi-war. Fourth, although his consuls had recommended American warships be sent to the Mediterranean, none of them had suggested a blockade. Fifth, Adams probably would have been willing to accept British assistance in negotiating with the Bashaw. After all, he had asked for this support in his draft of the treaty of 1783 and he had co-operated with the British during the Quasi-war.

It would, on the other hand, have been reasonable for John Adams to send a squadron to cruise the Mediterranean. Cruising could provide convoys for merchantmen, quiet nervous insurers, threaten or capture corsairs, and make a display of force. Adams had made clear that he thought "the great frigates should have separate stations" and Marshall suggested he had intended to send frigates to the Mediterranean once peace with France was assured.[108] Although

[108] John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, 8 Aug. 1799, *Works*, 9:12.

it is true Adams had made the Caribbean a priority, he had two practical reasons for doing so. First, both the value of American trade and the number of merchantmen seized was far greater: more than 2000 seizers by the French compared to less than forty by the Barbary corsairs.[109] Second, just as American warships were escorting British merchantmen in the Caribbean, so British warships at times protected American vessels. This unofficial and ad hoc co-operation made for a workable quasi-alliance that resisted the French attacks on both British and American shipping.[110]

As Adams had predicted in 1786, fighting the Barbary pirates resulted in greater expense, more captives who needed to be ransomed, and eventual payment of tribute. The success of Decatur's raid in preventing Tripoli from using the *Philadelphia* should not overshadow the destruction of one of America's valuable warships and the fact that the raid did nothing to force the Bashaw to terms. Eaton's expedition may have had some impact on the Bashaw, but Eaton himself was furious with Jefferson's failure to support Hamet Karamanli in his bid to take the throne. Jefferson, in his speech to Congress, admitted that "A small force in the Mediterranean will still be necessary to restrain the Tripoline cruisers: and the uncertain tenure of peace with some other of the Barbary powers may eventually require that force to be augmented."[111] Adams might well have reminded Jefferson that "we ought not fight them at all, unless we determine to fight them forever."[112]

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[109] Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 6.
[110] Bradford Perkins, *The First Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1795-1805* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 94-100.
[111] Thomas Jefferson, 15 Dec. 1802, *Speeches of the Presidents*, 160.
[112] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 31 July 1786, *NDBW*, 1:12. Modern historians are divided on their evaluation of the effectiveness of Jefferson's war against Tripoli. Koya Folayan argued that Pasha Yusef Qaramali was the real victor: "That Tripoli thus successfully withstood the American challenge between 1801 and 1805 was significant in the following ways. First, that success greatly enhanced Tripoli's international status as a maritime power on the Barbary Coast. Secondly, it ensured the continuity of Yusaf Pasha's reign, which the Americans had seriously threatened through the abortive Ahmad scheme. Thirdly, it was not only a dynastic coup that had been safely

Adams, however, failed to give due diligence to his own preferred policy of paying the pirates. Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis all complained about late payments, and the consuls were left scrambling for loans from local Jews or making creative excuses.[113] Adams may have been influenced by the years where Portuguese protection and Moroccan friendship made payment unnecessary, and his less than competent cabinet was not a model of efficiency. On the other hand, Adams' view that the Barbary States were part of the system of Europe and needed to be treated as such appears to be well-founded. Britain, in particular, at various times depended on Morocco, Algiers, and Tripoli to supply her possessions in the Mediterranean, and neither Britain nor France was initially interested in supporting American commerce in the Mediterranean. When it was in the interests of European powers like Britain, France, and Portugal either to access American grain, or cultivate better relations with the United States, some protection might be offered. Adams' initial conviction that fighting the Barbary States was pointless appears to be justified by the conduct and outcome of the First Barbary War. The Barbary powers ultimately ceased to be a threat when Britain decided they were no longer useful, a development that

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avoided; the continued political existence of Tripoli as a sovereign power was also guaranteed." See "Tripoli and the War with the USA, 1801-5," *Journal of African History* 13.3 (1972): 270. Similarly, Joshua E. London conceded that "Pasha Yusuf Qaramali was greatly pleased with the outcome of the war. Although it had proved costly in the short term, it was an unqualified Tripolitan success in the long term," but concluded, "During the war with Tripoli, the United States began to test William Eaton's hypothesis that fighting back and protecting the national honor and the national interest with force was the best way to end Barbary piracy. Just at the moment of triumph, however, President Thomas Jefferson wavered and settled on the side of expediency. Jefferson's lack of resolve left American interests unguarded, and once again American maritime trade felt the Barbary terror. By 1816, however, the United States finally proved that William Eaton was right. The success ignited the imagination of the Old World powers to rise up against the Barbary pirates." See *Victory In Tripoli: How America's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Built a Nation* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2005), 229, 242. Frank Joseph Wheelan, treating the First Barbary War as a model for America's response to 911, asked, "Did the United States chastise the Barbary States, as Jefferson so fervently desired, and did it earn Europe's respect? It depends on whether the year is 1805 or 1815… the punitive expeditions of 1815 and 1816 ended Algier's long reign as a major Mediterranean power….it happened sooner than later because of Thomas Jefferson… Jefferson and his fighting sailors and Marines had freed America and Europe from The Terror." See *Jefferson's War: America's First War On Terror, 1801-1805* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003), 365-68. Frank Lambert, focused on a larger context, wrote, "Nationalist hyperbole notwithstanding, America's rise was the result of changes in the Atlantic world more than the country's military exploits." See *The Barbary Wars: American Independence In the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 202.

[113] Kitzen, 624.

confirms Adams' views. Adams' neglect of the rise of Tripoli can also be understood because he spent his presidency focused on his diplomacy with France. This crisis is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Five: The Shock to the System

The prudence of the 18th Century is called now in the 19th "the Profligate Administration of John Adams." "the mad Ambition of John Adams"!!! etc etc etc. Is this the Reasoning, the veracity, the justice, the gravity, the dignity, the deliberation, of a Legislative Assembly? Or is it the ravings of your Patients in your tranquilizing Chairs?[1]

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 1812

Beginning in 1809, a series of essays appeared in the *Boston Patriot*. John Adams was finally responding to the attacks on his presidency outlined in a pamphlet written by the late Alexander Hamilton. In both these essays and in private letters, Adams painted a picture of himself as a determined man, surrounded by enemies, who nevertheless courageously and effectively saved the Republic.[2] His virulent and entertaining attacks on Hamilton, however, have obscured his emphasis on his system of neutrality as the key to understanding his foreign policy during the Quasi-war. In his first letter, Adams explained:

> The institution of an embassy to France, in 1799, was made upon principle, and in conformity to a system of foreign affairs, formed upon long deliberation, established in my mind, and amply opined, explained, and supported in Congress,—that is, a system of eternal neutrality, if possible, in all the wars of Europe,—at least eighteen years before President Washington's Proclamation of Neutrality, in 1794.[3]

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[1] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 24 June 1812. This is the reading in the ALS, which forms the basis for the *Old Family Letters*, 399. An alternative reading is found in in the letterbook copy, where it reads "the mad Administration of John Adams." See Adams Papers, reel 118. Because a few lines later, Adams wrote with regards to Madison, "War! War! War! Sure enough. Whose 'Profligacy' is this? Whose 'mad Ambition'?" it seems reasonable the correct reading is "Ambition."

[2] Adams had great admiration for the Roman republican, Cicero. His defense of himself reminds the reader of a similar insistence by Cicero that he had saved the Republic from Catiline. Adams himself suggested this comparison. See John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 23 Mar. 1809, Adams Papers, reel 118.

[3] John Adams to the Printers of the Boston Patriot, Letter 1, 1809, *Works*, 9:242. Adams made similar comments at the time: "In preparing the project of a treaty to be proposed by Congress to France, in the year 1776, fully apprised of the importance of neutrality, I prescribed to myself as a rule to admit nothing which could compromise the United States in any future wars of Europe. In the negotiations of peace in 1782, I saw stronger reasons than ever before in favor of that maxim… The wise and prudent measures adopted by my predecessor, to preserve and support a fair and impartial neutrality with the belligerent powers of Europe, coinciding with my own opinions and principles, more ancient than the birth of the United States, could not but be heartily approved and supported by me during his

In John Adams' system of neutrality, France was "the natural ally" and Great Britain "the last power" that American should consider for a formal alliance. But in 1797, when Adams assumed the presidency, France was attacking American merchantmen and Great Britain, already restrained by the Jay Treaty, would show interest in a formal Anglo-American alliance. The two great powers, locked in a struggle that would remain unresolved until 1815, refused to play the roles Adams had assigned to them. Adams nevertheless treated the Quasi-war with France as a temporary and manageable crisis; a distraction from the permanent threat posed by Great Britain. For John Adams, the challenge of foreign policy was to avoid escalating not only the Quasi-war with France, but also the quasi-alliance with Britain. Attention to Adams' dedication to his system of neutrality illuminates why he insisted on sending a commission to France in the fall of 1799: a formal peace with France would end the growing interest in an Anglo-American alliance that aimed to take the Floridas, New Orleans, and Louisiana from Spain.[4]

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whole administration, and steadily pursued until this time." See John Adams to the Inhabitants of Bridgeton, 1 May 1798, *Works*, 9:185-86.

[4] Secondary scholarship on Adams' foreign policy as president is polarized. Alexander DeConde praised Adams for his conduct, and gave him credit for ending the French alliance of 1778, convincing France to accept the Jay Treaty, and preserving cordial relations with Napoleon. DeConde argued that Adams "laid the groundwork for the acquisition of Louisiana two years later… without it the United States might not have acquired Louisiana peacefully and cheaply, as it did in 1803." See DeConde, *The Quasi-war: the Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801*, 338-9. Stephen G. Kurtz defended Adams' political record, and faulted Hamilton not only for the destruction of the Federalist Party, but also as for planning to use the new army to suppress the Republicans. See *The Presidency of John Adams: the Collapse of Federalism, 1795-1800*, 354-56. William Stinchcombe, while noting that Adams tended to exaggerate his own importance and descend into self-pity, concluded that "Acting on his own instincts and principles, Adams prevented the United States from entering a needless war. For this he rightfully deserved the credit he wanted, and certainly in this respect alone his record as president must be judged as superior to that of many others." See *The XYZ Affair* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 125. Paul Varg noted that Adams was an experienced diplomat, and committed to American independence: "With the fate of the nation in the hands of Adams, at least there was no danger of the nation betraying its own interests while under the illusion that a foreign government could be its generous friend." See *Foreign Policies of the Founding Fathers*, 127-129. Other scholars are not so laudatory. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick argued that his diplomacy was a futile attempt to implement his theories of "balance" in government. See Elkins and McKitrick, 614-17. By dividing Adams' domestic policy from his conduct of the war itself, they offered two conflicting views of Adams: on one hand, the stubborn ideologue who destroyed his own party; on the other hand, the competent commander-in-chief. Karl-Friedrich Walling argued that Adams was lucky: "Chance has determined how we have come to understand the Founders during the world war from 1793-1815. Had even one of Napoleon's armies occupied New Orleans, we perhaps might think of Hamilton as an American Hermocrates…or Pericles." See Walling, 282-3.

Adams' system rested on his evaluation of the potential danger of both France and England. He seems to have been genuinely opposed to universal empire, and fearful that the United States and Britain might join together and rule the world. He had, after all, seen Britain degenerate into tyranny after the Seven Years' War. He pointed out that even yeomen sitting around smoking in a bar had understood that if the king could seize Mr. Hancock's wharf, nothing else was safe.[5] But if power continued to be divided between Britain and France, with neither achieving a decisive victory over the other, the world would be more secure for the United States. He did not want to see the former colonies return to the British Empire.

France, on the other hand, could never be secure enough in Europe to give her a free hand to incorporate the United States in her new empire. Even after the rise of Napoleon, Adams still emphasized the weakness of France as a continental power:

> The Power and Resources of France, have been exaggerated in the Minds of our People, for thirty years past, and since the revolution more than ever. The Weakness and danger of England, have been as much misrepresented on the other hand. When I received your Letter, I was very far from your opinion that the Continent of Europe was prostrate at the feet of France: but since that time news has arrived of a very different Complection. The particulars are not yet stated from Authentic Sources. But I cannot believe that France will derive any solid Addition of Power or reputation from this Campaign. There is no country under her Power, that is not full of discontent; and revolutions in a contrary direction may succeed each other, much sooner and more rapidly than We imagine.[6]

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[5] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 21 May 1807, *Works*, 9:56-59.

[6] John Adams to John Quincy Adams, 26 Feb. 1806, Adams Papers, reel 404. When Napoleon fell from power in 1814, Adams took a philosophical approach: "Did you ever know a Man or Nation or Coalition or Alliance that could bear Success, Victory and Prosperity. Victory has destroyed Napoleon. Victory is in danger of destroying the Allies." See John Adams to Richard Rush, 30 May 1814, *Works*, 10:96-98. His final verdict on the French emperor was that "Napoleon can never be forgotten he deserves to be remembered more than Alexander or Ceaser or Nebuchadnezzar or Zingeskan; as a legislator a hero and a conqueror he was greater than them all, and a much better Man." See John Adams to Alexander Bryan Johnson, 10 May 1823, Adams Papers, reel 124.

It is true that Napoleon was never able to pacify his European empire, nor subdue the rebellious Haitians and rebuild an empire in North America. Adams conceded that the new US Navy might co-operate with the Royal Navy, but he "would make no engagement that should tie our hands from making peace whenever we pleased." He further conceded that the people or the legislature might force an alliance, but it "would have been against my own judgment and inclination."[7] In practical terms, Adams observed that the unpopularity of his administration and his efforts to build a navy, even in New England, had made a declaration of war against France impossible. He explained further that the problem was it would be a long war, and a long war would not be supported by a population about to elect Thomas Jefferson. More importantly, a war with France would have been expensive, with no French commerce or French lands vulnerable to American forces.[8] France was therefore the "natural ally" because she was unable to be a serious threat and could be managed with a combination of diplomacy and force.

The French Directory declared open season on American merchantmen two days before Adams' inauguration, but the roots of the crisis were in the wars between the new French Republic and Great Britain that had broken out in 1793. Washington decided to declare neutrality, a policy that both angered the pro-French Republicans and touched off a constitutional crisis: if only Congress could declare war, could the president declare peace? Alexander Hamilton argued that because Congress had not declared war, Congress already had declared peace, and therefore the president was simply confirming the decision of Congress. But a neutral state could still be useful to a belligerent, as indeed France had been during the early stages of the American War for Independence. The French representative, Citizen Edmond Charles Genet,

[7] John Adams to the *Boston Patriot*, *Works*, 9:269
[8] John Adams to James Lloyd, 6 Feb. 1815, Adams Papers, reel 122.

soon arrived in the United States, eager to enlist American privateers both for the war at sea and for a venture to seize Louisiana from Spain. Genet ran roughshod over Washington's Neutrality Proclamation and even Jefferson had to concede that the Frenchman was "Hotheaded, all imagination, no judgment, passionate, disrespectful and even indecent towards the P."[9] Genet eventually was forced to retire. Because British privateers could operate from ports in Nova Scotia and the West Indies, American neutrality necessarily favored Britain over France.

Washington took yet another step that favored Great Britain when he sent John Jay, an obvious Anglophile, to negotiate a treaty with the British minister, Lord Grenville. On its face, the Jay Treaty did not settle important issues like impressment, and American merchantmen who wished to trade in the West Indies were limited to small ships of less than seventy tons burthen. On the other hand, West Indian governors had discretion in enforcing this rule, and the British also agreed to finally evacuate the western posts. More importantly, Spain, observing the thaw in Anglo-American relations, indicated her willingness to negotiate issues like the Florida boundary and access to the Mississippi. American representative Thomas Pinckney, sent from London to Madrid, was able to secure rights not only to the Mississippi but the use of the valuable port of New Orleans. Adams favored both of these treaties because they strengthened American neutrality and enhanced the opportunities for the merchant marine.

Adams did not play a decisive role in foreign policy during his vice-presidency. Although it is true that Washington preferred to lean on Alexander Hamilton, his aide from the Revolutionary War, Adams was often not available anyway. After Adams' first few years in office, Abigail preferred to remain in Quincy rather than travel to the capital. Adams thereafter tended to spend most of the year with her, arriving in time to take his place as president of the

[9] Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 7 July 1793, *PTJ*, 26:443-44.

