

## Lesson Plan

**Topic:** George Washington and the Transition of Power **Time:** 1 period

### Objectives: (SWBAT)

- create a visual representation of issues at the end of the Revolution
- list the key phrases of the documents used in the lesson
- analyze the Farewell Address
- propose a counterfactual prediction if George Washington had not voluntarily left office.

### Procedures:

1. Review past lessons on the conditions of the country at the end of the Revolutionary war - draw visual representation of the key issues of the day (include items like: money supply, death rates, destroyed trade, French alliance, Congressional difficulties, etc.)
2. Ask students to identify what they consider to be the most important issue of the day and write three sentences why that issue is more important than any other issue facing the nation at the end of the war. Write the issues up on the board. See if there are any patterns or agreements.
3. Distribute three documents: Circular Letter to the States (June 8, 1783); Resignation from the Army (December 23, 1783); Continental Congress's Answer to George Washington's Resignation Address (December 23, 1783). Divide students into six groups. Two groups will read each document. Have students fill out the Data Retrieval Chart - DRC - (George Washington and the Transition of Power). After each group is finished with their respective document, recombine groups which read the same document. Make sure each group agrees on the basic components of the document.
4. Conduct a jigsaw on the three documents. Make sure students understand the components of each document. Once everyone is in agreement, and understands the issues of the day, now ask students to explain why Washington resigned his role as Commander and what the Circular Letter identified as the 'unfinished work' of the country. What did Washington mean by "we have a national character to establish"?

5 Give background information to clarify the transition from statesman general to citizen-statesman. See Lecture Notes attached.

6. Distribute Farewell Address (September 19, 1796). Using the same DRC as before, fill in the chart on the Farewell Address. Discuss the key components and issues of the Farewell Address. Ask students:

- What are the paramount issues included in Washington's Farewell Address? From Washington's perspective, how are domestic and foreign policy issues interrelated?
- What does Washington have to say regarding Personal Reflections, Admonitions, and Recommendations ?
- What central issues of the day were not included in Washington's Farewell? Why do you think they were omitted? Explain
- Why did Washington leave office with all the issues still not solved?

7. Using the overhead, show transparency of the quote from Napoleon: "They wanted me to be another Washington." With a partner, ask students to clarify what Napoleon meant by his statement. Write the descriptors on the board. Ask students to suggest, in a counterfactual way, what changes the country might have experienced if Washington refused to step down from office (either military or Presidential). Write this scenario in their notebooks.

### **Notebook Entries:**

#### *Left side entries:*

Visual Representation of the Key Issues at the end of the War  
POV: THE most important issue of the day and reasons DRC - George Washington and the Transition of Power  
Napoleon Quote and its meaning  
Counterfactual Scenerio

#### *Right Side entries:*

Lecture Notes

### **Materials:**

Documents: Resignation from the Army

Document: Continental Congress's Answer to George Washington Resignation Address

Document: Circular Letter to the States (a multimedia presentation of this can be found at [www.pbs/georgewashingtoninmultimedia/index.html](http://www.pbs/georgewashingtoninmultimedia/index.html) --read by Charlton Heston)

Document: Farewell Address (a multimedia presentation of this can be found at [www.pbs/georgewashington/multimedia/index.html](http://www.pbs/georgewashington/multimedia/index.html)--read by Charlton Heston)

DRC: George Washington and the Transition of Power

Transparency: Napoleon Quote

Lecture

Lecture Outline

George Washington and His Legacy: Myths, Symbols and Reality  
NEH Institute, Boston University  
Summer, 2005

Lecture Outline

- I. The General Resigns, 1783
  - A. Statesman General to Statesman Citizen
  - B. Disbanded Troops
  - C. Resignation of Commission
  
- II. The Citizen Stirs, 1784-1788
  - A. Return to Mount Vernon
  
- III. The Drama of Founding, 1788-1789
  - A. Washington and the New Government
  - B. Inauguration.
  - C. The Annual Addresses.
  - D. The Farewell Address



George Washington and His Legacy: Myths, Symbols and Reality  
NEH Institute, Boston University  
Summer, 2005

Lecture

I. The General Resigns, 1783

A. Statesman General to Statesman Citizen

Washington's transition from statesman-general to citizen-statesman occurred almost effortlessly. The year-and-a half delay between the decisive victory at Yorktown and the achievement of a negotiated peace, with the subsequent six-month delay before all appropriate ratifications had been secured, imposed upon Washington the difficult and sensitive task of maintaining an army prepared to fight at the same time as the new nation was yearning to reacquire the arts of peace. Washington acted on the principle that the army had to remain standing less for the sake of defending the nation's freedom than for the sake of symbolizing a free nation until the rest of the world officially concurred in its existence. From the beginning of this time, however, he inculcated lessons of political responsibility which entailed strengthening the federal union, honoring its debts, and regulating its orderly expansion through the continent. His wide correspondence bears universally the mark of his solicitude—above all for the just compensation of the soldiers.