Senate and leaving once Congress adjourned.[10] Washington did include Adams, however, when he asked for advice in the 1790 Nootka Sound crisis, where Great Britain and Spain were disputing territory and trading rights at Nootka Sound on the west coast of North America. He asked Hamilton, Jefferson, John Jay, and Henry Knox as well as Adams, how he should respond if Lord Dorchester, Governor of Canada, asked the United States for permission to march British troops from Detroit to the Mississippi for an attack on New Orleans. Washington noted that a British victory over Spain would result in encirclement of the United States, and would threaten American appeal to western settlers.[11]

Jefferson, noting that British possession of Louisiana or the Floridas was against the interests of the United States, recommended entering the war on the side of Spain. He softened this bellicose position by explaining, "I am for preserving neutrality as long, and entering into the war as late, as possible." In reference to the law of nations, he noted that it was no violation to permit British troops to cross if they also permitted Spanish troops the same privilege.[12] Hamilton, after considering the legal opinions of Puffendorf, Barbeyrac, Grotius, and Vattel, and the issue of "gratitude" to France and Spain, considered the danger to the United States should Britain take the Spanish possessions in North America. Hamilton observed that although the situation was less dangerous for those territories to be in the hands of Spain, it was nonetheless also dangerous. He pointed out that the British would encounter an American fort on the Wabash, and therefore the question of their passage could not simply be ignored. Hamilton,

[10] Ferling, 218-220.
[11] George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, 27 Aug. 1790, *PAH*, 6:572-73.
[12] Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 28 Aug. 1790, *PGW-PS*, 6:356-358.

noting that the United States could not prevent the passage, counselled that the United States ought to give reluctant consent, but make their reluctance clear to Spain.[13]

Adams, unlike Jefferson and Hamilton, thought neutrality could be preserved, but focused on "honest" rather than legal neutrality: permitting British troops to pass "would be a real Injury to Spain" and granting Spain the same rights of passage would be of no benefit. Permission therefore ought to be refused. And if the British passed anyway, it would be a cause for war, but he pointed out that in the remote region, thinly settled, militia ranks were also thin, and it would be difficult to resist invaders. Furthermore, he argued that "Nations are not obliged to declare War for every Injury or even Hostility." Negotiation should be the response, and an ambassador sent to London. He took this opportunity to point out the handicap of not having effective ministers in Europe: "Early and authentick Intelligence from those Courts may be of more importance than the Expense." Adams therefore insisted on strict neutrality, refusal to enter into alliances, emphasis on intelligence and diplomacy rather than armed resistance, and respect for the rights of Spain despite the difficulty the United States had had with Spain and his awareness of the importance of the Mississippi.[14] It is tempting to see Adams' response to the Nookta Sound crisis as a pattern for his policy during the Quasi-war with France, especially because he also approved the Neutrality Proclamation of 1793, and the three treaties of 1796: the Algerine Treaty, Jay's Treaty and Pinckney's Treaty.[15] In the dangerous world of the 1790s, Adams thought that the United States should hold to what he would later call "inflexible neutrality," and depend on diplomacy rather than formal alliances and armies. By the time he became president, he had altered this emphasis on negotiation only to include the small frigate

[13] Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, 15 Sept. 1790, *PGW-PS*, 6:440-460.
[14] John Adams to George Washington, 29 Aug. 1790, *PGW-PS*, 6:358-361.
[15] See John Adams to Tench Coxe, 25 Apr. 1793, Adams Papers, reel 116.

navy that could provide enough protection of the merchant marine to keep insurance affordable. Inflexible neutrality did not require inflexible tactics.

The challenges Adams faced as president began with his weak performance in the election. Unlike the popular George Washington, Adams did not command widespread support. Most of his support came from New England, though commercial interests in the Middle States and the South were important in tipping the results in his favor. The South had supported Jefferson, and Adams now had the leader of the Republicans as his vice-president. Knowing how difficult it had been for Washington to fill the posts of secretary of state and secretary of war, Adams retained Timothy Pickering as the former and James McHenry as the latter.

It is easy to over-estimate the calamity of Adams' decision to retain Washington's cabinet, in part because Adams himself claimed it had been the greatest mistake of his presidency.[16] This view deserves closer examination. In the first place, Timothy Pickering was secretary of state and James McHenry was secretary of war because Washington had tried to find more suitable men but had been unsuccessful. No one—not even Adams—has suggested who might have been their replacements in 1796. Second, firing Pickering and McHenry would have alienated the High Federalists, and deepened divisions that were already apparent in the election. Third, the High Federalists were not uniform in their opinions and neither Timothy Pickering nor Oliver Wolcott, Jr. were mere mouthpieces for Alexander Hamilton. Pickering, for example, owed nothing to Hamilton for his position, and Wolcott opposed Hamilton's provisional army.[17] Fourth, Hamilton at times exercised a restraining hand on the cabinet, bringing them more in to line with Adams' preferred policy: like Adams, Hamilton opposed declaring war in 1797 and

[16] Ferling, 333.
[17] Kurtz, 370-71.

wanted to try a diplomatic solution. Fifth, Pickering played a pivotal role in re-opening trade with St. Domingo and strengthening Toussaint's hand. He was much less cautious than Adams, and persuaded the president to co-operate with Britain. If Jefferson was able to buy Louisiana—an acquisition Adams approved—because American support of Toussaint helped end dreams of a revived French empire in North America, the credit should go to Pickering. And finally, Adams did not have serious problems with his cabinet until 1799.

While it is true that Pickering, Wolcott, and McHenry were in contact with Alexander Hamilton, and that McHenry would pass on Hamilton's views virtually intact to Adams, it should also be noted that these less-than-loyal advisors nevertheless were often in agreement with Adams. Adams had not only inherited Washington's cabinet and the crisis with France, but Washington's plan for a peace mission. In his enclosure with his letter to Washington, McHenry noted that the minister to France had failed to justify the Jay Treaty and reassure the French government. Although he did not mention James Monroe by name, McHenry argued that whether the minister to France agreed with the treaty or not, he was obligated, as minister, to defend it, and having failed to do so, ought to be replaced. The next question was who should be his replacement. McHenry suggested Charles Carroll, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, John Marshall, William Smith, or Patrick Henry. He then mentioned that "Mr Adams, the minister to Portugal has been strongly suggested by Mr Pickering & Mr Woolcot." McHenry, however, advised against John Quincy:

> To send him would not suit the solemnity of the crises. He would not be presumed to carry with him a correct knowledge of circumstances. He might also be distrusted from the relation he stands in to the Vice President, who may be thought by France a favourer of England. He is besides (tho' a man of abilities) too young, and too little known in the U.S. for the importance of such a mission;

> one object of which is to dissipate a threatening storm, and restore good understanding and harmony between two nations.[18]

McHenry therefore revealed his support for peace between France and the United States; the confidence Pickering and Wolcott had in John Quincy Adams; and French concern about John Adams as "a favourer of England." The potential for friction between Washington's cabinet and John Adams therefore was not apparent in 1796. Just as Washington had sent John Jay to make peace with Great Britain, so he would plan to send an acceptable minister to make peace with France, and preserve American neutrality; and Pickering, Wolcott, and McHenry accepted this policy.

A greater challenge to John Adams was his vice-president, Thomas Jefferson. Until the passing of the Twelfth Amendment, the candidate with the most Electoral College votes became the president, and the runner-up became vice-president. Adams received 71 votes, three more than Jefferson's 68. The other Federalist candidate, Thomas Pinckney, came in third with 59, and Republican Aaron Burr had 30. Adams therefore became president, and the Republican Jefferson became his vice-president. Because disagreements over foreign policy were central to the formation of the Republican Party, Jefferson was certain to be at odds with many Federalists. Worse yet, in May 1796, excerpts from a private letter that Jefferson had written to Philip Mazzei began to appear in the newspapers, first in Europe, then in America. The letter caused Jefferson a great deal of embarrassment because of his pro-French sentiments and his attack on George Washington. Disappointed with the Jay Treaty, Jefferson had charged that "an Anglican, monarchical and aristocratical party has sprung up" that had capitulated to Great Britain: "It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies,

[18] James McHenry to George Washington, Enclosure, [2 July 1796], Papers of George Washington, Library of Congress.

men who were Samsons in the field and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England."[19] Who more than Washington was a "Sampson in combat" and a "Solomon in council"? Jefferson admitted to James Madison that he could not disavow the letter: the ideas were indeed his.[20] Jefferson had resigned from Washington's cabinet in 1793, and now had been exposed denouncing the honor of the great man. Tension between the vice-president and the cabinet, and between Federalists and Republicans in Congress, especially over foreign policy, was therefore unavoidable.

Adams and Jefferson also disagreed over the importance of republican revolution in Europe. Adams did not regard France as a "sister Republic," and was skeptical that "a Democratical Republick could be erected in a Nation of Five and twenty Millions of People, Four and twenty Millions and five hundred Thousands of whom, could neither write nor read."[21] Jefferson, in contrast, wrote that "the best anchor of our hope is an invasion of England. if they republicanize that country, all will be safe with us."[22] But Adams thought that even if Britain experienced a republican revolution, she would remain a serious threat: "But will England be the weaker or less formidable to France for this? Ask Oliver Cromwell."[23] In practical terms, however, Jefferson could be useful: he could be counted on to support Adams' policy of avoiding a formal alliance with Great Britain against France. Adams would later explain that he asked advice of men "whom I knew to be attached to the interest of the nation, and whose

[19] Thomas Jefferson to Philip Mazzei, 24 Apr. 1796, *PTJ*, 29:73-88.
[20] Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 3 Aug. 1797, *PTJ*, 29:489. Jefferson wrote, "The letter to Mazzei imputed to me in the papers, the general substance of which is mine, tho' the diction has been considerably varied in the course of it's [sic] translations from English into Italian, from Italian into French and from French into English."
[21] John Adams to Thomas McKean, 21 June 1812, *Works*, 10:15-17.
[22] Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Mann Randolph, 11 Jan. 1798, *PTJ*, 30:25.
[23] John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 3 May 1797, Adams Papers, reel 117.

experience, genius, learning, and travels had eminently qualified them to give advice," regardless of party affiliation, and specifically mentioned Jefferson as one of those men.[24]

Adams also had other advisors who were loyal to him. In 1797, the navy obtained its own department separate from the War Department. The first head of this new naval department was Benjamin Stoddert, a capable administrator who ably handled the operations conducted during the Quasi-war. Stoddert naturally agreed with Adams' preference for the navy over the army. Arthur Lee, Adams' attorney general, his son John Quincy Adams, and William Vans Murray, American minister at the Hague, all proved to be dependable allies and the latter two were important sources of intelligence. Even the Republican Elbridge Gerry, who defied Adams and remained in France, as a New Englander and an old friend, proved in the end to be a useful supporter of Adams' policy.[25] Adams also used contacts in the merchant community such as Josiah Quincy, to whom he wrote, "I want to know what Effect this whole Business has had or shall have On your Insurance offices and the Price of Stocks, in this Place. I am told the Insurers at a meeting, have Resolved to rise their Premiums, only one Pr Cent."[26] As with the Barbary States, insurance was a key issue in Adams' views on the French crisis. It therefore is clear that when Adams assumed the presidency in 1797, he had a great deal of support from the High Federalists, the Republicans, and the merchant community for a peaceful solution to the crisis with France.

[24] John Adams to the *Boston Patriot*, *Works*, 9:285.
[25] Nathan Perl-Rosenthal argues that attention to Adams' private networks significantly alters the evaluation of Adams' presidency: "Seen through the lens of his private network, Adams' decisions in 1797 appear more consistent and less subservient to the wishes of the cabinet than has usually been thought." See "Private Letters and Public Diplomacy: The Adams Network and the Quasi-war, 1797-1798," *Journal of the Early Republic* 31.2 (2011): 287.
[26] John Adams to Josiah Quincy III, 23 Jan. 1797, Adams Papers, reel 117.

Early in 1797, Adams answered a letter from Elbridge Gerry. His reply provides a blueprint for his thinking about the crisis in foreign policy. First, he evaluated Gerry's concerns about domestic divisions in the United States:

> Is there any English Party in the sense that there is a french Party? I.e. a Party for forcing Us or seducing Us off our neutral Ground into a War with France? if there is I know it not but should be glad to discover it. on the contrary there is a Party and a numerous and powerful one too, who are striving to force Us off our neutral Ground into a War with England.

Unlike Jefferson, Adams did not believe that a British party existed in the United States. Furthermore, Adams argued that the French governments, from 1776 to the present, were working "to make us dependent." [27] France was therefore more of a threat than England to the political unity of the United States. On the other hand, Adams discounted the military power of France and the threat of invasion. He chided Gerry:

> I am amazed at your Language about the Power of France.—Where is it possible for her to get ships to Send thirty thousand Men here? We are double the Numbers We were in 1775—We have four times the military skill and We have eight times the Munitions of War.—What would 30,000 Men do here?

As during the Revolution, Adams focused on the logistics of shipping. Adams also assured Gerry that he had every intention of avoiding war with France: "She is at War with Us: but We are not at War with her." At the same time, he saw no reason for an "unjust and unnecessary war with England." As in the Nootka Sound crisis, Adams aimed to preserve neutrality when European states were at war.

Adams' official messages to Congress in 1797 further illuminate his thinking. Adams did not treat negotiation and force as two separate options, but as two prongs of a single policy. Permitting merchantmen to arm, sending frigates to protect convoys, and taking measures to

[27] John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 3 May 1797, Adams Papers, reel 117.

strengthen the army put teeth into diplomacy.[28] Adams would be able to demonstrate to the French that the United States would take care of its own defense rather than tolerate French assaults. If the French thought that America could not protect itself, and could not turn to Britain because of the pro-French faction, they were in for a surprise. Even the coup in France in September did not alter Adams' decision to negotiate:

> Talleyrand, I should suppose, could not be for war with this country; nor can I apprehend that even the Triumvirate, as they begin to be called in France, will be for a measure so decided. A continued appearance of umbrage, and continued depredations on a weak, defenceless commerce, will be much more convenient for their views. [29]

No matter the form of government, he expected French foreign policy to be consistent, and aggression against the American merchant marine to remain the preferred strategy of the French.

Because Adams later stressed his opposition to Hamilton's army and his efforts to end its existence, it is useful to explain his initial request for a provisional army in his Message to Congress.[30] First, during the Revolution he had at times been frustrated with militia and recognized the value of well-trained troops. Second, during Adams' time as vice-president, Washington had on several occasions called on Congress to set up a temporary force to deal with a specific crisis, as when "Mad" Anthony Wayne and the American Legion had dealt with Indians in the North-West. Third, Adams was well aware of the value of rumor. He had written his son that if the French threatened the United States, he would not back down: "America is not Scared."[31] The French would soon find out that Congress had authorized a standing army, and understand that the United States did not intend to do nothing in the face of their unlawful attacks. Fourth, in the unlikely event that the French did invade the United States, Adams would

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[28] John Adams' Speech to Both Houses of Congress, 16 May 1797, *Works*, 9:111-117.
[29] John Adams to Timothy Pickering, 31 Oct. 1797, *Works*, 8:560.
[30] John Adams, "Message to Congress," 16 May 1797, *Works*, 9:115-17.
[31] John Adams to John Quincy Adams, 31 March 1797, Adams Papers, reel 383. Emphasis is in the original.

need to prepare. He knew it took time to organize an army, and he had always emphasized the importance of officers.[32] The legislation gave him time to find and appoint those officers in case they were needed. Prudence alone dictated attention to a provisional army.

On the other hand, Adams also knew that trained militia could effectively resist invaders, as when John Stark had won the Battle of Bennington against "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne's regulars in 1777. He recommended "a revision of the laws for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, to render that natural and safe defence of the country efficious."[33] He wrote of the obstacle that the militia would be if the French should invade. Second, he had seen tension between civilians and regulars erupt: he had, after all, defended the soldiers accused of the Boston massacre. Third, he knew that both republican ideals and more pragmatic opposition to taxes made a standing army intolerable: Congress had, after all, been careful to tie the provisional army to the specific threat of a French invasion. He was certain the union could not survive the tax revolts that would spring up if a large army had no enemy to fight. Fourth, the humiliation he experienced as Washington overruled his ranking of the officers highlighted the danger to civilian control of the military. Much later he would write that "the danger to our government is, that the General will be a man of more popularity than the President, and the army possess more power than Congress."[34] Fifth, he thought that an army organized and trained needed a purpose, and he eventually saw that its existence encouraged the "Hyperfederalists" to ally with Britain and attempt to seize Spanish possessions.[35]

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[32] It is also true that Adams used his power to appoint officers to try to make political capital. See William J. Murphy, Jr., "John Adams: The Politics of the Additional Army, 1798-1800," *New England Quarterly* 52.2 (1979): 234-239.

[33] John Adams, Speech to Both Houses of Congress, 16 May 1797, *Works*, 9:117.

[34] John Adams to Thomas McKean, 21 June 1812, *Works*, 10:15-17.

[35] Adams identified the High Federalists as "Hyperfederalists" in several of his surviving letters. For example, in 1808 he wrote, "If this Country Submits to the Unjust demands of the Britons and throws herself into their Arms she will find their Gripe as cruel as that of France. If our Hyperfederalists Should get Us into a War with France and an

After Adams' first message, Jefferson sent an official letter to Adams on behalf of the Senate, welcoming "with singular satisfaction, the vigilance, firmness, and promptitude, exhibited by you, in this critical state of our public affairs." Jefferson highlighted Adams' proposal for "amicable negotiation with the French republic," noted his approval of the measures for defense, and claimed the Senate had "entire confidence in your abilities and exertions in your station to maintain untarnished the honor, preserve the peace, and support the independence of our country."[36] Congress also supported Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, John Marshall, and Elbridge Gerry as the commissioners who would try to come to terms with France.

Adams knew that the Directory might refuse to receive the commissioners. He therefore sent a message to his four cabinet secretaries, sounding out their opinions on the crisis. He asked for advice on "the State of the Nation and its foreign Relations especially with France." It should be noted that he did not merely ask about France, but France in a larger context: "These indeed may be so connected with those, with England Spain Holland, and others, that perhaps the former cannot be well weighed without the other." Then he moved on to the possible treatment of the commissioners, and asked what the commissioners should do if "refused an Audience, or after an Audience be ordered to depart without accomplishing the Object of their Mission": Should all leave France and go to Holland? Should two of them return and one remain? Should all return? He also wanted to know what he as president should say to Congress about a failed mission; what would be "necessary" or "expedient." He specifically asked, "Shall an immediate Declaration of War be recommended or Suggested?" And if not a declaration of war, was there

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Alliance with England it will be the Society of the Wolf and the Sheep." See John Adams to John Quincy Adams, 17 Jan. 1808, Adams Papers, reel 405.

[36] Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 24 May 1797, *ASP:FR*, 1:42.

any other "System" besides "a repetition of the recommendations heretofore repeatedly made?"[37] Adams also asked for opinions on an embargo.

Adams then turned to how this breakdown in relations with France should be communicated to the other powers of Europe, especially Britain:

> Will it not be imprudent in Us to connect ourselves, with Britain in any manner, that may impede Us in embracing the first favourable Moment or opportunity to make a Seperate Peace? What Aids or Benefits can We expect from England, by any Stipulations with her, which her Interests will not impel her to extend to Us without any? on the brink of the dangerous Precipice on which she stands will not shaking hands with her, necessitate Us, to fall with her, if she falls? On the other hand, what Aid could We Stipulate to afford her, which our own Interest would not oblige Us to give without any other obligation?[38]

His leading questions reveal that he was concerned war with France would weaken American independence from Britain. As in the Revolutionary War, American interests could be trampled by her ally as much as by her enemy.

When Adams learned in early 1798 that not only had the Directory issued new orders that unleashed French privateers on American merchantmen, but that the American commissioners had been rebuffed, he sent a short message to his cabinet:

> Will it be advisable to present immediately to Congress the whole of the communications from our minister in France, with the exception of the names of the persons employed by the minister Talleyrand to exhibit and enforce his requisitions for a bribe, under an injunction of secrecy as to that particular? Ought the President, then, to recommend, in his message, an immediate declaration of war?[39]

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[37] John Adams to James McHenry, Timothy Pickering, Oliver Wolcott, Jr., and Charles Lee, 24 Jan. 1798. Quotes are from the letter sent to Timothy Pickering. See Timothy Pickering Papers, reel 22. The copy made by McHenry for Alexander Hamilton and found in *PAH*, 21:339-341.
[38] Ibid.
[39] John Adams to the Heads of the Department, 13 Mar. 1798, *Works*, 8:568.

Among Adams' papers is a "war message" he drafted for Congress but never delivered.[40] This draft reveals not only that he considered asking for a declaration of war, but why he was considering doing so:

> The Decree of [ ] must, in its operation, deprive the United States not only of their indubitable Right, but of their essential Resources, without which they cannot maintain their Existence as an independent nation. From our Commerce are derived, not only the means of Subsistence to a great and deserving portion of our fellow Citizens, but the means and Instruments of national defence, and the most essential part of the Revennues of the State. For defending our commerce therefore against this decree, every Effort and every resource should be called into Action, which cannot be done, unless there be a formal declaration of War. To proceed no farther, than the Plan of arming Vessells under regulations and restrictions is too inefficient of itself, and more dangerous to the Lives of our Seamen in cases of captures, than in a State of <~~ope~~> declared war. To me there appears no alternative between actual Hostilities on our part, and national ruin. The former, no American will hesitate to prefer: and all Men will think it more honourable and glorious to the national Character when its existence as an independent nation is at Stake, that Hostilities Should be avowed in a formal Declaration of War.[41]

Adams' draft makes it clear that he thought American commerce was key to independence and therefore had to be protected. It appears that he did not think Congress would approve the necessary measures for defense without a formal declaration of war. Yet asking for a declaration was also dangerous: if Congress refused to declare war, could he then order American warships to provide convoy protection or attack French privateers? Adams had seen the outcry over Washington's Neutrality Proclamation, where Washington had been accused of usurping the war powers of Congress to declare peace. Adams' potential war message therefore should not be taken as evidence of his uncertainty over whether to declare war against France, but instead as evidence of his uncertainty over whether a formal declaration of war was necessary for him to defend American merchantmen.

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[40] John Adams, c. 15 March 1798, Adams Papers, reel 387. The draft is simply entitled "Message."
[41] Ibid.

The crisis with France escalated further when the Republicans demanded the dispatches sent by the commissioners and Adams released them. In October 1797, French officials, known as XYZ, had demanded a bribe and made clear to the commissioners that they were uninterested in negotiation. Furthermore, by unleashing privateers against American merchantmen without a declaration of war, France violated acceptable practice for naval warfare under the law of nations. Adams observed that the cash-strapped Directory, like the Barbary pirates, was motivated by financial advantage. The Jay Treaty provided a convenient excuse, for other states that had made no such treaty such as Sweden and Denmark were also included in the attacks. The French party in America was disgraced, and the Federalists took advantage of the patriotic fever in Congress to get their defence program passed. As noted above, Adams did not think that a British party existed in the United States, but he was certain that a dangerous and disloyal pro-French party could wreak the same havoc they had done during Washington's administration. Adams had witnessed a threatening mob in Philadelphia in 1793, and thought that only the yellow fever had dispersed them. He was aware that the French had sent Victor Collot to spy out the west, and he wrote Timothy Pickering that "Having long possessed Evidence the most satisfactory to my Mind that Collot is a pernicious and malicious Intriguer I have been always ready and willing to execute the Alien Law upon him." He therefore made no opposition to the various Alien and Sedition Laws, though, as he later wrote, he had not asked for them either.[42] Furthermore, he saw no justice in blaming him for these laws while excusing Thomas Jefferson,

[42] John Adams to Timothy Pickering, 13 August 1799, *Works*, 9:13-14. Victor Collot's own writings make clear that he was indeed a spy. See Victor Collot and Durand Echeverria, "General Collot's Plan for a Reconnaissance of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, 1796," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 9.4 (1952): 512-520.

because, as he pointed out, his former vice-president had also signed them.[43] Adams expected James Madison to likewise resort to similar laws in 1812, though Madison in fact did not do so.[44]

Adams discovered that he did not need to ask for a formal declaration of war. The main threat to American merchantmen in the West Indies allowed Adams to pursue what he called a "half-way war."[45] As Francis Bacon had observed: "Hee that Commands the Sea, is at great liberty, and will take as much, and as little of the Warre, as he will."[46] In his lifetime, Adams had watched the French and Indian War, as well as America's Revolutionary War, escalate into world wars where American interests were subjugated to those of her powerful ally. He had not approved of widening the American War of Independence, and now that he was president, he had the power to work at keeping the Quasi-war limited. He would later claim that he saw no reason to go beyond a few frigates to protect the trade, and some improvement to coastal fortification in case a stray French raiding party arrived.[47]

Adams had learned during both the Seven Years' War and the Revolutionary War that European armies needed ships, both to transport troops and to supply them. The French armies that could march across Europe could not march across the Atlantic. And even if they did arrive, they would simply bog down in the vast North American territory as they encountered hostile militiamen. The French had found enough ships to send Napoleon and an army to Egypt in 1798,

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[43] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 14 June 1813, *PTJ-Ret*., 6:191.
[44] In 1786, in a letter to Jefferson, Madison described "An Act giving powers to the Governor & Council in certain cases" as follows: "This Act empowers the Executive to confine or send away suspicious aliens, on notice from Congs. that their sovereigns have declared or commenced hostilities agst. U. S. or that the latter have declared War agst such sovereigns. It was occasioned by the arrival of two or three Algerines here, who having no apparent object were suspected of an unfriendly one. The Executive caused them to be brought before them, but found themselves unarmed with power to proceed. These adventurers have since gone off." See James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 22 Jan. 1786, *PJM*, 8:472-482. For his actions during his presidency, see *PJM-PS*, 4:561.
[45] Qtd. in DeConde, 328. Years earlier, Adams had criticized the initial War of Independence as "half a war": "If we finally fail in this great and glorious contest, it will be by bewildering ourselves in groping after this middle way. We have hitherto conducted half a war; acted upon the line of defence." See John Adams to General Horatio Gates, 23 March 1776, *Works*, 1:206-7.
[46] Francis Bacon and Michael Kiernan. *The Essayes Or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 98.
[47] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 24 June 1812, *OFL*, 399.

but loss of his ships in the battle of the Nile forced him to abandon the campaign. As Adams noted, the French had to deal with the Royal Navy. It is true that Napoleon later found enough peace in Europe and enough ships to send 30,000 troops to St. Domingue in 1801. As John Quincy had warned his father, it was possible for the French to mount an expedition in North America.[48] But motive matters as well. Success in St. Domingue would have meant control of valuable sugar and coffee plantations, and the invasion had been urged by French merchants. Success in St. Domingue also was necessary to rebuild a French empire that then might find Louisiana useful and control of New Orleans vital. Privateers were seizing American merchantmen because it was profitable. In contrast, it is difficult to identify strategic or monetary advantages for a French invasion of the United States.

By July, Adams was aware of a French fleet in the Mediterranean and the intention of the Royal Navy to attack it.[49] Lack of a formal American alliance with Great Britain did not prevent Admiral Nelson from destroying this French fleet and stranding Napoleon's army in Egypt in August of 1798.[50] News of this great victory had reached America by early October. The British victory meant that the French threat to the American mainland, whether real or imagined, had dissipated. France could not land an army with the Royal Navy in command of the sea. Adams understood that American defense was inseparable from events in Europe, and he had already expressed his preference for a naval strategy:

> Floating Batteries and wooden walls have been my favorite System of Warfare and Defense for this Country, for Three and Twenty years. I have had very little Success in making Proselytes. At the present moment however, Americans in

[48] John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 3 April 1797, Adams Papers, reel 384.
[49] William Vans Murray to John Adams, 17 July 1798, *Works*, 8:683.
[50] Rodger, 458-461.

> general, Cultivators as well as Merchants and Mariners, begin to look to that source of Security and Protection.[51]

Adams' understanding of the concert of Europe, and that American military threats could not be viewed in isolation, were as important as his "Wooden Walls" in his handling of the crisis.

Adams' combination of quasi-alliance and heavily armed frigates focused on protecting merchantmen bore some resemblance to the long-standing British grand strategy known as "the old system".[52] Adams himself noted this:

> The English have exhibited an amazing Example of skill and Intrepidity, Perseverance and Firmness at sea. We are a Chip of that Block. And We could do as We pleased at least as We ought upon the watery Element, if it were not that We shall excite Jealousy in the English Navy. We must however, Stand for our Right. We must adopt their Motto Dieu et mon Droit.[53]

But Adams also borrowed from the colonial past. As noted, he permitted merchantmen to arm themselves, like militiamen upon the waters. Over three hundred did so.[54] American ships accepted the offer of British convoy, and British ships were sometimes protected by American escorts.[55] H.R. Saabye, the consul in Copenhagen, wrote Adams, describing British success in countering the French:

> Englands superiority on the Ocean, and the care which she has taken, not only to block up many French harbours, but likewise to keep a considerable number of Cruisers on their coast, compell'd them to remain in port, lest they be captured by the watchful English. It is to be hoped that the much wish'd for peace, may be restored to Europe, by Englands steady and manly resistance, to the new fangled

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[51] Adams to Boston Marine Society, 7 Sept 1798, Adams Papers, reel 391. "Wooden walls" is a reference to the interpretation of the oracle of Delphi by Themistocles, the Athenian patriot who recommended building a navy to defeat the Persian invaders. See Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles*. When discussing America's naval history with Adams, Thomas Jefferson remarked, "The additions to these in your time I need not note to you, who are well known to have ever been an advocate for the wooden walls of Themistocles." See Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 1 Nov. 1822, Adams Papers, reel 456.
[52] Rodgers
[53] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 1 January 1799, Adams Papers, reel 393.
[54] *NDQW*, 2:iii.
[55] Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, xiii.

> French system of conquest and oppression, and by her success in annihilating, as it were, nearly the whole of the French Marine.[56]

Saabye added that "prices are [high] for produce from the W.Indies," revealing the motive to trade despite the war. American merchants, their insurance rates down because of the success of Adams in countering privateers, were actually against declaring war on France.[57] Operations were largely left to the capable Benjamin Stoddert, who had been Adam's second choice for secretary of the navy.[58]

But Adams was dissatisfied with the performance of his navy. He wrote to Stoddert: "I own that the navy has not afforded to our commerce that complete protection which might have been expected from it, considering the vast inferiority of all the French force, both in public and in private ships, in the West Indies."[59] Adams found fault with the leadership, and called for access to reading materials:

> The President of the United States requests the Secretary of the Navy to employ some of his clerks in preparing a catalogue of books for the use of his office. It ought to consist of all the best writings in Dutch, Spanish, French, and especially in English, upon the theory and practice of naval architecture, navigation, gunnery, hydraulics, hydrostatics, and all branches of mathematics subservient to the profession of the sea. The lives of all the admirals, English, French, Dutch, or any other nation, who have distinguished themselves by the boldness and success of their navigation, or their gallantry and skill in naval combats. If there are no funds which can be legally applied by the Secretary to the purchase of such a library, application ought to be made to Congress for assistance.[60]

Perhaps Adams ought to also have included books on recent history. The quasi-alliance with Great Britain had some very real problems like the continuation of impressments. Adams rejected the option of American ships in turn impressing British sailors: "If our men-of-war had a

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[56] H.R. Saabye to John Adams, 10 Oct. 1798, *NDQW*, 1:515.
[57] DeConde, 332.
[58] Palmer, *Stoddert's War,* 14.
[59] John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, 27 April 1799, *Works*, 8:637.
[60] John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, 31 March 1800, *Works*, 9:47.

right to take them, we might easily man our navy; but the thing has no principle," he wrote to Timothy Pickering.[61]

The British also began to interfere with American shipping in the West Indies. Captain Alexander Murray complained to Benjamin Stoddert:

> I think Sir that we have no Enemy so much to be shunned in this quarter, as the British, for they blockade all the passages, & fair, or foul, let few of our Vessels pass them, if they have Cargoes of Value, and send them to Jamaica, where the venality of the Admiralty court gives no quarter, how long we are to bear with these aggravations, I leave to wiser heads than mine to determine.[62]

Adams, in a letter to his new secretary of state, John Marshall, acknowledged that although he still supported the ideal of free ships, free goods, he was pessimistic about achieving it:

> The question, whether neutral ships shall protect enemies' property, is indeed important. It is of so much importance, that if the principle of *free ships, free goods*, were once really established and honestly observed, it would put an end forever to all maritime war, and render all military navies useless. However desirable this may be to humanity, how much soever philosophy may approve it and Christianity desire it, I am clearly convinced it will never take place. The dominant power on the ocean will forever trample on it. The French would despise it more than any nation in the world, if they had the maritime superiority of power, and the Russians next to them. We must treat the subject with great attention, and, if all other nations will agree to it, we will. But while one holds out, we shall be the dupes, if we agree to it.[63]

The Atlantic trade therefore remained vulnerable to British interference, despite the quasi-alliance. But the figures are nevertheless impressive: for a cost of six million to build his frigates and operate his navy, Adams protected 200 million of commerce, and government revenues exceeded 23 million. His grand strategy had successfully brought down insurance rates and

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[61] John Adams to T. Pickering, 7 June 1799, *Works*, 8:656.
[62] Alexander Murray to B. Stoddert, 31 July 1800, *NDQW*, 6:210.
[63] John Adams to John Marshall, 3 Oct. 1800, *Works*, 9:86.

enabled the operation of a profitable merchant marine.[64] His diplomatic overtures would eventually be effective in France, and the crisis would pass without exploding into full-scale war.