B. Disbanded Troops

Washington disbanded the army just as soon as the peace was made final. In taking leave of his troops he no less exhorted them to a republican faith than he had exhorted their fellow-republicans, the civilians, to keep faith with the troops. The war struggle had lasted eight years, and its effect on Washington and the soldiers is best symbolized, perhaps, in Washington's farewell, when he assembled his officers at a tavern and endeavored to utter some parting sentiments. In the end, he could do no more than reach out in a warm embrace of the portly General Henry Knox, who stood nearest. The other officers filed by, silence pervading, and reenacted the ritual.

C. Resignation of Commission

The effect of the war on the country is perhaps best symbolized by Washington's resignation of his commission immediately after disbanding the army. At that point the United States stood as a free republic under no armed domination. Congress then sat at Annapolis, Maryland, to which Washington journeyed. He inquired how Congress would prefer to receive his farewell, by letter or public address. Congress

summoned him to appear and speak; he did so resigning "with satisfaction the appointment [he] accepted with diffidence."

## II. The Citizen Stirs, 1784-1788

### A. Return to Mount Vernon

Washington returned to Mount Vernon, which was in considerable disrepair, to resume the domestic arts he had so long pined for. He had returned home but once during the long war, taking a brief stop there during the Yorktown campaign. He could already see at that time the labors which lay before him to bring Mount Vernon back to its former glory.

Though Washington plunged back into the managing of his estates, he found himself under no less weight of correspondence than formerly. He assured one friendly inquirer, "I have not leisure to turn my thoughts to commentaries." Public concerns still pressed in on him; everyone, it seemed, sought his opinion, and he disappointed none. He resumed his prewar efforts to produce a waterway connecting the trans-Appalachian region and the Potomac, as much for reasons of state-"to cement the union"-as for reasons of commerce. Continuing to press for a strengthening of the Union, between the end of 1783 and 1786 Washington drew a coterie of reform-minded men around him whose efforts at length gave hope of a general reform of the Confederation.

## III. The Drama of Founding, 1788-1789

### A. Washington and the New Government

Washington looked forward even as he looked back. He approached the installation of the new government with that characteristic diffidence noted throughout his military career. It was universally believed that the Constitutional Convention settled on the design it did, above all on the strong executive, because of the expectation that Washington would be the first President. Nevertheless, just as at length he had been persuaded to attend the Constitutional Convention he had done so much to bring about, at length he had to be persuaded to accept the presidency. Washington seemed genuinely uncertain whether events were unfolding around him or whether he in fact was producing them, giving credibility to his opinion that "a greater drama is now acting on this theatre than has heretofore been brought on the American stage, or any other in the world." Whether he was merely acting or directing, the last act in this drama was his inauguration on April 30, 1789

## B. Inauguration.

The Constitutional Convention had recommended that the Confederation Congress set the place and time to commence proceedings under the new Constitution. On April 14, Charles Thomson, Secretary to Congress, handed Washington a letter from John Langdon, president *pro tempore* of the Senate, stating that Washington had been unanimously elected President of the United States. He left Mount Vernon on April 16, 1789 and bade farewell to his friends and neighbors in Alexandria. He arrived at New York on April 23.

The Senate and the House of Representatives completed the plans for the inauguration and ceremony on April 27. The event followed on April 30. Shortly after noon, on the balcony of Federal Hall in front of the Senate chamber, the oath of office was administered to Washington by Robert R. Livingston, Chancellor of the State of New York.

## C. The Annual Addresses.

Washington pursued three objects in his eight annual addresses to Congress:

1. The first was to recount the conduct of the executive in relation to legislation that had been previously enacted.
2. The second was to recommend deliberation upon prospective legislation.
3. Third, and most important, Washington encouraged the cooperation of all the representatives in making provision for the general welfare.

In all the addresses, of course, Washington was fulfilling the constitutional obligation to report to Congress on the "state of the union."

The first addresses focused almost exclusively upon the responsibilities of the officers of government. As the years passed, however, and corresponding with the growth of political parties and increasing dissension, Washington devoted greater attention to addressing the general public, including the much-remarked 1794 passage in which he condemned the "self-created democratic societies" which had become implicated in the Whiskey Rebellion.

## D. The Farewell Address.

With a presidential election and the prospect of a third term of office looming before him, Washington decided upon a definitive retirement in 1796. He devoted considerable thought as to the appropriate manner in which to effectuate his retirement. On May 10, 1796, he asked Alexander Hamilton to help valedictory address. Washington sent to Hamilton a draft, parts of which had been written by James Madison, upon whose offices Washington had called four years earlier. The draft contained the outline of, and the objects to be considered in, the

address. There followed four months of correspondence until Washington's objective had been achieved. Hamilton enlisted the aid of John, Jay in the project. Washington published the address on Monday, September 15, 1796, in Claypoole's *American Daily Advertiser*.