As noted above, by the fall of 1798, Adams was certain that France would not invade the United States, and was thinking of the provisional army in terms of expense rather than employment:

> There has been no national plan, that I have seen, as yet formed for the maintenance of the army. One thing I know, that regiments are costly articles everywhere, and more so in this country than any other under the sun. If this nation sees a great army to maintain, without an enemy to fight, there may arise an enthusiasm that seems to be little foreseen. At present there is no more prospect of seeing a French army here, than there is in Heaven. [65]

He was content to use the provisional army to reward those who sought officer's commissions. While is true that he had written to Timothy Pickering only two days earlier, asking if he thought it "was expedient for the president to recommend to the consideration of congress a declaration of war against France," he also asked "whether any further proposals of negotiation can be made with safety," when he had previously made clear "the impropriety of sending any ministers to France, without assurances that they shall be received." He closed the letter asking "whether it will not be necessary to lay before congress, all the papers sent from Mr. Gerry by Mr. Humphreys."[66] It appears that Adams wished to continue his policy of combining both the threat of declaring war with a willingness to negotiate. By the middle of January, his son Thomas was able to assure him that France, having taken note of America's aggressive defense measures, was now open to negotiation. It appeared that the worst of the crisis with France had ended, but a new

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[64] *NDQW*, 7:313-314; See also Elkins and McKitrick, 653: "Insurance savings alone, according to the House Naval Affairs Committee report of January 17, 1799, already amounted to more than three times the total cost of the navy since the appropriations of 1794." See also Footnote 24, 890-891.
[65] John Adams to James McHenry, 22 Oct. 1798, *Works*, 8:613.
[66] John Adams to Timothy Pickering, 20 Oct. 1798, *Works*, 8:609-10. A reply from Pickering has not been found.

threat to his policy of "inflexible neutrality" was developing; one that would come from the High Federalists.

Although Timothy Pickering supported Adams' measures to defend American merchantmen, he expressed greater appreciation for Britain and the Royal Navy. Already in 1797, Pickering wrote to George Washington that "France is most of all to be distrusted, because she has power, and because more than any nation since Europe became civilized, she has most unjustly and atrociously abused it." With regards to French attacks on American merchantmen, Pickering noted: "Were it not for the vast numbers of British Cruizers which soon capture her privateers, our commerce would be ruined."[67] Similarly, Henry Knox warned Adams that "Indeed we are vulnerable in the Southern States to an alarming degree. The British navy is the only preventative against an invasion of those States from the West Indian Islands." Knox feared that if the British ships became engaged elsewhere, the French would land black troops who would encourage a slave revolt. Knox pointed out that the South differed from New England, which could be defended simply by militiamen. [68] As for Washington, although he doubted that the French would invade the United States, he differed significantly from Adams on what the United States ought to do if they did. Washington, the American Fabius of the Revolution, did not want to be Fabius again. This time he wanted to meet the enemy on the shore and immediately repulse him.[69]

Washington also showed more concern than Adams did for the American south-west: Adams was no isolationist, and he was not a western expansionist either. It was not clear what

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[67] Timothy Pickering to George Washington, 6 June 1797, *PGW-Ret*, 1:170-71.
[68] Henry Knox to John Adams, 26 June 1798, *NDQW*, 1:140.
[69] George Washington to John Adams, 4 July 1798, *PGW-Ret*, 2:368-71. James Madison thought Washington less bellicose than Adams: "It is said, and there are circumstances which make me believe it, that the hotheaded proceedings of Mr. A are not well relished in the cool climate of Mount Vernon." See James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 3 June 1798, *PJM*, 17:141-42.

would happen with Spain's American empire, which included New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Floridas. The island of Hispaniola, which had been divided into Spanish Santo Domingo and French St. Domingue, became the sole possession of the French in 1795. St. Domingue had been the most profitable colony in the West Indies, with a slave-based economy exporting sugar and coffee, but in the wake of the French Revolution, a slave uprising supported by free blacks and mulattos had thrown the economy into chaos. The British had invaded in 1793, but by the summer of 1798, were negotiating with General Toussaint Louverture and preparing to evacuate their troops. "Standing, as it were, in the midst of falling empires, it should be our aim to assume a station and attitude which will preserve us from being overwhelmed in their ruins," Washington wrote to James McHenry.[70]

As for Alexander Hamilton, the American Caesar initially had opposed a formal alliance with Britain:

> I am against going immediately into alliance with Great Britain. It is my opinion that her interest will ensure us her cooperation, to the extent of her power, and that a Treaty will not secure her further. On the other hand a Treaty might entangle us; public opinion is not prepared for it—it would not fail to be represented as to the *point to which our previous conduct was directed* and in case of offers from France satisfactory to us the public faith might be embarrassed by the calls of the people for accommodation & peace.[71]

Like Adams, Hamilton thought a formal alliance was unnecessary and potentially divisive, and like Adams, he also was open to further negotiation with France. But, like Washington, Hamilton was concerned about the future of Spain's possessions. The Spanish-American revolutionary, Francisco de Miranda, had met Hamilton as early as 1794, and by 1797, was inviting the

[70] George Washington to James McHenry, 13 Dec. 1798, *PGW-Ret*, 3:250-265.
[71] Alexander Hamilton to Timothy Pickering, 27 March 1798, *PAH*, 21:379-80.

Americans to support the independence of South America.[72] Hamilton explained to Miranda that he "could personaley [sic] have no participation in it unless patronised by the Government of this Country," but he also made clear his own enthusiasm for a joint operation with Great Britain:

> The plan in my opinion ought to be, a fleet of Great Britain, an armmy [sic] of the ustates, a Government for the liberated territorey agreable to both the Cooperators, about which there will be probably no difficulty. To arrange the plan a competent authority from Great-Britain to some person here is the best expedient. Your presence here will in this case be extremely essential. We are raising an army of about Twelve Thousand men. Genl. Washington has resumed his station at the head of our armies. I am appointed second in command.[73]

Adams recollected that he had not seen the letter where Hamilton promised troops to support Miranda, but explained that even if he had seen it, "My Imagination was amused with very different Pictures." Rather than dreams of conquest or even support for independence, he saw horror:

> Seven thousand Men and 2000 horses crouded into transports in the Gulph Stream, bound to South America, two thirds of them, within a fortnight after their Landing, dead with the Rot, the Goal Fever, the Yellow Fever or the Plague; and their Fathers and Mothers Wives and Children Brothers and Sisters weeping and wailing their Losses and cursing John Adams as a Traitor to his Country and a bribed Slave to Great Britain.[74]

Considering that the British expedition to St. Domingue in 1793 had lost almost two-thirds of the troops to yellow fever and that the French expedition in 1801 would lose half its forces in two months, also to yellow fever, Adams' claim that the result would only be disaster and death seems reasonable.

Adams appears to have envisioned fighting only a limited naval war, whether undeclared or not. His frigates, however, would become entangled in the independence of Latin America

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[72] Francisco de Miranda to Alexander Hamilton, 1 Apr. 1797, *PAH*, 21:1-3; 7 Feb. 1798, *PAH*, 21:348; 6 Apr. 1798, *PAH*, 21:399.
[73] Alexander Hamilton to Francisco de Miranda, 22 Aug. 1798, *PAH*, 22:155-56.
[74] John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 10:146-49.

after Toussaint Louverture sent Joseph Bunel to approach Timothy Pickering in the fall of 1798. Toussaint, eager to import American grain to feed the freedmen, wanted Adams to end the embargo. Pickering, as both a New Englander and the son of an abolitionist, encouraged Adams to work with the black general.[75] It was true that a declaration of independence by Toussaint could be used to convince Congress to re-open trade with St. Domingo as it would no longer be a French possession. On the other hand, the embargo was in place because of attacks by French privateers; if Toussaint, as French representative, restrained the privateers, an embargo would no longer be necessary. Adams evaluated the British plan for the independence of St. Domingue in terms of how it would affect the balance of power in Europe, as well as America's relations with France and with Great Britain. He noted that if Britain sponsored Toussaint, the independence of St. Domingue would be "projected, partial, limited & restrained." British acquisition of St. Domingue would threaten Holland and Spain, and they would draw closer to France. As for the United States: "Will it not involve us in a more inveterate and durable hostility with France, Spain & Holland, & subject us more to the policy of Britain, than will be consistent with our interest or honor?"[76] The quasi-alliance could easily degenerate into quasi-dependence. Adams remained cautious about American involvement, and appears to have been influenced primarily by the merchants who wished to resume what had been a very lucrative trade. Adams himself was doubtful that their dreams of profits would be realized, but he was willing to support their desire to take the risk.[77]

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[75] For an overview of Pickering's cordial diplomacy with both Indians and Blacks, see Ronald Angelo Johnson, *Diplomacy in Black and White: John Adams, Toussaint Louverture, and Their Atlantic World Alliance* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014), 33-36.
[76] John Adams to Timothy Pickering, 17 Apr. 1799, Adams Papers, reel 119.
[77] John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, 7 June 1799, Adams Papers, reel 119.

In the spring of 1799, Adams assumed that the crisis with France was over. The Directory was open to negotiation, and he ordered Pickering to arrange for commissioners to set sail for France. But it appears that the High Federalists simply did not believe William Vans Murray's report that France was willing to negotiate in good faith, and Pickering took pains to assure Hamilton that Adams' new commission was "wholly *his own act*, without any participation or communication with any of us."[78] Alexander Hamilton revealed another obstacle; in a letter to Pickering he asked, "How is the sending an Agent to Toussaint to encourage the Independence of St Domingo & a Minister to France to negotiate an accommodation reconciliable to consistency or good faith?"[79] Pickering admitted that

> With respect to St. Domingo, the President will certainly do no act to encourage Toussaint to declare the island independent: but he will doubtless open the commercial intercourse when Dr. Stevens (Consul General) shall certify that privateering is at an end, so that agreeably to the 4th section of the act, the President may consider it safe & for the interests of the U. States to do it.[80]

Hamilton and Pickering may have disagreed with Adams, but Jay, Knox, Stoddert and Washington all supported him. So did Hamilton protégé Oliver Wolcott, who was opposed to the provisional army.[81]

By the summer of 1799, Hamilton had grown bolder. He wrote to James McHenry:

> It is a pity, My Dear Sir, and a reproach, that our administration have no general plan. Certainly there ought to be one formed without delay. If the Chief is too desultory, his Ministers ought to be the more united and steady and well settled in some reasonable system of measures.

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[78] Timothy Pickering to Alexander Hamilton, 25 Feb. 1799, *PAH*, 22:500-03. Emphasis in original.
[79] Alexander Hamilton to Timothy Pickering, 21 Feb. 1799, *PAH*, 22:493.
[80] Ibid. Pickering also wrote to John Quincy Adams: "General Maitland departed from hence yesterday to embark in the British Ship Camilla for St. Domingo, to arrange with General Toussaint the commerce of that Island. The American commerce is to be on a footing equally free with that of the British. We do not intermeddle with Toussaints Politics. Whether he declares the Island independent (which it is probable he will do) or governs it as a Colony of France, the commercial arrangements will apply, while he finds himself under the necessity of suppressing privateering in order to procure the requisite supplies for the inhabitants." See his letter dated 24 Apr. 1799, Adams Papers, reel 396.
[81] Kurtz, 390-91.

Hamilton then outlined a "reasonable system":

> It will be ridiculous to raise troops and immediately after to disband them. *Six* ships of the line & *twenty* frigates and sloops of war are desireable—more would not now be comparatively expedient. It is desireable to complete and prepare the land force which has been provided for by law. Besides eventual security against invasion, we ought certainly to look to the possession of the Floridas & Louisiana—and we ought to squint at South America.[82]

Hamilton's enthusiasm for invasion should not be attributed solely to his desire for personal military glory. His openness to joint operations with Great Britain was consistent with both America's colonial past and even her revolutionary diplomacy. New Englanders had supplied the volunteers and Britain had supplied regulars and war ships for the attack on the French fortress of Louisbourg in 1745. Virginians had provided reinforcements for Braddock's expedition against Fort Duquesne in 1755. Colonial soldiers had joined with redcoats to wrestle Quebec from France during the Seven Years' War. In 1776, Congress had entertained proposals to assist Spanish forces in attacks on Pensacola and force the transfer of Florida to Spain.[83] In the Eleventh Federalist, Hamilton argued that, in case of war between Great Britain and France in the West Indies, an American navy could support one side, and that "a few ships of the line… would often be sufficient to decide the fate of a campaign."[84] As noted above, in the Nootka Sound crisis, Jefferson had recommended declaring war on Britain and joining Spain to resist a British invasion. It appears that for both Hamilton and Jefferson, entangling alliances were an acceptable option for securing American interests. John Adams, in contrast, emphasized the

[82] Alexander Hamilton to James McHenry, 27 June 1799, *PAH*, 23:227-28.
[83] *JCC*, 6:1057.
[84] *Federalist*, 11.

danger of alliances degenerating into tyranny, with the stronger partner trampling not only the enemy, but the weaker ally.[85]

On March 12, Adams left Philadelphia for Quincy. He brushed aside criticism of his absence from the capital. As he explained:

> The people elected me to administer the government it is true, and I do administer it here at Quincy, as really as I could do at Philadelphia. The Secretaries of State, Treasury, War, Navy & the Attorney General, transmit me daily by the post all the business of consequence, & nothing is done without my advice & direction, when I am here, more than when I am in the same city with them. The post goes very rapidly and I answer by the return of it, so that nothing suffers or is lost.[86]

It nevertheless is difficult to justify Adam's phlegmatic approach to foreign policy in 1799. Timothy Pickering was incensed over Adams' decision to send another mission to France. At the same time, Pickering was eager to work with Robert Liston and Thomas Maitland to open trade with St. Domingue. Whether he would have welcomed a formal alliance with Britain is less clear.[87] How carefully Adams read the enclosures Pickering sent him is not clear; he simply replied to Pickering that he approved his co-ordination of policy with Thomas Maitland:

> Last night I received your favor of the 22d. and rejoice to find you have received dispatches from Stevens and Maitland… A good understanding with the English is of more importance to us, than the trade of St. Domingo, which I am afraid will be found to have been too highly estimated—I shall wait with some impatience for your further information, but I hope the trade will be opened without waiting for any further communication from me.[88]

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[85] John Adams to Robert Livingstone, 6 Sept. 1782, *PJA*, 13:430. "We should consider the maxim that is laid down by all the political writers in the world, and the fact that is found in all histories, 'that in cases of alliance between unequal powers, almost all the advantages ever did and ever will acrrue to the greatest.'"

[86] John Adams to Uriah Forrest, 13 May 1799, *Works*, 8:645-46.

[87] Pickering later denied that he had wanted an alliance with England, and cited letters between Hamilton and himself as evidence. He explained, "That I ever 'wished to bring about an alliance with Great Britain', to link our interest and our fate with hers, cannot be true. But when, in 1798, I, in common with others, deemed a rupture with France almost inevitable, it was certainly natural and proper to think what would be the most effectual means of carrying on the war; and as natural to think some plan of cooperation with Great Britain, *then at war with France*, for our mutual safety and advantage, *against a common enemy*, to be expedient: But as it was *this expected rupture with France* which alone led me to think of some connection with *Great Britain* so my ideas never went beyond that object." See Timothy Pickering to Alexander Hamilton, 14 Dec. 1800, *PAH*, 25:255-56. Emphasis is in the original.

[88] John Adams to Timothy Pickering, 29 June 1799, Adams Papers, reel 119.

Pickering then sent a message to Edward Stevens, informing him that he now had the president's consent to re-open trade. Stevens had already met with Toussaint and Maitland to negotiate a treaty, but he did not sign it.[89] This incident shows both Pickering's initiative in conducting foreign policy in Adams' absence, and Adams' ability to nevertheless rein in Pickering. But getting Pickering to send the commissioners was a different story.