In preparing for his first inauguration, Washington opted for expressions of diffidence instead of confidence in addressing the people. By the time of the "Farewell Address," he could speak with some confidence. He could consistently lay claim to satisfaction upon this last retirement. Not only had the country been solidified and its finances put in order, but the ominous threats of war which had loomed over his last five years in office had been greatly lessened even as the country had been strengthened to meet any eventuality. At the same time, his resignation removed him from that unfamiliar position of being held up to public scorn and ridicule by "infamous scribblers."

#### Bibliography:

Robert E. Jones, *George Washington: Ordinary Man, Extraordinary Leader*  
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/Intros/Washington.php>

## **Data Retrieval Chart: George Washington and the Transition of Power**

Document

Key Phrases

Key Issues

Analysis



George Washington's Resignation Address to the Continental Congress  
Annapolis, Maryland 23 December 1783

On Saturday 20 December 1783 Washington wrote to the Continental Congress, notifying it of his arrival in Annapolis, Maryland, with the intention of "asking leave to resign the commission he has the honor of holding in their service, and desiring to know their pleasure in what manner it will be most proper to offer his resignation; whether in writing or at an audience." Upon reading the letter, Congress resolved that Washington "be admitted to a public audience, on Tuesday next, at twelve o'clock." [1] On the following Tuesday, 23 December 1783, Washington, "according to order . . . was admitted to a public audience, and being seated, the President, after a pause, informed him, that the United States in Congress assembled, were prepared to receive his communications." [2] Washington then arose and delivered the following address.

[To the Continental Congress]  
[Annapolis, Md. 23 December 1783]

Mr President

The great events on which my resignation depended having at length taken place; I have now the honor of offering my sincere Congratulations to Congress & of presenting myself before them to surrender into their hands the trust committed to me, and to claim the indulgence of retiring from the Service of my Country.

Happy in the confirmation of our Independence and Sovereignty, and pleased with the opportunity afforded the United States of becoming a respectable Nation, I resign with satisfaction the Appointment I accepted with diffidence—A diffidence in my abilities to accomplish so arduous a task, which however was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our Cause, the support of the Supreme Power of the Union, and the patronage of Heaven.

The Successful termination of the War has verified the more sanguine expectations—and my gratitude for the interposition of Providence, and the assistance I have received from my Countrymen encreases with every review of the momentous Contest.

While I repeat my obligations to the Army in general, I should do injustice to my own feelings not to acknowledge in this place the peculiar Services and distinguished merits of the Gentlemen who have been attached to my person during the War. It was impossible the choice of confidential Officers to compose my family should have been more fortunate. Permit me Sir, to recommend in particular those, who have continued in Service to the present moment, as worthy of the favorable notice & patronage of Congress. I consider it an indispensable duty to close this last solemn act of my Official life, by commanding the Interests of our dearest Country to the protection of Almighty God, and those Who have the superintendence of them, to his holy keeping.

Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of Action—and bidding an Affectionate farewell to this August body under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my Commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life.

Notes

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The Continental Congress's Answer to George Washington's Resignation Address  
Annapolis, Maryland  
23 December 1783

Following his Resignation Address to the Continental Congress, Washington "advanced and delivered to the President his commission, with a copy of his address, and having resumed his place, the President [Thomas Mifflin] returned him the following answer," which is a report in the writing of Delegate James McHenry of Maryland. The report is in the National Archives, Washington, D.C., Papers of the Continental Congress, item 19, and is printed in Worthington C. Ford et al, eds., Journals of the Continental Congress, vol. 25:838-38. A docket on the manuscript reads: "A report of a Committee Decr 23d 1783 Answer of Congress to Genl Washington."

The Committee to whom were referred Etc. have agreed to the following report.

Sir,

The U.S. in congress assembled receive with emotions too affecting for utterance this solemn Resignation of the authorities under which you have led their troops with success through a perilous and a doubtful war. called upon by your country to defend its invaded rights you accepted the sacred charge before it had formed alliances, and whilst it was without funds or a government to support you. You have conducted the great military contest with wisdom and fortitude invariably regarding the rights of the civil power through all disasters and changes. You have by the love and confidence of your fellow citizens enabled them to display their martial genius and transmit their fame to posterity. You have persevered till these united States, aided by a magnanimous king and nation have been enabled under a just providence to close the war in freedom safety and independence, on which happy event we sincerely join you in congratulations.

Having defended the standard of liberty in this new world: having taught a lesson useful to those who inflict and to those who feel oppression, you retire from the great theatre of action with the blessings of your fellow citizens--but the glory of your virtues will not terminate with your military Command It will continue to animate remotest (ages).

We feel with you our obligations to the army in general, and will particularly charge ourselves with the interests of those confidential officers, who have attended your person to this affecting moment.

We join you in commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of almighty god, beseeching him to dispose the hearts and minds of its citizens to improve the opportunity afforded them of becoming a happy and respectable nation: And for you we address to him our earnest prayers, that a life so beloved may be fostered with all his care; that your days may be happy as they have been illustrious; and that he will finally give you that reward which this world cannot give.

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# Circular to State Governments

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George Washington

June 8, 1783

Sir: The great object for which I had the honor to hold an appointment in the Service of my Country, being accomplished, I am now preparing to resign it into the hands of Congress, and to return to that domestic retirement, which, it is well known, I left with the greatest reluctance, a Retirement, for which I have never ceased to sigh through a long and painful absence, and in which (remote from the noise and trouble of the World) I meditate to pass the remainder of life in a state of undisturbed repose; But before I carry this resolution into effect, I think it a duty incumbent on me, to make this my last official communication, to congratulate you on the glorious events which Heaven has been pleased to produce in our favor, to offer my sentiments respecting some important subjects, which appear to me, to be intimately connected with the tranquility of the United States, to take my leave of your Excellency as a public Character, and to give my final blessing to that Country, in whose service I have spent the prime of my life, for whose sake I have consumed so many anxious days and watchfull nights, and whose happiness being extremely dear to me, will always constitute no inconsiderable part of my own.

Impressed with the liveliest sensibility on this pleasing occasion, I will claim the indulgence of dilating the more copiously on the subjects of our mutual felicitation. When we consider the magnitude of the prize we contended for, the doubtful nature of the contest, and the favorable manner in which it has terminated, we shall find the greatest possible reason for gratitude and rejoicing; this is a theme that will afford infinite delight to every benevolent and liberal mind, whether the event in contemplation, be considered as the source of present enjoyment or the parent of future happiness; and we shall have equal occasion to felicitate ourselves on the lot which Providence has assigned us, whether we view it in a natural, a political or moral point of light.

The Citizens of America, placed in the most enviable condition, as the sole Lords and Proprietors of a vast Tract of Continent, comprehending all the various soils and climates of the World, and abounding with all the necessaries and conveniencies of life, are now by the late satisfactory pacification, acknowledged to be possessed of absolute freedom and Independency; They are, from this period, to be considered as the Actors on a most conspicuous Theatre, which seems to be peculiarly designated by Providence for the display of human greatness and felicity; Here, they are not only surrounded with every thing which can contribute to the completion of private and domestic enjoyment, but Heaven has crowned all its other blessings, by giving a fairer opportunity for political happiness, than any other Nation has ever been favored with. Nothing can illustrate these observations more forcibly, than a recollection of the happy conjuncture of times and circumstances, under which our Republic assumed its rank among the Nations: The foundation of our Empire was not laid in the gloomy age of Ignorance and Superstition, but at an Epoque when the rights of mankind were better understood and more clearly defined, than at any former period, the researches of the human mind, after social happiness, have been carried to a great extent, the Treasures of knowledge, acquired by the labours of Philosophers, Sages and Legislatures, through a long succession of years, are laid open for our use, and their collected wisdom may be happily applied in the Establishment of our forms of Government: the free cultivation of Letters, the unbounded extension of Commerce, the progressive refinement of Manners, the growing liberality of sentiment, and above all, the pure and benign light of Revelation, have had a meliorating influence on mankind and increased the blessings of Society. At this auspicious period, the United States came into existence as a Nation, and if their Citizens should not be completely free and happy, the fault will be intirely their own.

Such is our situation, and such are our prospects: but notwithstanding the cup of blessing is thus reached out to us, notwithstanding happiness is ours, if we have a disposition to seize the occasion and make it our own; yet, it appears to me there is an option still left to the United States of America, that it is in their choice, and depends upon their conduct, whether they will be respectable and prosperous, or contemptable and miserable as a Nation; This is the time of their political probation, this is the moment when the eyes of the whole World are turned upon them, this is the moment to establish or ruin their national Character forever, this is the favorable moment to give such a tone to our Federal

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Government, as will enable it to answer the ends of its institution, or this may be the ill-fated moment for relaxing the powers of the Union, annihilating the cement of the Confederation, and exposing us to become the sport of European politics, which may play one State against another to prevent their growing importance, and to serve their own interested purposes. For, according to the system of Policy the States shall adopt at this moment, they will stand or fall, and by their confirmation or lapse, it is yet to be decided, whether the Revolution must ultimately be considered as a blessing or a curse: a blessing or a curse, not to the present age alone, for with our fate will the destiny of unborn Millions be involved.