On August 29th, Stoddert wrote a letter to Adams, trying to convince the president to return to the capital. But Adams brushed aside Stoddert's pleas, explaining that "The terms of accommodation with France were so minutely considered and discussed by us all, before I took leave of you at Philadelphia, that I suppose there will be no difference of sentiments among us."[90] There were, of course, serious differences of sentiments, as he would soon discover. A few days later, having received another letter from Stoddert, Adams exclaimed:

> Toussaints armed vessells with Dr Steevens's passport! what can they be cruising for in the Bite? Is it to intercept supplies to Rigaud? Have they passports from Col. Maitland too? Multa desunt desiderata. The Arrett for the discouragement of trade to St Domingo as Fletcher marks it you did not inclose nor the proclamation for the suspension of pyracy.[91]

Stevens was not only issuing passports to Toussaint's navy. By 1800, Adams' frigate navy would move well beyond protecting American merchantmen: Captain Christopher Raymond Perry in command of the *General Greene*, helpfully bombarded the town of Jacmel and thus assisted Toussaint in routing the forces of his rival Andre Rigaud.[92] The quasi-alliance was escalating as Adams' captains directly interfered in the course of the civil war in St. Domingue.[93]

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[89] Johnson, 99.
[90] John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, 4 Sept. 1799, Adams Papers, reel 120.
[91] John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, 9 Sept. 1799, Adams Papers, reel 120. *Multa desunt desiderata* is "Many things to be desired are lacking."
[92] Palmer, 162.
[93] Palmer, 164.

On 13 September 1799, Stoddert wrote a frank letter to Adams, explaining that he had "never entertained the opinion prevalent with many persons, that we could not during the present War in Europe maintain Peace with both France & England—tho' I believe it will be a difficult matter." Part of the difficulty was maintaining good relations with Britain while attempting to make peace with France. Another difficulty was organizing the mission to France in the face of opposition from some of the Federalists. Stoddert urged Adams to come to Trenton and not think that he could direct the government just as well from Quincy. Relations with both France and Britain required attention: "I think the Peace of the Country may depend upon taking the true ground now, & upon promptly carrying into effect the proper measures to prevent a misunderstanding, where it is so much our Interest to be understood."[94] When Adams received Stoddert's letter, he immediately replied and assured his faithful secretary that, "if no fatal accident prevents," he would be in Trenton by the middle of October.[95]

On October 10, Adams arrived and began discussing the mission to France with his cabinet. A few days later, he overruled all objections and ordered the commissioners to depart for Europe. In 1780, Adams had thought that Franklin was too subservient to France, and gone off to Holland to conduct diplomacy as he saw fit. He would later boast that he had defied Vergennes and insisted on American independence. Now in 1799, he would again take his own way, dismissing the advice of those he judged too subservient to Britain. The militia diplomacy that had once won a commercial treaty with Holland would this time win peace with France. He would later explain:

> It was impossible not to perceive a profound and artful plot hatching in England, France, Spain, South and North America, to draw me into a decided instead of a quasi war with France, Spain, Holland, and all the enemies of England, and a

[94] Benjamin Stoddert to John Adams, 13 Sept. 1799, Adams Papers, reel 396.
[95] John Adams to Benjamin Stoddert, 21 Sept. 1799, Adams Papers, reel 120.

> perpetual alliance offensive and defensive, with Great Britain; or in other words, to entangle us forever in all the wars of Europe. This plot I was determined to resist and defeat, if could; and accordingly I embraced the first overtures from France to make peace with her upon terms honorable and advantageous to the United States.[96]

Sending a new commission to France not only took advantage of the opportunity to strike a new deal with France and demonstrate to all Europe that the United States was, in Eliga Gould's terms, "treaty-worthy," but would also clarify the end of the crisis that had called the army into existence. Voters could be assured—for whatever reasons might matter to them—that their taxes would be reduced, that there would be no alliance with Britain, and that the army would fade away.[97]

When the commissioners arrived in France, they found Napoleon Bonaparte in power and Talleyrand again the minister of foreign relations. The French had already called off their privateers, and negotiations eventually resulted in the Convention of Mortefontaine. Adams revealed his reaction to peace with France in a letter to his son, Thomas:

> I am fully in Opinion with you concerning the Convention with France.—Take it for better or for worse, it is an harmless thing.—It leaves us at full Liberty to Place England and France on a footing of Equality in their relations with Us, which I think is the precise point of Wisdom for Us to aim at.[98]

Adams did not win compensation for American merchants whose ships had been seized by French privateers, but such compensation was unlikely anyway: "In the younger Adams' view, if France defeated the European coalition it would be unwilling to pay, and if France lost the war it would be unable to pay."[99] The Senate, after initially rejecting the Convention, approved with

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[96] John Adams to James Lloyd, 20 Mar. 1815, *Works*, 10:151.
[97] John Adams to James Lloyd, 21 Feb. 1815, *Works*, 10:126-131.
[98] John Adams to Thomas Adams, 27 Jan. 1801, Adams Papers, reel 400.
[99] Stourtz, *Alexander Hamilton*, 405.

reservations on February 3, 1801. The new treaty with France was finally ratified in December, but Adams was no longer president.

In his retirement, Adams would rant about Pickering and Hamilton and their intrigues in St. Domingue, but it does not appear he ever reproached himself for his lethargic leadership. The worst of the crisis may have been over by the spring of 1799, but it was not over. As Adams well knew, Britain and France remained at war, and some Federalists found closer relations with Britain enticing, especially when Britain was responsible for re-opening a potentially lucrative trade with St. Domingue and offering assistance in taking Florida and New Orleans. He emphasized the danger of Hamilton's command of the provisional army, but he was well aware that there were few enlistments and the army existed primarily on paper.[100] He had failed to consider the implications of the rise of a British party in the government, and would instead emphasize the disloyalty of the "Hyperfederalists." It is nevertheless true that he demonstrated his commitment to neutrality by sending a new commission to France. He weakened the quasi-alliance with Britain, just as he had weakened the French alliance during the Revolution, and in both cases, asserted American independence in foreign policy.

[100] See William J. Murphy, "John Adams: The Politics of the Additional Army, 1798-1800," *New England Quarterly* 52.2 (1979): 234-239.

Chapter Six: The Voice Croaking in the Wilderness

As I had been intimately connected with Mr. Jefferson in friendship and affection for five-and-twenty years, I well knew his crude and visionary notions of government as well as his learning, taste, and talent in other arts and sciences. I expected his reign would be very nearly what it has been. I regretted it, but could not help it.[1]

John Adams to James Lloyd, 1815

In 1801, John Adams concluded his presidency and left Washington. After his long career as diplomat, vice-president, and president, he found himself deprived of public office and would never hold another. He did not, however, devote his retirement to his family and farm, but as America's senior statesman, continued to give his opinion on, among other things, Republican foreign policy.[2] His criticism centered on how the Republicans had "neglected his navy," and how those Virginians "hated money," the money that poured into the United States from the merchant marine.[3] His criticism was softened only by his conviction that however dangerous and deluded the ideas of Thomas Jefferson, they were not as dangerous and deluded as those of Alexander Hamilton. Adams' preference for Jefferson sprang from his own long-standing fear of Great Britain: Adams had refused to make an alliance with Britain even when America was threatened by France; he considered the Barbary pirates pawns of Britain; he worried about British intrigue in South America. He therefore evaluated the Jeffersonian Republicans in terms of their grasp of the danger of Britain, America's "natural" enemy.

[1] John Adams to James Lloyd, 31 March 1815, *Works*, 10:152-55.
[2] In a letter to his son, Adams wrote, "Croak! Croak! Croak I can do nothing but croak, in the present state of things." John Adams to John Quincy Adams, 5 Feb. 1806, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[3] John Adams to John Quincy Adams, 8 Jan. 1808, Adams Papers, reel 118.

During the first decade of the nineteenth century, Adams was publishing in the *Boston Patriot* a spirited defence of his foreign policy during the Quasi-war, and writing letters to many acquaintances, including his good friend Dr. Benjamin Rush. By 1812, through the efforts of Rush, Adams had resumed his correspondence with Thomas Jefferson. When Rush passed away, his son Richard, a member of the Madison administration, began writing Adams. After 1809, Adams was also in contact with his son, John Quincy, American minister to St. Petersburg, but their letters are less revealing because Adams knew they were intercepted and was forced to be cautious. Adams was spending his retirement reading books—and arguing with their authors, as his marginal notes demonstrate—as well as writing on issues like religion, political systems, and the memory of the American Revolution.[4] Although Adams never wrote an essay on foreign policy after the manner of his *Discourses on Davila*, he referred to his long-standing guiding principles when justifying his own foreign policy and when commenting on the policies of the Republican administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

Adams, of course, had been in the forefront of American independence in 1776, and it could be argued that his Anglophobia was reason enough to advocate a second round with Great Britain, as opposed to his more recent careful diplomacy with France. It is true that Adams thought the Boston High Federalists and the Essex Junto too Anglophile but he also thought the Republicans too Francophile. Adams saw dissension over foreign policy as the catalyst for the political divisions both between the Federalists and the Republicans, as well as among them.[5] Fellow New Englander and Adams nemesis Timothy Pickering shared Adams' concern over "interests" and "balance" but differed considerably on "independence." Pickering considered the

[4] Ellis, *Passionate Sage*, 89. See this book for a study of Adams in his retirement.
[5] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 14 May 1812, *Spur of Fame*, 219.

Royal Navy the "shield against the overwhelming power of France."[6] If the High Federalists favoured an "internationalist" foreign policy, with the United States in a binding alliance with Great Britain, and the Republicans favoured an "isolationist" foreign policy, with the extremists committed to the United States ending commercial ties with the rest of the world, so as to avoid armed conflict on the Atlantic, Adams offered an alternative of an "independent" foreign policy that prioritized American interests, and secured those interests through naval strength and careful manoeuvring in the European balance of power.[7]

At first glance, Adams' emphasis on naval power in foreign policy appears identical to that of English Whigs, but close examination reveals important distinctions. Adams, for example, never advocated an American navy that would rival the Royal Navy, but instead argued for an asymmetric option of a frigate navy rather than the more powerful ships of the line. English Whigs, moreover, had to contend with the vulnerable province of Hanover, of which their king was Elector, as an Achilles' heel on the mainland of Europe. Although it is true that the United States, though geographically separated from Europe by the Atlantic, nevertheless was surrounded by territory held by hostile European powers and their Indian allies, the ability of those European Empires to project power in the New World had limits.[8] The French armies that could march into Hanover could not march across the Atlantic.[9] British armies that could invade from Canada nevertheless needed support and direction from London.

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[6] Timothy Pickering, *A Letter from the Hon. Timothy Pickering, a Senator of the United States from the State of Massachusetts: Exhibiting to his Constituents a View of the Imminent Danger of an Unnecessary and Ruinous War: Addressed to his Excellency James Sullivan, Governor of the Said State* (Boston, 1808), 8.
[7] A study of Adams' foreign policy has important implications for the scholarly quarrel over American "isolationism." Note that what he calls "independent" might be considered "unilateral."
[8] See Map, p. 231, below.
[9] John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 3 May 1797, Adams Papers, reel 117.

Key to European theories of foreign policy in the eighteenth century, found in writers such as Pufendorf and Bolingbroke—both studied by Adams—was the principle of "interests."[10] Interests were vital concerns identified by the ruler, who then developed policies to secure those interests.[11] A nation made an alliance, for example, not out of shared religion or ideals, but in order to protect its own interests. Frederick the Great explained:

> Finances, foreign policy and army cannot be separated; they must be guided neck and neck like the horses drawing the Olympic chariots, which, advancing with equal strength and in the same step, quickly race over the prescribed course to the goal, and crown their driver with victory.[12]

As a New Englander, Adams was heir to a bitter lesson in competing interests. The New Englanders who successfully captured the French fortress of Louisbourg in 1745 saw their victory squandered when Great Britain advanced her own European interests at the expense of her North American colony and returned Louisbourg to France. Adams observed the British defeat under General Braddock and concluded that New England could provide for its own defence and secure its interests better outside the British Empire than within it.[13] His attention to American interests appears in the Model Treaty, which asserted American trading rights and American territorial claims. The Model Treaty therefore is not a product of Enlightenment ideals on foreign policy, but an endorsement of the primacy of interests.[14]

A second principle of European theories of foreign policy was "balance of power." It was in the interests of Great Britain to have a balance of power on the Continent. The strongest single power on the Continent was France, and Britain routinely allied itself with a weaker power like

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[10] John Adams to M. Genet, 29 April 1780, *Works*, 7:157.
[11] Gilbert, 96.
[12] Qtd. in Gilbert, 92.
[13] John Adams to Skelton Jones, 11 March 1809, *Works*, 9:610-13; Adams to George Otis, 9 Feb. 1821, *Works*, 10:394.
[14] It is usually seen as a departure from European models of diplomacy. See Gilbert, 54.

Prussia to "balance" French power. The principle of "balance" was not limited to foreign policy, but was an important virtue in theories about government. The view of the ancient historian Polybius that Rome had achieved its position of power and security through the stability of its balanced constitution was revived by the French philosopher Montesquieu. England's constitution was considered a contemporary example of successful balance of power in government. Adams' endorsement of separation of powers in government and the need to balance them is well known. Adams' understanding of "balance of power" in foreign policy was that after 1763, Britain had risen in power, but was again being challenged by France. Great Britain was the stronger power, the real threat to the United States. Unlike France, it held colonial possessions on the North American continent, and had refused to evacuate the North-western forts. Unlike France, Britain possessed a powerful navy capable of transporting armies, blockading American ports, and harassing American fisherman and merchantmen. Great Britain had islands in the West Indies, and genuine interests in inheriting Spanish Florida, access to the Mississippi, and New Orleans. Canadian officials such as John Graves Simcoe dreamed of taking the Ohio Country away from the Americans.

In Adams' view, the threat of British encirclement was real, but manageable. Adams' solution was to take advantage of Franco-British tension, and build a strong American Union resistant to European control. It was not in the interests of America to see either Britain or France eliminated as a power in Europe, and it was important that their European quarrels did not split the American Union into pro-British and pro-French factions. Adams explained to Rush, "Thus our beloved country is indeed in a very dangerous situation. It is between two great fires in Europe and between two ignited Parties at home, smoking, sparkling and flaming, ready to burst

into Conflagration."[15] Adams was well aware of the insignificance of America in the foreign policies of Britain and France, but the United States ignored the balance of power in Europe to its own peril.[16]

To the European theories of interests and balance of power, Adams added his own principle of "independence." Key to an independent American foreign policy was rejection of the temptation to depend on European military power for American defense. Adams therefore argued that ideally, the United States should form no military alliances with European powers. If it became necessary, an alliance was permissible, as the Franco-American alliance that brought French support against Great Britain in the War of Independence. Since Adams considered Great Britain America's "natural enemy" he considered her enemy, France, to be America's "natural ally," but one that was also looking out for its own interests. Adams favored temporary alliances, and preferably not beyond the operational level.[17] As a New Englander, Adams looked to the American Union as a source of security. If the states did not remain united, they would become pawns of the European powers and fight each other. If they remained united, they could resist entanglement in European quarrels, and provide strategic depth if attacked by European armies. Adams initially favored a maritime defense strategy for the United States, meaning that along with establishing an American navy, he advocated holding strategic points of land such as Bermuda, Sable Island, Florida, and Nova Scotia that would counter the power of European navies. [18] Adams opposed the creation of a large standing army and supported reliance on militia.

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[15] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 28 June 1810, *OFL*, 257-59.
[16] Elkins and McKitrick, 213, 370. The paucity of references to America in the diplomatic records of Great Britain and France reveal the insignificance of the United States in this period.
[17] John Adams to Ralph Izard, 25 September 1778, *Works*, 7:46-48; John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 10:126-131.
[18] John Adams, 10 December 1782, *JADA*, 3:95.