With this conviction of the importance of the present Crisis, silence in me would be a crime; I will therefore speak to your Excellency, the language of freedom and of sincerity, without disguise; I am aware, however, that those who differ from me in political sentiment, may perhaps remark, I am stepping out of the proper line of my duty, and they may possibly ascribe to arrogance or ostentation, what I know is alone the result of the purest intention, but the rectitude of my own heart, which disdains such unworthy motives, the part I have hitherto acted in life, the determination I have formed, of not taking any share in public business hereafter, the ardent desire, I feel, and shall continue to manifest, of quietly enjoying in, private life, after all the toils of War, the benefits of a wise and liberal Government, will, I flatter myself, sooner or later convince my countrymen, that I could have no sinister views in delivering with so little reserve, the opinions contained in this Address.

There are four things, which I humbly conceive, are essential to the well being, I may even venture to say, to the existence of the United States as an Independent Power:

1st. An indissoluble Union of the States under one Federal Head.

2dly. A Sacred regard to Public Justice.

3dly. The adoption of a proper Peace Establishment, and

4thly. The prevalence of that pacific and friendly Disposition, among the People of the United States, which will induce them to forget their local prejudices and policies, to make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity, and in some instances, to sacrifice their individual advantages to the interest of the Community.

These are the Pillars on which the glorious Fabrick of our Independency and National Character must be supported; Liberty is the Basis, and whoever would dare to sap the foundation, or overturn the Structure, under whatever specious pretexts he may attempt it, will merit the bitterest execration, and the severest punishment which can be inflicted by his injured Country.

On the three first Articles I will make a few observations, leaving the last to the good sense and serious consideration of those immediately concerned.

Under the first head, altho' it may not be necessary or proper for me in this place to enter into a particular disquisition of the principles of the Union, and to take up the great question which has been frequently agitated, whether it be expedient and requisite for the States to delegate a larger proportion of power to Congress, or not. Yet it will be a part of my duty, and that of every true Patriot, to assert without reserve, and to insist upon the following positions. That unless the States will suffer Congress to exercise those prerogatives, they are undoubtedly invested with by the Constitution, every thing must very rapidly tend to Anarchy and confusion, That it is indispensable to the happiness of the individual States, that there should be lodged somewhere, a Supreme Power to regulate and govern the general concerns of the Confederated Republic, without which the Union cannot be of long duration. That there must be a faithful and pointed compliance on the part of every State, with the late proposals and demands of Congress, or the most fatal consequences will ensue, That whatever measures have a tendency to dissolve the Union, or contribute to violate or lessen the Sovereign Authority, ought to be considered as hostile to the Liberty and Independency of America, and the Authors of them treated accordingly, and lastly, that unless we can be enabled by the concurrence of the States, to participate of the fruits of the Revolution, and enjoy the essential benefits of Civil Society, under a form of Government so free and uncorrupted, so happily guarded against the danger of oppression, as has been devised and adopted by the Articles of Confederation, it will be a subject of regret, that so much blood and treasure have been lavished for no purpose, that so many sufferings have been encountered without a compensation, and that so many sacrifices have been made in vain. Many other

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considerations might here be adduced to prove, that without an entire conformity to the Spirit of the Union, we cannot exist as an Independent Power; it will be sufficient for my purpose to mention but one or two which seem to me of the greatest importance. It is only in our united Character as an Empire, that our Independence is acknowledged, that our power can be regarded, or our Credit supported among Foreign Nations. The Treaties of the European Powers with the United States of America, will have no validity on a dissolution of the Union. We shall be left nearly in a state of Nature, or we may find by our own unhappy experience, that there is a natural and necessary progression, from the extreme of anarchy to the extreme of Tyranny; and that arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of Liberty abused to licentiousness.

As to the second Article, which respects the performance of Public Justice, Congress have, in their late Address to the United States, almost exhausted the subject, they have explained their Ideas so fully, and have enforced the obligations the States are under, to render compleat justice to all the Public Creditors, with so much dignity and energy, that in my opinion, no real friend to the honor and Independency of America, can hesitate a single moment respecting the propriety of complying with the just and honorable measures proposed; if their Arguments do not produce conviction, I know of nothing that will have greater influence; especially when we recollect that the System referred to, being the result of collected Wisdom of the Continent, must be esteemed, if not perfect, certainly the least objectionable of any that could be devised; and that if it shall not be carried into immediate execution, a National Bankruptcy, with all its deplorable consequences will take place, before any different Plan can possibly be proposed and adopted; So pressing are the present circumstances! and such is the alternative now offered to the States!

The ability of the Country to discharge the debts which have been incurred in its defence, is not to be doubted, an inclination, I flatter myself, will not be wanting, the path of our duty is plain before us, honesty will be found on every experiment, to be the best and only true policy, let us then as a Nation be just, let us fulfil the public Contracts, which Congress had undoubtedly a right to make for the purpose of carrying on the War, with the same good faith we suppose ourselves bound to perform our private engagements; in the mean time, let an attention to the chearfull performance of their proper business, as Individuals, and as members of Society, be earnestly inculcated on the Citizens of America, that will they strengthen the hands of Government, and be happy under its protection: every one will reap the fruit of his labours, every one will enjoy his own acquisitions without molestation and without danger.

In this state of absolute freedom and perfect security, who will grudge to yield a very little of his property to support the common interest of Society, and insure the protection of Government? Who does not remember, the frequent declarations, at the commencement of the War, that we should be compleatly satisfied, if at the expence of one half, we could defend the remainder of our possessions? Where is the Man to be found, who wishes to remain indebted, for the defence of his own person and property, to the exertions, the bravery, and the blood of others, without making one generous effort to repay the debt of honor and of gratitude? In what part of the Continent shall we find any Man, or body of Men, who would not blush to stand up and propose measures, purposely calculated to rob the Soldier of his Stipend, and the Public Creditor of his due? and were it possible that such a flagrant instance of Injustice could ever happen, would it not excite the general indignation, and tend to bring down, upon the Authors of such measures, the aggravated vengeance of Heaven?

If after all, a spirit of disunion or a temper of obstinacy and perverseness, should manifest itself in any of the States, if such an ungracious disposition should attempt to frustrate all the happy effects that might be expected to flow from the Union, if there should be a refusal to comply with the requisitions for Funds to discharge the annual interest of the public debts, and if that refusal should revive again all those jealousies and produce all those evils, which are now happily removed. Congress, who have in all their Transaction shewn a great degree of magnanimity and justice, will stand justified in the sight of God and Man, and the State alone which puts itself in opposition to the aggregate Wisdom of the Continent, and follows such mistaken and pernicious Councils, will be responsible for all the consequences.

For my own part, conscious of having acted while a Servant of the public, in the manner I conceived best suited to promote the real interests of my Country; having in consequence of my fixed belief in some measure pledged myself to the Army, that their Country would finally do them compleat and ample Justice: and not wishing to conceal any instance of my official conduct from the eyes of the World. I have thought proper to transmit to your

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Excellency the inclosed collection of Papers, relative to the half pay and commutation granted by Congress to the Officers of the Army; From these communications, my decided sentiment will be clearly comprehended, together with the conclusive reasons which induced me, at an early period, to recommend the adoption of the measure, in the most earnest and serious manner. As the proceedings of Congress, the Army, and myself are open to all, and contain in my opinion, sufficient information to remove the prejudices and errors which may have been entertained by any; I think it unnecessary to say any thing more, than just to observe, that the Resolutions of Congress, now alluded to, are undoubtedly as absolutely binding upon the United States, as the most solemn Acts of Confederation or Legislation. As to the Idea, which I am informed has in some in-stances prevailed, that the half pay and commutation are to be regarded merely in the odious light of a Pension, it ought to be exploded forever; that Provision, should be viewed as it really was, a reasonable compensation offered by Congress, at a time when they had nothing else to give, to the Officers of the Army, for services then to be performed. It was the only means to prevent a total dereliction of the Service. It was a part of their hire, I may be allowed to say, it was the price of their blood and of your Independency, it is therefore more than a common debt, it is a debt of honour, it can never be considered as a Pension or gratuity, nor be cancelled until it is fairly discharged.

With regard to a distinction between Officers and Soldiers, it is sufficient that the uniform experience of every Nation of the World, combined with our own, proves the utility and propriety of the discrimination. Rewards in proportion to the aids the public derives from them, are unquestionably due to all its Servants; In some Lines, the Soldiers have perhaps generally had as ample a compensation for their Services, by the large Bounties which have been paid to them, as their Officers will receive in the proposed Commutation, in others, if besides the donation of Lands, the payment of Arrearages of Cloathing and Wages (in which Articles all the component parts of the Army must be put upon the same footing) we take into the estimate, the Bounties many of the Soldiers have received and the gratuity of one Year's full pay, which is promised to all, possibly their situation (every circumstance being duly considered) will not be deemed less eligible than that of the Officers. Should a farther reward, however, be judged equitable, I will venture to assert, no one will enjoy greater satisfaction than myself, on seeing an exemption from Taxes for a limited time, (which has been petitioned for in some instances) or any other adequate immunity or compensation, granted to the brave defenders of their Country's Cause; but neither the adoption or rejection of this proposition will in any manner affect, much less militate against, the Act of Congress, by which they have offered five years full pay, in lieu of the half pay for life, which had been before promised to the officers of the Army.