His aim was to provide a cost-effective defense for the United States that would permit it to have an independent foreign policy to secure its interests.[19]

This overview of Adams' emphasis on the principles of interest, balance of power, and independence help assess his actions in foreign policy. As noted above, Adams' Model Treaty was designed to secure American interests, including territory that had strategic value, and his acceptance of the Franco-American alliance during the War of Independence was a necessary concession that he preferred to be temporary. Although Adams saw France as "the natural ally" of the United States because it was Great Britain's enemy, and because its weaker navy made it less dangerous to the United States, he supported the Jay Treaty because it ended the alliance with France without creating a new alliance with Great Britain.[20] In 1796, John Quincy Adams, writing to his father from The Hague, outlined the problems of American commerce. American merchants were aggressively seeking markets and boldly sailing into the Mediterranean, but their trade was unprotected by the United States government. The solution was either for merchants to exercise more prudence in the maritime trade, which seemed unlikely, or for the United States to build a navy capable of defending the merchant marine, which seemed prohibitively expensive, or for the nations of Europe to form a maritime league against Great Britain.[21] The idea of a maritime league was not original with John Quincy, and had long been argued by the Dutch and revived first by the Russians and then by Napoleon. Adams, while agreeing that "free ships, free goods" was the ideal, nevertheless was pessimistic about its implementation because "the dominant power on the ocean will forever trample on it."[22] Although Adams believed in the legal

[19] John Adams to James Lloyd, 21 February 1815, *Works*, 10:126-131.
[20] John Adams to Ralph Izard, 25 September 1778, *Works*, 7:46-48; John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 10:126-131.
[21] John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 24 June 1796, *Writings*, 1:497-508.
[22] John Adams to John Marshall, 3 October 1800, *Works*, 9:86-87.

benefits of treaties, he recognized that treaty concessions had to backed up by military force. Securing New England's carrying trade benefited the western farmers and Southern planters who produced the foodstuffs, as well as the growing carrying trade in the coastal cities of the rest of the United States. Adams argued failure to provide an independent and broad-based defense was the basis for sectional division in the United States.[23] For Adams, Republican opposition to the Jay Treaty seemed to reflect a stubborn refusal to see how different the French Revolution was from the American Revolution, as well as willingness to subordinate American interests to France.

During his Presidency, Adams complained that he was attacked by both Federalists and Republicans in his attempts to deal with France without resorting to a costly and unpredictable war.[24] He exercised his principles of the priority of American interests, respect for the European balance of power and preservation of an independent foreign policy primarily through the use of asymmetrical naval power. First, he permitted merchantmen to arm themselves. Second, he issued letters of marque to privateers. Third, he continued the building of "super-frigates": ships that were not only effective against pirates and privateers, but also formidable enough to take on any foreign frigates in single combat and fast enough to sail away to safety if they met ships of the line. Fourth, he avoided an actual declaration of war against France. Fifth, he accepted unofficial co-operation with the Royal Navy in preference to a binding alliance with Britain. Adams saw no benefit to the United States to declare war on France, and the possibility of much harm because of sectional tensions. He feared that a declaration of war would justify and institutionalize Hamilton's army, an expensive enterprise that many Americans would refuse to

[23] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 3 May 1812, *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 303.
[24] John Adams to Joseph Lyman, 20 April 1809, *Works*, 9:619-621.

support. The result would be rebellions against the required taxes.[25] He likewise saw no value in an official alliance with Great Britain against France, though he was willing to participate in combined operations. Years later he insisted, "My invariable principle for five-and-thirty years has been, to promote, preserve, and secure the integrity of the Union, and the independence of the nation, against the policy of England as well as France."[26] For Adams, the key to American security was his independent foreign policy.

Adams insisted that the unpopularity of his administration and his efforts to build a navy, even in New England, made a declaration of war against France impossible. He explained further that the problem was a war with France would be a long war, and a long war would not be supported by a population about to elect Thomas Jefferson. More importantly, a war with France would have been expensive, with no French commerce or French lands vulnerable to American forces. His solution was a quasi-war with France, and a quasi-alliance with Great Britain.[27] Adams stressed the challenges of sectional disunity, the weakness of his administration, the treachery within his own government, the potential cost of the war, the taxes, and the sudden French willingness to make peace as all reasons he had refused to declare war.[28] Since France offered peace on honorable terms, he saw no purpose in declaring war. Adams insisted that "The end of war is peace…so even if [like Pompey] he could stamp the ground and raise infantry, to what purpose?"[29] Although he complained that his concern for his country did not win him a second term as president, he was proud that he left it prosperous and at peace.[30] Whatever the political ramifications for himself, Adams' policy in the Quasi-war was a significant military

[25] John Adams to James Lloyd, 21 February 1815, Adams Papers, reel 122.
[26] John Adams to Joseph Lyman, 20 April 1809, *Works*, 9:619-621.
[27] John Adams to James Lloyd, 6 February 1815, *Works*, 10:114-116.
[28] John Adams to James Lloyd, 14 February 1815, *Works*, 10:120-123.
[29] John Adams to James Lloyd, 21 February 1815, *Works*, 10:126-131.
[30] John Adams to F. A. Vanderkemp, 28 December 1800, *Works*, 9:576-577.

success. Although the Atlantic trade remained vulnerable to British interference, the figures are nevertheless impressive: for a cost of six million to build his frigates and operate his navy, Adams protected 200 million of commerce, and government revenues exceeded 23 million. His grand strategy had successfully brought down the cost of insurance and enabled the operation of a profitable merchant marine.[31] This success would be a sharp contrast to the financial hardships and the sectional animosity that were the results of the Republican embargo. Adams nevertheless insisted that the Republicans were the legally elected government of the United States, and he denounced any scheme that threatened to take New England out of the Union and back into the British Empire.[32]

Adams' strategy of fighting the great powers of Europe on the Atlantic was based on several factors. First, although he accepted the need for a small standing army, he saw large standing armies as a tax burden that threatened American security rather than enhancing it. He assumed that with no enemy to fight, soldiers would pillage the countryside and assault women.[33] Second, he looked favorably on the militia, and during the Revolutionary War tended to blame their officers when the militia performed badly.[34] His regard for militia may stem not only from the reputation of the Massachusetts militia as the best in the Union but also on account of the performance of the militia against Burgoyne in the north and against Cornwallis in the south. Third, he retained the Whig fear of standing armies as a serious threat to liberty, and recognized the safer alternative of a navy since "the man on horseback does not command from

[31] *NDQW*, 7:313-314. See also Elkins and McKitrick, 653: "Insurance savings alone, according to the House Naval Affairs Committee report of January 17, 1799, already amounted to more than three times the total cost of the navy since the appropriations of 1794." See also Footnote 24, 890-891.
[32] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 27 September 1808, *Works*, 9:602-604.
[33] John Adams to James Lloyd, 21 February 1815, *Works*, 10:126-131.
[34] John Adams, *JADA*, 4:438.

the sea."[35] Adams worried that the General would become more powerful than the President, and was a firm advocate of civilian control of the military.[36] Fourth, he recognized an American navy of "super-frigates" that were formidable enough to take on any foreign warship in single combat, and fast enough to sail away to safety if they met ships of the line was ideally suited to protect American commerce. These frigates, easily built from America's own timber and capably manned by New England sailors, provided an effective and efficient defense for the United States.

In the Federalist Party split, Adams' supporters could find common ground with the Republicans. Both Adamsian Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans were favorable to France—albeit for different reasons—and hostile to Great Britain. It should be noted that New England merchants who traded with France and French possessions, and competed with Great Britain in the Far East or the Baltic, were not easily attracted by opportunities within the British system.[37] Adams, however, saw serious flaws in Republican foreign policy, flaws that endangered the fragile Union. But Adams considered both the High Federalists and the Republicans as short-sighted, and decided that of the two, the Republicans were the lesser danger. He clashed with Thomas Jefferson over his "crude and visionary notions of government," but found him preferable to "fools who were intriguing to plunge us into an alliance with England, an endless war with all the rest of the world, and wild expeditions to South America and St. Domingo; and, what was worse than all the rest, a civil war."[38] Adams thought the preservation of the Union essential, even if the Republican administration was

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[35] Dave Richard Palmer, *1794: America, Its Army, and the Birth of a Nation* (Novato: Presidio, 1994), 131.
[36] John Adams to Thomas McKean, 13 June 1812, *Works*, 10:14.
[37] Alison L. LaCroix, "A Singular and Awkward War: The Transatlantic Context of the Hartford Convention," *American Nineteenth Century History* 6.1 (2005): 25.
[38] John Adams to James Lloyd, 31 March 1815, *Works*, 10:154-155.

making serious mistakes. The reason was the utter unacceptability of the alternative: a return of New England to the British Empire, with all the loss of independence and sacrifice of New England interests that would entail. Adams looked far back into the colonial period, to the return of Louisbourg for this view. He had concluded that New England could better defend itself and its interests outside of the British Empire, and he never saw any evidence that forced him to change his mind. Adams never became a Republican, but remained a New Englander who saw the Union as beneficial to New England. He believed that disunion would make the sections pawns of France and Britain, and thus bring civil war into America.[39] Adams was not alone in thinking that the great powers of Europe could take advantage of sectional strife and agree to divide up America. In 1776, rumors of a Partition Treaty between Great Britain, France and Spain encouraged the patriots to declare independence. "The partition spirit of the times," expressed in the partition of Poland and the betrayal of Corsica, made the threat seem real, though Adams himself thought so long as the colonies stood together, the armies of Europe could not conquer North America.[40]

Adams' military success did not result in political dividends and with the election of Thomas Jefferson, he retired to private life. But once in power, Republican ideology clashed with international reality—and lost. When the opportunity to buy Louisiana suddenly appeared, the Republicans quickly discarded their narrow interpretation of executive powers under the Constitution. Federalists, now the opposition, howled over Republican inconsistency. Some of the Federalist criticism was no doubt due to partisanship, but some reflected their genuine difference in ideals. Specifically, some New England Federalists, such as Timothy Pickering,

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[39] John Adams to J. B. Varnum, 26 December 1808, *Works*, 9:604.
[40] James H. Hutson, "The Partition Treaty and the Declaration of American Independence," *The Journal of American History* 58.4 (1972): 886, 891.

feared that adding Louisiana would lessen the power of New England in the Union.[41] Unlike the High Federalists, Adams does not seem to have worried that New England would be swallowed up by the West, perhaps because he remained so worried that New England would be enticed by Great Britain into a new Empire. Instead, Adams saw the Louisiana Purchase in terms of New England security. The addition of Louisiana meant that the United States now owned both banks of the Mississippi River, which meant the South-West would be less vulnerable to enticement by either the Spanish Empire or a revived French Empire. The addition of thousands of acres of wilderness, which would in time be populated by American settlers, meant more strategic depth for the United States and thus gave New England additional space and time to fend off an invading army. Adams expressed some concern over the legal questionability of the Louisiana Purchase, but thought the circumstances and the security benefits more important.[42] Adams' response to the Louisiana Purchase did not reflect a rejection of Federalist Party policy, or an attempt to curry favour with the Republicans, but a consistent judgement based on long-held understandings of American security.

Jefferson, attracted to their potential for untrained militiamen, built his famous gunboat navy—but he also used Adams' frigates to fight the Barbary pirates. His gunboats, which he had claimed were "adequate… to the resistance of any fleet which will ever be across the Atlantic," were in fact, not adequate for anything.[43] Unable to protect American trade, Jefferson resorted to his embargo. Adams was not entirely against the embargo, but thought an embargo should be a temporary measure used to recall merchantmen for the purpose of allowing them to arm

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[41] Linda K. Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), xi, 93; LaCroix, 10.
[42] John Adams to Josiah Quincy, 9 February 1811, *Works*, 9:631; John Adams to Richard Rush, 3 February 1811, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 60 (1936): 427-30.
[43] Thomas Jefferson to Tadeusz Kosciuszko, 26 Feb. 1810, *PTJ-Ret*, 2:257-261. For an attempt to rehabilitate Jefferson's gunboat navy see Spencer C. Tucker, *The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973).

themselves.[44] Arming merchantmen, Adams observed, took away the reason for merchants to complain. They were permitted to defend themselves, and should take care of their own defense. The Atlantic trade was a danger zone, they chose to take the risk, and were permitted to defend themselves and their property. This self-reliance insulated the government from complaint.[45] He cited his court case where he had defended John Paxton, a sailor who had killed the British lieutenant trying to impress him. Adams had been prepared to argue that a sailor had the right to resist impressment, even to the point of killing the officials who were trying to impress him. Adams conceded that the British king had the right to summon his subjects to fight for him, but not the right to force them to answer the summons. Adams ridiculed the British action by asking why their officers in Canada and Nova Scotia did not come into New England itself and try to take men: "The right would stand upon the same principles; but there is this difference, it would not be executed with so little danger."[46] He was confident that his legal argument for resisting impressment was sound according to the law of nations, and he was convinced that it was unlikely that either England or France would declare war on account of a merchantman's victory for fear that the United States would abandon neutrality.[47] Adams even insisted that if the United States had to fight both France and England, it did not differ significantly from fighting England alone. A glance at the map shows his reasoning: England had colonies in North America and France did not; England had command of the Atlantic and France did not, and therefore England was the real threat, since France was unable to project power.[48]

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[44] Burton Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis: Commerce, Embargo, and the Republican Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1979).
[45] John Adams to J. B. Varnum, 26 December 1808, *Works*, 9:604.
[46] John Adams, "The Inadmissible Principles of the King of England's Proclamation of October 16, 1807, Considered," *Boston Patriot*, 26 December, 1807.
[47] Madison apparently did consider arming merchantmen. See Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 80.120.
[48] Ibid.

Adams' criticism of Republican foreign policy arose from his deep understanding of balance of power and his workable strategy in the Quasi-war.[49] He believed that he had achieved an independent defense in the Quasi-war, and that the Republicans had foolishly abandoned this strategy in favor of unworkable options based on theories of commercial restriction that resulted in an ongoing embargo and Non-intercourse Laws, and the unsuitable military strategy of a land invasion of Canada.[50] Jefferson and Madison had turned to these options because they had rejected Adams' naval strategy. The downside of a navy is it requires constant maintenance and expense—expense that the Jeffersonian Republicans did not wish to incur despite the returns in revenue that navy could insure. Adams placed the blame for the War of 1812 squarely on Jefferson and his "neglect of the navy."[51] In Adams' judgment, Jefferson and the Republicans had squandered resources on useless gunboats, and, without an effective navy, tried to force Britain's hand with equally useless policies of Embargo and Non-intercourse.[52] He wondered if the Republicans understood the danger to the United States of growing British interests in trading with Latin America, and how it might bring challenges to American interests. Adams worried about weakening Spanish power and growing British naval power.[53]

Adams explained that had he been president, he would have improved coastal fortifications, and continued to build frigates and counter Britain at sea, as he had France. He

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[49] For a general history of the Quasi-war see Alexander DeConde, *The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801* (New York: Scribner, 1966). For a military history see Michael Palmer, *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations During the Quasi-war with France, 1798-1801* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987).
[50] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 25 December 1811, *Works*, 10:10.
[51] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 28 June 1812, *PTJ-Ret*, 5:186.
[52] John Adam to Benjamin Rush, 25 December 1811, *Works*, 10:10.
[53] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 3 September 1808, *Works*, 9:600-601. For a discussion of Adams' view on "balance" see David J. Siemers, *Presidents and Political Thought* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 41.

would not consider an invasion of Canada until he had command of the Lakes.[54] There was, however, an important distinction between France in 1798 and Great Britain in 1812. Adams was well aware of the overwhelming preponderance of British naval power that resulted from the victories on the Nile, at Copenhagen, and Trafalgar, but that same lack of naval power that had meant a French army would indeed land in heaven before it landed on the American mainland also meant that the French would not be able to co-operate with the Americans as the Royal Navy had during the Quasi-war.[55] In the Quasi-war, Adams had confronted a great land power at sea, and accepted a quasi-alliance with a great sea power. In 1812, he would have confronted a great sea power at sea, and accepted a quasi-alliance with a great land power.[56] How much Adams would have had to expand his frigate navy to offer the same degree of protection to American commerce is uncertain, but clearly the effort would have been much greater. Since Adams was not challenged on the feasibility of his alternative strategy, there is no record of how he would have confronted those challenges. However, Adams fighting the great naval power at sea is not as hubristic as it first appears. As in the Quasi-war, he would not have considered the guaranteed safety of each and every American merchant ship the necessary prerequisite for victory. Furthermore, part of his strategy was not to neglect the navy in peacetime, and Jefferson could have built more frigates instead of gunboats. Adams would have needed to be able to prevent blockade, attack British shipping, and fight British warships, not sweep the Royal Navy from the seas. By employing this asymmetric strategy, he could have continued to apply pressure as needed, and sought a diplomatic solution at the same time.[57] Most historians think that had the

[54] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, *Spur of Fame*, 246.
[55] John Adams to James Lloyd, 27 March 1815, *Works*, 10:145.
[56] Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 233.
[57] For a study of asymmetric warfare see Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

United States received the news that the new British foreign secretary, Lord Castlereagh, had recommended repeal of the Orders in Council on June 16, 1812, the Senate would not have voted for war.[58] Adams' strategy, which did not require a declaration of war, therefore would have been much more flexible in accommodating this sudden shift in British policy. But as with all counterfactuals, one cannot know for certain if Adams' alternative strategy would have worked. What is clear is that Adams thought it would have, and that it was a wiser strategy than that chosen by the Republicans under Jefferson and Madison.