Before I conclude the subject of public justice, I cannot omit to mention the obligations this Country is under, to that meritorious Class of veteran Non-commissioned Officers and Privates, who have been discharged for inability, in consequence of the Resolution of Congress of the 23d of April 1782, on an annual pension for life, their peculiar sufferings, their singular merits and claims to that provision need only be known, to interest all the feelings of humanity in their behalf: nothing but a punctual payment of their annual allowance can rescue them from the most complicated misery, and nothing could be a more melancholy and distressing sight, than to behold those who have shed their blood or lost their limbs in the service of their Country, without a shelter, without a friend, and without the means of obtaining any of the necessaries or comforts of Life; compelled to beg their daily bread from door to door! suffer me to recommend those of this description, belonging to your State, to the warmest patronage of your Excellency and your Legislature.

It is necessary to say but a few words on the third topic which was proposed, and which regards particularly the defence of the Republic, As there can be little doubt but Congress will recommend a proper Peace Establishment for the United States, in which a due attention will be paid to the importance of placing the Militia of the Union upon a regular and respectable footing; If this should be the case, I would beg leave to urge the great advantage of it in the strongest terms. The Militia of this Country must be considered as the Palladium of our security, and the first effectual resort in case of hostility: It is essential therefore, that the same system should pervade the whole; that the formation and discipline of the Militia of the Continent should be absolutely uniform, and that the same species of Arms, Accoutrements and Military Apparatus, should be introduced in every part of the United States; No one, who has not learned it from experience, can conceive the difficulty, expence, and confusion which result from a contrary system, or the vague Arrangements which have hitherto prevailed.

If in treating of political points, a greater latitude than usual has been taken in the course

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of this Address, the importance of the Crisis, and the magnitude of the objects in discussion, must be my apology: It is, however, neither my wish or expectation, that the preceding observations should claim any regard, except so far as they shall appear to be dictated by a good intention, consonant to the immutable rules of Justice; calculated to produce a liberal system of policy, and founded on whatever experience may have been acquired by a long and close attention to public business. Here I might speak with the more confidence from my actual observations, and, if it would not swell this Letter (already too prolix) beyond the bounds I had prescribed myself: I could demonstrate to every mind open to conviction, that in less time and with much less expence than has been incurred, the War might have been brought to the same happy conclusion, if the resources of the Continent could have been properly drawn forth, that the distresses and disappointments which have very often occurred, have in too many instances, resulted more from a want of energy, in the Continental Government, than a deficiency of means in the particular States. That the inefficiency of measures, arising from the want of an adequate authority in the Supreme Power, from a partial compliance with the Requisitions of Congress in some of the States, and from a failure of punctuality in others, while it tended to damp the zeal of those which were more willing to exert themselves; served also to accumulate the expences of the War, and to frustrate the best concerted Plans, and that the discouragement occasioned by the complicated difficulties and embarrassments, in which our affairs were, by this means involved, would have long ago produced the dissolution of any Army, less patient, less virtuous and less persevering, than that which I have had the honor to command. But while I mention these things, which are notorious facts, as the defects of our Federal Constitution, particularly in the prosecution of a War, I beg it may be understood, that as I have ever taken a pleasure in gratefully acknowledging the assistance and support I have derived from every Class of Citizens, so shall I always be happy to do justice to the unparalleled exertion of the individual States, on many interesting occasions.

I have thus freely disclosed what I wished to make known, before I surrendered up my Public trust to those who committed it to me, the task is now accomplished. I now bid adieu to your Excellency as the Chief Magistrate of your State, at the same time I bid a last farewell to the cares of Office, and all the employments of public life.

It remains then to be my final and only request, that your Excellency will communicate these sentiments to your Legislature at their next meeting, and that they may be considered as the Legacy of One, who has ardently wished, on all occasions, to be useful to his Country, and who, even in the shade of Retirement, will not fail to implore the divine benediction upon it.

I now make it my earnest prayer, that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in his holy protection, that he would incline the hearts of the Citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to Government, to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow Citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for their brethren who have served in the Field, and finally, that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all, to do Justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the Characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy Nation.





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## Other Documents

### Farewell Address

George Washington

September 19, 1796

Friends, and Fellow-Citizens:

The period for a new election of a Citizen, to Administer the Executive government of the United States not far distant, and the time actually arrived, when your thoughts must be employed in designating t who is to be cloathed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed decline being considered among the number of those, out of whom a choice is to be made.

I beg you, at the same time, to do me the justice to be assured that this resolution has not been taken strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation, which binds a dutiful citizen to his and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence in my situation might imply, I am influc diminution of zeal for your future interest, no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness; b supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in, the office to which your Suffrages have twice called been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty, and to a deference for what appeared t desire. I constantly hoped, that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with moti I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement, from which I had been reluctantly draw strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last Election, had even led to the preparation of to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our Affairs w Nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon th

I rejoice, that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety; and am persuaded, whatever partia retained for my services, that in the present circumstances of our country, you will not disapprove m determination to retire.