Adams did not limit himself to a counterfactual based on Republican maintenance of his naval strategy. He also dealt with the reality that the navy had been neglected, and Madison nevertheless had declared war and intended to invade Canada. Adams expressed sympathy for Madison and the partisan attacks that were crippling him:

> When I was exerting every nerve to vindicate the honor, and demand a redress of the wrongs of the nation against the tyranny of France, the arm of the nation was palsied by one party. Now Mr. Madison is acting the same part, for the same ends, against Great Britain, the arm of the nation is palsied by the opposite party. And so it will always be while we feel like colonists, dependent for protection on France or England; while we have so little national public opinion, so little national principle, national feeling, national patriotism; while we have no sentiment of our own strength, power, and resources.[59]

In the Senate debates, some Federalists were advocating a naval strategy, but apparently were more interested in either opposing Madison or delaying any armed conflict with Great Britain.[60] Madison seemed to favor seizing Canada because those "few acres of snow" were rapidly becoming an important supplier of food for the West Indies and seriously undermining the Republican strategy of forcing Britain to terms on account of the need for American produce. Worse yet, his government was powerless to prevent smugglers from defying his trade

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[58] Leland R. Johnson, "The Suspense was Hell," *Indiana Magazine of History* 65.4 (1969): 247-267.
[59] John Adams to William Keteltas, 25 November 1812, *Works*, 10:23-24.
[60] Johnson, 250.

restrictions and taking advantage of the St. Lawrence. [61] Upper Canada had also replaced the Baltic as Britain's source for timber for the Royal Navy.[62] Other Republicans such as Peter B. Porter and Henry Clay also supported a land war.[63] Charles W. Goldsborough, chief clerk of the Department of the Navy, thought that the navy should not be involved.[64] Albert Gallatin, Madison's secretary of the treasury, complained about the expense of the navy and advised the president, "Unless therefore great utility can be proven, the employment of that force will be a substantial evil," and recommended sailors serve as privateers.[65]

Once war was declared, Adams wrote to Benjamin Rush that "the present war with Great Britain [is] just and necessary."[66] Less than two months later he wrote, "The war I justify, but the conduct of it I abhor."[67] Adams faulted the proposed invasion of Canada, the failure to first attempt to get command of the Lakes, and the choice of commanders. Over a year later, he had expanded on the necessity of the war: "A more necessary war was never undertaken. It is necessary against England; necessary to convince France that we are something: and above all necessary to convince ourselves, that we are not nothing."[68] The war was necessary against Great Britain because the Republicans had failed to maintain the navy, and British assaults on American commerce and citizens had to be addressed. Adams preferred war to the Embargo, in part because he rejected the Enlightenment abhorrence of war: "As much as I hate war, I cannot

[61] J.C.A. Stagg, "James Madison and the Coercion of Great Britain: Canada, the West Indies and the War of 1812," *William and Mary Quarterly* 38.1 (1981): 25, 33.
[62] Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 40.
[63] J.C.A. Stagg, "Between Black Rock and a Hard Place: Peter B. Porter's Plan for an American Invasion of Canada in 1812," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19.3 (1999): 385-422.
[64] Edward K. Eckert, *The Navy Department In the War of 1812* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1973), 14.
[65] Albert Gallatin, "Memorandum from Albert Gallatin," [ca. 1 Nov. 1811], *PJM-PS*, 3:537.
[66] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 18 July 1812, *Spur of Fame,* 218.
[67] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 4 September 1812, *Spur of Fame,* 245.
[68] John Adams to Richard Rush, 8 October 1813, Adams Papers, reel 95.

be of the opinion that frequent wars are so corrupting to human nature as long peaces."[69] Adams wrote little about France, so it is difficult to know for sure why he thought it important to show France "that we are something." It seems likely that part of the reason was his emphasis on the need to respect the balance of power—that Anglo-American relations could not ignore France. Fighting Britain would show France that America was not merely a client state of Great Britain and could be taken seriously by France. This bellicosity would also discourage French attacks on American trade or French discrimination against American trade.

Adams' principle of independence could account for the necessity to "convince ourselves that we are not, Nothing." High Federalists like Timothy Pickering wanted to cower behind the shield of the Royal Navy. Adams wanted Americans to see that they could defend themselves, that they did not need to depend on Great Britain for their defense, nor did they need to abandon overseas trade. Adams had scoffed at Republican timidity: "The Dutch once declared war against England, France, and Spain all at once and fought them with great intrepidity. Shall we follow their example? Fight them all with 240 gunboats? I wish you would cure our rulers of their hydrophobia!"[70] When Adams learned that Commodore John Rodgers had forced the British frigate Belvidera to abandon operations, an elated Adams wrote: "Rodgers has shown the universe that an American squadron can traverse the ocean in spite of the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of the British navy. He has shown that American seamen can manage and maneuver great ships as well as small ones."[71] One can imagine him gloating: See what one frigate can do! Now if we only had more of them!

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[69] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 23 March 1809, *Spur of Fame,* 137.
[70] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 28 December 1807, *Spur of Fame,* 101.
[71] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 4 September 1812, *Spur of Fame,* 245.

Adams thought an attempt to conquer Canada without first securing naval superiority on the Great Lakes had been a serious failure to understand the reality of warfare.[72] He was not alone in recommending that an invasion of Upper Canada needed to be preceded by a build-up of naval forces on the Great Lakes. Adams' emphasis on command of the Great Lakes was shared by the Duke of Wellington. In Dec. 1814, the Iron Duke wrote, "I have told the Ministers repeatedly that a naval superiority on the lakes is a *sine qua non* of success in war on the frontier of Canada, even if our object should be solely defensive."[73] Obadiah German, a Clintonian Republican senator argued that neither army nor navy was prepared for an invasion of Canada.[74] William Hull, in command at Detroit, recommended building up naval forces on the Great Lakes before an attempt to invade Upper Canada.[75] But whatever their pessimism, the Americans nevertheless proceeded with an invasion without command of the Lakes. It is unlikely that Adams would have done likewise, even at an operational level. After the surrender of Detroit, Henry Clay admitted that British naval superiority on the Lakes had been key to American defeat.[76] Similarly, Madison wrote to Henry Dearborn that: "The command of those waters [Great Lakes] is the hinge on which the war will essentially turn according to the probable course of it."[77] Madison was not a new convert to the benefits of naval power, but had thought of it primarily in terms of coastal defense.[78] Hull was court-martialed and given a death sentence, but

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[72] John Adams to Richard Rush, 13 June 1813, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 60 (1936): 438-439. For a series of essays focused on the significance of the Great Lakes in this period see David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson, eds., *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001). Louis Armand de Lom D'Arce, Baron de Lahontan, a French officer who served under New France Governor Louis de Baude de Frontenac, proposed a navy on the Great Lakes in 1692. See Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, Baron de Lahontan, and F.C.B. Crompton, *Glimpses of Early Canadians* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1925), 89.
[73] Qtd. in Black, 140.
[74] Leland R. Johnson, "The Suspense was Hell," *Indiana Magazine of History* 65.4 (1969): 247-267.
[75] William Hull to William Eustis, 6 March 1812, in Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 191-193.
[76] Black, 140.
[77] James Madison to Henry Dearborn, 6 February 1813, *PJM-PS*, 5:645-47.
[78] Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War,* 91.

even before the trial began Adams accused the Republicans of "hydrophobia" and growled that "If anybody is shot, they ought to be those who neglected the command of the Lakes and Rivers."[79] Madison overruled Hull's death penalty, though he was dishonorably discharged.

The depressing defeats of the army highlighted the encouraging success of the frigates in single encounters. Federalists and Republicans alike took pride in the victories of the navy they considered Adams'.[80] Adams was pleased, but understood there were too few frigates to win the war. The British were effectively shutting down American trade on the Atlantic, and Adams argued that had Congress been willing to build more frigates, it would have encouraged New Englanders to support the war.[81] Adams was also interested in permanent American control of the Great Lakes that would effectively block British support of natives, and end the Indian wars, as well as prevent access to the Mississippi.[82] Both Americans and British were building new ships and an arms race began on the Great Lakes. Madison vowed, "If they build two ships, we should build four. If they build 30 or 40 gun ships, we should build them of 50 or 60 guns."[83] When the war went quite badly for the United States, Adams lapsed into apocalyptic visions of Britain having command of the Atlantic, the Lakes and the Mississippi, and landing armies that would drive from those points into the interior. However, he did not think the British armies would conquer the United States since its vast territory would prove too challenging for their logistics. The real horror would be the man of iron who would rise to save the nation, and make himself dictator, thus destroying the Republic.[84]

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[79] John Adams to Richard Rush, 12 December 1813, Adams Papers, reel 95.
[80] Richard Rush to John Adams, 25 December 1813, Adams Papers, reel 416; LaCroix, 10.
[81] John Adams to Richard Rush, 31 July 1812, Adams Papers, reel 118.
[82] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 28 June 1812, *Works*, 10:17-20.
[83] James Madison to Henry Dearborn, 6 February 1813, *PJM-PS*, 5:645-47. It is not clear what Adams thought of this.
[84] John Adams to Richard Rush, 12 December 1813, Adams Papers, reel 95. Adams had had a similar nightmare during the War of Independence: "You have been since called upon for six thousand militia for Canada and New

Fortunately for the United States, the man of iron turned out to be the Iron Duke, who realized that Britain could not get command of the Great Lakes and counseled against a prolonged war in North America, and agreed with Lord Castlereagh that a diplomatic solution was preferable.[85] President Madison summoned John Quincy Adams from his place as minister to St. Petersburg, to join Henry Clay and Albert Gallatin in negotiating the peace with Britain. Adams turned his attention to the Court of St. James and the future of the Atlantic fishery. In a letter to Richard Rush, the elder Adams said he could reassure all New Englanders that they can trust not only his son John Quincy, but also Clay and Gallatin to protect their fishery rights.[86] Adams wrote James Madison and insisted that he "would *continue this war forever*, rather than surrender one acre of our territory, one iota of the fisheries, as established by the third article of the treaty of 1783, or one sailor impressed from any merchant ship."[87] Adams asked Madison to inform his son of his views on the matter. John Quincy wrote his father, and explained that British officials were arguing that the recent war had made void the Treaty of 1783. He reassured his father of the firm stand of the Americans: "If we are content to abandon the right, it will certainly be taken from us. If we are firm and inflexible in the assertation of it we may yet secure it."[88] Adams insisted that the Americans had a right to the fisheries "from God and our own

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York. How you will get the men, I know not. The smallpox, I suppose, will be a great discouragement. But we must maintain our ground in Canada. The regulars, if they get full possession of that province, and the navigation of St. Lawrence river above Deschambault, at least above the mouth of the Sorel, will have nothing to interrupt their communication with Niagara, Detroit, Michilimackinac; they will have the navigation of the five great lakes quite as far as the *Mississippi* River; they will have a free communication with all the numerous tribes of Indians extended along the frontiers of all the colonies, and, by their trinkets and bribes, will induce them to take up the hatchet, and spread blood and fire among the inhabitants; by which means, all the frontier inhabitants will be driven in upon the middle settlements, at a time when the inhabitants of the seaports and coasts will be driven back by the British navy. Is this picture too high colored? Perhaps it is; but surely we must maintain our power in Canada." John Adams to James Warren, 16 June 1776, *Works*, 4:316.

[85] Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1949), 216.

[86] John Adams to Richard Rush, 30 May 1814, *Works*, 10:96-98.

[87] John Adams to James Madison, 28 November 1814, *Works*, 10:105-106.

[88] John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 16 December 1815, *Writings*, 5:448.

swords," and argued that the Americans did more to secure the fisheries from the French than anyone else through the American conquest of Louisbourg in 1745.[89] John Quincy told his father that he was in the same place as his father had been, again securing the rights to the fishery. However, there was an important difference: the British were less insistent on rights of navigation on the Mississippi, since it was now known that there was no easy access from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi, and the fishery rights survived the Treaty of Ghent.[90]

With the war over, and the Union intact, Adams took a surprisingly optimistic and conciliatory view of Mr. Madison's war, especially since his navy had been neutralized and American commerce severely damaged:

> Mr. Madison's *administration has proved* great points long disputed in Europe and America.
>
> 1. He *has proved, that* an *administration* under our present Constitution can declare war.
>
> 2. *That* it can make peace.
>
> 3. *That* money or no money, government or no government, Great Britain can never conquer this country or any considerable part of it.
>
> 4. *That* our officers and men by land are equal to any from Spain and Portugal.
>
> 5. *That* our trans-Alleghanian States, in patriotism, bravery, enterprise, and perseverance, are at least equal to any in the Union.
>
> 6. *That* our navy is equal, *cæteris paribus*, [other things being equal] to any *that* ever floated.[91]

The government of the Republic had survived, Great Britain had won some battles but been unable to take any territory permanently, the army and navy had performed adequately, and the new western states had shown themselves worthy of the original Thirteen. Madison had not tried

[89] John Adams to William Cranch, 3 March 1815, *Works*, 10:131-133.
[90] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, 215.
[91] John Adams to Thomas McKean, 6 July 1815, *Works*, 10:166-168.

to make an alliance with France, and the war in North America had been fought by Americans for Americans. Adams was kinder to Madison than some modern historians.[92] Although the strategy had been wrong—due to neglect of his navy—Adams could take satisfaction in American efforts on her own behalf. But the end of the war did not secure American interests, and the defeat of Napoleonic France led to a new balance of power in Europe—the famous Concert that came out of Vienna—that left Great Britain the clear victor. The United States needed to work out issues in North America that remained unsettled by the Treaty of Ghent.

The War of 1812 had encouraged an arms race on the Great Lakes—an arms race that James Monroe, who was elected president in 1816—did not want to pursue. In February 1815, the Americans began dismantling their fleet on the Great Lakes. John Adams, preoccupied by his concerns over the Atlantic fishery, appears not to have taken notice or objected. Unlike Atlantic frigates, which protected valuable trade that brought in handsome revenues, a Great Lakes squadron would be primarily for defense, and a tax burden. Great Britain proposed an American disarmament—while preserving the right to continue arming itself—and the Americans counter-

[92] See for example, Jon Latimer, *1812: War with America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 400: "All that remained now was for the construction of a reassuring myth which might transfer Madison's futile and humiliating adventure that had aimed to conquer Canada into one of defending the Republic." Julian Gwyn, even more harsh, writes, "None of the aims for which President Madison declared war were achieved in the peace treaty. Moreover, when hostilities ceased in February 1815, the American navy was utterly vanquished, while the destruction of American merchant shipping and the general disruption of American overseas trade was so complete that those parts of the United States economy dependent on commerce lay in ruins. The individual American victories over several British warships, however memorable in naval circles, achieved neither tactical nor strategic advantages… In general, the war was a futile and expensive struggle in which the United States barely escaped dismemberment and disunion. The North American squadron contributed much to the creation of this desperate condition. Yet among Americans, the war has now passed into myth as a glorious triumph in which the United States 'had single-handedly defeated the conqueror of Napoleon and the Mistress of the Seas.' However comforting such myths, nothing could be further from the truth." Gwyn acknowledges though, "The war convinced the United Kingdom that another maritime war with the United States was no longer acceptable policy….. no American seaman was impressed… during the months after Napoleon escaped Elba to regain his imperial throne in 1815. Indeed, no American was ever knowingly pressed by the British navy." See *Frigates and Foremasts: The North American Squadron in Nova Scotia Waters, 1745-1815* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 128-9, 151-52.

offered with a proposal for mutual disarmament.[93] In December 1815, William Eustis wrote to John Quincy in London, and pointed out that it would be an advantage to the United States if Great Britain would agree to be "equal" in order to "prevent a strife which is not only of no use but may lead to unpleasant consequences. Is it too late?" Eustis' concern over an arms race on the Lakes was prompted by American concerns that Spain had ceded Florida to Great Britain.[94] James Madison added the rumor that Great Britain was planning to land an army of occupation of ten thousand men. British possession of Florida would threaten New Orleans, and the United States could not afford an arms race on the Great Lakes with British threats in the South.

Monroe had once been a strong Francophile who swore he would not make a treaty with Great Britain and was very hostile to the Jay Treaty. By 1806 he, along with William Pinkney, had negotiated another treaty with Great Britain that accepted American weakness. Although he urged Jefferson to accept it, Jefferson refused to submit it to the Senate.[95] By 1815, Monroe had drifted to a central position, one less ideological, that was still willing to use diplomacy with Great Britain. He and John Quincy Adams were on the same page, both eager to avoid war, if possible. Monroe instructed John Quincy to suggest mutual disarmament of the Great Lakes. John Quincy discussed the matter with Lord Castlereagh, who seemed favorable, yet Great Britain continued to arm. John Quincy was pessimistic that an arms agreement could be reached.[96] But Great Britain was interested in reducing expenses, and easy access to the Great

[93] Bemis, 204.
[94] William Eustis to John Quincy Adams, 14 December 1815, Adams Papers, reel 428.
[95] Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War,* 54.
[96] John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, 27 September 1816, Adams Papers, reel 144.

Lakes from the Atlantic was prevented by the St. Lawrence rapids and Niagara Falls. Eventually an agreement was signed by Richard Rush, Adams' wartime correspondent.[97]

What exactly Adams' role was in the agreement on the Great Lakes, if any, is unclear. His son, John Quincy, who had been appointed to the Court of St. James after signing the peace treaty, introduced the idea to the British at the instruction of Monroe. But the idea of a demilitarized border between Canada and the United States was suggested by John Adams in the peace negotiations in 1782. Federalists Alexander Hamilton and John Jay had repeated this offer, though the British had turned it down.[98] With its small standing army, low tolerance for taxation for military purposes and aggressive search for markets and for land, a demilitarized border was of great advantage to the Americans.[99] Although Adams refused to be part of the British Empire, or make an alliance with Great Britain, he was not against making peace with Great Britain, and had regretted that their interests could not be "reconciled."[100] In 1815 John Quincy was writing to his father about the fishery, but did not mention the Lakes. It seems reasonable that Adams would have approved this agreement with Great Britain that gave the Americans command of the southern shores, ended the British alliance with the Indians, and prevented a costly arms race. Adams was open to arms limitation agreements if all involved participated, so if, as seems likely, he approved of the Rush-Bagot agreement, he not only made peace with France, but also with Great Britain.

There is no evidence that Adams had abandoned his long-term emphasis on American security on the Atlantic and the centrality of the carrying trade for new dreams of American

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[97] The Rush-Bagot Agreement has been of interest to twentieth century scholars interested in disarmament. For a pessimistic view of the Agreement see C.P. Stacey, "The Myth of the Unguarded Frontier," *The American Historical Review* 56.1 (1950): 1-18.
[98] Bemis, 229.
[99] Stacey, 11-12.
[100] John Adams to James Lloyd, 12 March 1815, *Works*, 10:137-38.

westward expansion and new profits in the west. Despite his criticism of Republican failure to secure command of the Lakes before invading Canada, at the conclusion of the war, Adams was obsessed with the fishery, not the Lakes. For Adams, the western states, like those of the original thirteen, provided strategic depth and supported New England's security and independence from Great Britain. That said, the War of 1812 justified Adams' criticism of Republican foreign policy. In his annual message, James Monroe announced that the Atlantic trade was beneficial to all Americans, and all had an interest in protecting American shipping. His emphasis on adequate coastal defense and his description of the acquisition of the Great Lakes, the Mississippi, and Florida as the foundation for national defense could have come straight out of Adams' writings.[101] The partnership of President James Monroe and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams secured American interests in the Gulf and in the Northwest with their successful diplomacy with both Spain and Great Britain. For John Adams, war with Great Britain had been "necessary"—though not necessarily how the Republicans had waged it—but the outcome was vindication.

[101] James Monroe, *Annual Message*, 2 December 1823, *Writings*, 6:333.

Conclusion

Who destroyed this system? The Congress of the Nineteenth Century: who by repealing the Taxes, have emptied their Treasury? Who by mud docking my Navy have disarmed themselves at sea? Who by a shallow superficial thoughtless Policy have involved themselves in embarrassments and distress enough to make them objects of universal Pitty?[1]

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 1812

In 1783, John Singleton Copley captured John Adams, American diplomat. As might be expected, Adams was not altogether pleased with his arrest. Forced to stand, looking like Admiral Lord George Anson, his sword by his side, the world at his feet, a mysterious scroll in his right hand, and his left hand pointing to a map of North America, partly hidden by his treaty, draped over a table. Hovering in the background was a Greek figurine holding a raised palm branch. Adams was imprisoned forever in the aristocratic pose of a triumphant peacemaker. When John Stockdale suggested that an engraving of the portrait accompany his new edition of Adams' *The Defence of the Constitutions of the United States of America*, Adams protested, "I should be much mortified to see such a Bijou affixed to those Republican Volumes."[2] Stockdale apparently compromised, for he instead used only the bust of the portrait. Adams left England in 1788, but the painting remained there until John Quincy Adams shipped it to Boston in 1817. It eventually landed at Harvard, where it now stands among the collections of the Fogg Art Museum.[3]

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[1] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 24 June 1812, *OFL*, 399.
[2] John Adams to John Stockdale, 12 May 1793, Adams Papers, reel 116.
[3] For an overview of the history of the portrait, see Andrew Oliver, *Portraits of John and Abigail Adams* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 23-38. A copy of Copley's original portrait of Adams was offered for sale as that of Admiral Lord George Anson.

http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/299877?position=1

The neglect of the portrait of Adams the diplomat mirrors his career. Thomas Jefferson, the apostle of democracy, and Alexander Hamilton, the champion of capitalism, can be seen as forward thinkers charting a new course for the young United States. John Adams, in contrast, appears dull and old-fashioned, with his focus on insurance rates and Bolingbroke. The modern emphasis on Jefferson and Hamilton is not without merit, yet fails to acknowledge the genuine contribution Adams made to both the philosophy and practice of American foreign policy. More than Thomas Jefferson or Alexander Hamilton, John Adams was the architect of American neutrality. Only Benjamin Franklin rivals him in importance in the genesis of early American foreign policy. Franklin and Adams might be seen as an alternate dichotomy: the former emphasizing western expansion, the latter emphasizing the Atlantic trade. More authentic, however, is an acknowledgement of the complexity and the contingency of this period, where various policymakers encountered concrete problems that required attention.

For John Adams, the central challenge in early American foreign policy was the Royal Navy. He had to find a way for the merchant marine of an independent United States to cope with not only the loss of British protection but even attacks by their former protectors. Adams was unwilling to surrender either the fishery or the carrying trade, but he understood that a new American navy that would rival that of Britain would be "Quixotism."[4] Through his activities on the Board of War and his conversations with James Warren, he grasped the importance of a brown water navy that would open America's ports to the world. In turn, he expected that the European powers would protect the incoming American merchantmen. Adams also incorporated the colonial tradition of privateering into this strategy, but recognized privateers could not protect merchantmen, and that this option required enemy merchantmen vulnerable to attack.

[4] John Adams to James Warren, 7 October 1775, *PJA*, 3:191.

Adams thought the Southern states would never support the taxes necessary for a frigate navy, but once the navy was established, he considered it America's "natural defense."[5] American sailors, trained in the fishery and carrying trade, familiar with the coastline, were the naval equivalent of the militia. His support for a standing navy evolved to the point where he became adamant that the institution was a crucial part of his system of neutrality.

The second challenge was the different economic interests of the western expansionists and the eastern merchant marine. These conflicting agendas were complicated by their sectional basis; hence Adams' concern that the Southern states would not support the taxes necessary for a frigate navy. While it was true that the carrying trade did not have to be in American hands for Southern planters to find markets for their products, their opportunities and profits could be enhanced if it were, especially when Canada became a competitor. Adams learned both from the Seven Years' War and his responsibilities on the Board of War the importance of logistics, and understood that so long as the States remained united, together they were unconquerable. His foreign policy therefore took into account the fragility of the Union.

The third challenge was the wars between Great Britain and France, and the temptation to form a formal alliance with one of those great powers. The great wars for empire which had begun in the colonial period persisted until Great Britain triumphed over Napoleon in 1815. Further complicating the struggle was the weakening of Spain and the uncertain future of its North American empire, which included the vital port of New Orleans. If that were not enough, the French Revolution, which began in 1789, generated new enthusiasm for the Franco-American alliance of 1778, but the excesses of the Terror, along with improving relations with Great Britain in the wake of the Jay Treaty, polarized public opinion. As Adams observed, "Our

[5] John Adams, "Speech to both Houses of Congress," 16 May 1797, *Works*, 9:115-116.

beloved country is indeed in a very dangerous situation. It is between two great fires in Europe and between two ignited Parties at home, smoking, sparkling and flaming, ready to burst into Conflagration."[6] Adams' response to Franco-British rivalry was his system of neutrality.

Adams gave the clearest overview of his system in an 1815 letter to James Lloyd, a Massachusetts senator:

> For full forty years, three points have been settled in my mind after mature deliberation. 1. That neutrality in the wars of Europe is our truest policy; and to preserve this, alliances ought to be avoided as much and as long as possible. But if we should be driven to the necessity of an alliance, 2. Then France is our natural ally; and, 3. That Great Britain is the last power, to which we should, in any, the last extremity, resort for any alliance, political or military.[7]

Adams recognized that the United States could not ignore Great Britain or France, but he insisted on the preservation of neutrality "as long as possible." If the United States were forced to abandon neutrality, the two great powers were not interchangeable options. In Adams' view, Great Britain would always be the more serious threat. Because Adams claimed that he had developed this system during the Revolution and held to it for "forty years," awareness of the system illuminates his thought and action in American foreign policy for his entire career and also his retirement.

Previous scholarship on Adams and early American foreign policy is fragmented into studies of the Revolution, and of the Quasi-war, and of the Barbary conflict. It can be difficult to see Adams' system unless looking over his entire career, and integrating naval and diplomatic history. This overview incorporates the major episodes in Adams' diplomatic career: his authorship of the Model Treaty, his diplomacy in France and Holland and with the Barbary States, his foreign policy during his presidency, and his armchair diplomacy during his

[6] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 28 June 1810, *OFL*, 257-59.
[7] John Adams to James Lloyd, 29 March 1815, *Works*, 9:147.

retirement. This methodology shows that the Model Treaty was not indebted to Enlightenment ideals of free trade, but to practical problems like procuring powder for Washington's army. Adams' unruly behavior in France should be attributed to his firm commitment to an independent American foreign policy, as he explained, "Independent of friends and foes."[8] It appears he did not think a formal military alliance with France had been "necessary," yet, the alliance made, and the war escalating from a colonial rebellion into yet another great war for empire, he attempted to channel that escalation and enhance independence from France. His successful attempt to negotiate a commercial treaty with the Dutch was yet another declaration of independence from both Great Britain and France. His response to the threat from the Barbary States was to consider their role in the system of Europe, and the fact that Algiers, in particular, was a British ally. Whatever the crisis, Adams kept one eye cocked at Great Britain. Even when France began attacking American merchantmen, Adams still refused a formal alliance with Great Britain. He was, however, willing to take advantage of the Royal Navy in a quasi-alliance. Attention to the system clarifies Adams' actions and underscores his contribution to ideas about early American foreign policy.

Accepting Adams' claim that he had a system does not mean that the system explains everything about Adams' approach to foreign policy. Adams sometimes made bellicose statements like his threat to march into Nova Scotia and take it. It is also true that he was an unruly and troublesome diplomat in France, loudly demonstrating his independence of both his enemy and his ally. During the Quasi-war, he put on a similar display, assuring France that "America is not Scared." Yet his career was also marked by restraint. He seemed to prefer to

[8] John Adams to Francis Dana, 17 Sept. 1782, *PJA*, 13:471-73.

keep wars limited if possible. He preferred negotiation to force when dealing with revolutionary France and the Barbary States. Unlike other Americans, he often had more prudence than spirit.

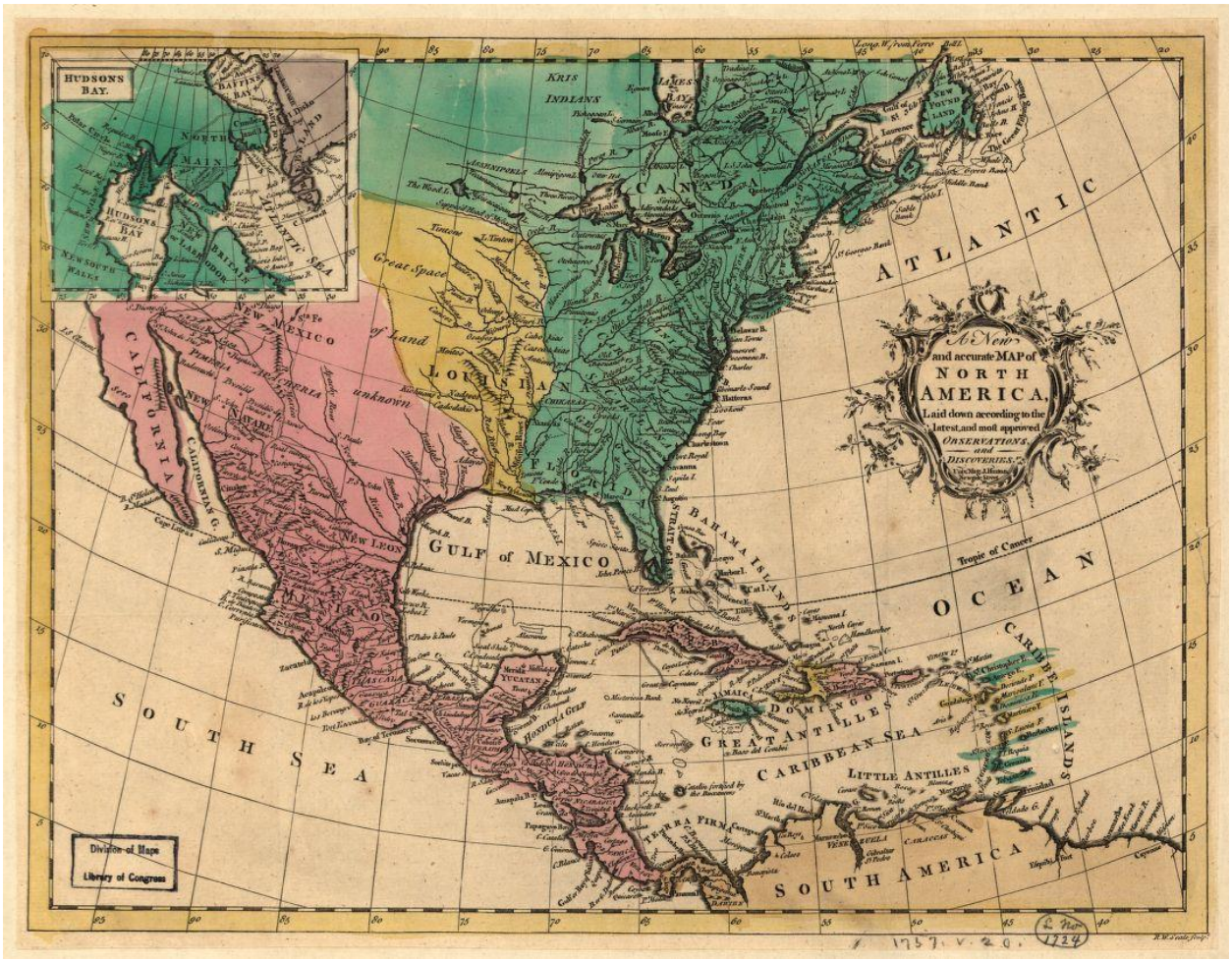
As seen in his response to the Nootka Sound crisis and to French aggression in the Quasi-war, naked interests were not Adams' sole concern, and even the letter of the law was not enough. Nor could insults to national honor be permitted to take control. Nor was a quest for perfect security part of Adams' thought. Unlike the western expansionists, Adams was willing to tolerate Spain to the south and Britain to the north, for two reasons. First, he argued that the interior could never be secure anyway if the Atlantic coast was vulnerable to attack from the sea. Second, drawing from the example of Quebec in the Seven Years' War, he thought the territory of the original Thirteen already vast enough to withstand an armed invasion. Adams was also willing to tolerate risks at sea. He opposed prolonged embargoes, a fleet of ships-of-the-line, and passing over potential markets in a free black republic in Haiti. If New Englanders wished to sail into Hell to sell their codfish, Adams would not try to stop them. He would instead permit them to arm themselves, and assist them with his small frigate navy, and thus attempt to keep insurance rates affordable.

This overview of the thought and practice of John Adams and early American foreign policy confirms that he was the founder of the principle of "no entangling alliances." At the same time, he clearly was no isolationist. As a New Englander, he refused to surrender the fishery and the carrying trade, and devised a system that would permit the weak union of the former Thirteen Colonies to navigate a hostile world. He offered an alternative to western expansionists like Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton. His system of neutrality was eventually endorsed by both Federalists and Republicans. The study of American foreign policy is incomplete without him; this dissertation provides a place to begin.

Maps

North America c. 1700

North America c. 1763



North America c. 1784

The Barbary Coast c. 1800

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