The impressions, with which I first undertook the arduous trust, were explained on the proper occasi discharge of this trust. I will only say, that I have, with good intentions, contributed towards the Org and Administration of the government, the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was cap: unconscious, in the outset, of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience in my own eyes, perhap more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself; and every day the er weight of years admonishes me more and more, that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as welcome. Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were ter have the consolation to believe, that while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, does not forbid it.

In looking forward to the moment, which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my fe not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my belc country, for the many honors it has conferred upon me; still more for the stedfast confidence with w supported me; and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachm services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted

*Handwritten signature: Hopps 18 of 24*

country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that, under circumstances in which the Passions agitated in every direction were liable to mislead amidst appearances sometimes dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging, in situations in which it is not unfrequently want of Success has countenanced the spirit of criticism, the constancy of your support is the essential prop of the efforts, and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. Profoundly persuaded with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave as a strong incitement to unceasing vows that Heaven will continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence; that your Union and brotherly affection may be perpetual; that the free constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained; that the Administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and Virtue; that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these States, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete by so careful a preservation and prudent a use of this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger, natural to that solicitude, urge me on an occasion like the present, to offer to you a solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments; which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all important to the permanent felicity as a People. These will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel; and can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and a dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The Unity of Government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so: for it is the main Pillar in the Edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home; your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very Liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is to be foreseen, that from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political situation against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (the one covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial and immoveable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the Palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing every suggestion that in any event be abandoned, and indignantly frowning upon the dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our Country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same Religion, the same Habits, and political Principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils, and joint efforts; of common dangers, sufferings and successes.

But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your Interest. Here every portion of our Country has the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the Union of the whole.

The North, in an unrestrained intercourse with the South, protected by the equal Laws of a common government, finds in the productions of the latter, great additional resources of Maritime and commercial enterprise and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The South, in the same Intercourse, benefits by the same Agency of the North, sees its agriculture grow and its commerce expand. Turning partly into different channels the seamen of the North, it finds its particular navigation invigorated; and while it contributes in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the National navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a Maritime strength, to which itself is unequally adapted. The East, in a like Intercourse with the West, already finds, and in the progressive improvement of interior communications, by land and water, more and more find a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad, or manufactures at home. The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort, and what is perhaps of greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future Maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union directed by an indissoluble community of Interest as one Nation. Any other tenure by which the West and the East are connected, this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength, or from an apostate and unsteady connection with any foreign Power, must be intrinsically precarious.

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While then every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular Interest in Union, all the combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts greater strength, greater resource proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their Peace by foreign Nations; and what is of inestimable value! they must derive from Union an exemption from those broils and Wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighbouring countries, not tied together by the same government; which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence, likewise, they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown Military establishments, which under any form of Government are inimical to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to Republican Liberty: In this sense it is that your Union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to be to you the preservation of the other.

These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind, and exhibit the continuance of the UNION as a primary object of Patriotic desire. Is there a doubt, whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation in such a case were criminal. We are authorized to hope that a proper organization of the whole, with the auxiliary agency of governments for the respective Subdivisions, will afford a happy issue to the experiment, worth a fair and full experiment. With such powerful and obvious motives to Union, affecting all parts of the country, while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those, who in any quarter may endeavor to weaken its bands.

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as a matter of serious concern, that ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by Geographical discriminations: Northern and Southern; Atlantic and Western; whence designing men may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of Party to acquire influence, within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other Districts. You cannot shield yourselves from the jealousies and heart burnings which spring from these misrepresentations. They tend to render every man an Alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection. The Inhabitants of the Western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head. They have seen, in the Negotiation by the Executive, and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate, of the Treaty with Spain, and in the universal satisfaction at that event, throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suggestions propagated among them of a policy in the General Government and in the Atlantic States unfriendly to the Interests in regard to the Mississippi. They have been witnesses to the formation of two Treaties, the one with Britain and that with Spain, which secure to them every thing they could desire, in respect to our Foreign relations, towards confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of their advantages on the Union by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, who would sever them from their Brethren and connect them with Aliens?

To the efficacy and permanency of Your Union, a Government for the whole is indispensable. No Alliance however strict between the parts can be an adequate substitute. They must inevitably experience the interruptions which all Alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, we have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a Constitution of Government, better calculated to secure a former for an intimate Union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This new government, the offspring of our own choice uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its Laws, acquiescence in its measures, are enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true Liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of every people to make and to alter their Constitutions of Government. But the constitution which at any time is established, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole People, is sacredly obligatory upon all. It is the duty of every individual of the power and the right of the People to establish Government presupposes the duty of every Individual to obey the established Government.

All obstructions to the execution of the Laws, all combinations and Associations, under whatever pretence and character, with the real design to direct, controul, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the Constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put in the place of the delegated authority of the Nation, the will of a party; often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the Community; and to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the Mirror of the ill conduct and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils and modified by mutual interests. However combinations or Associations of the kind may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the Power of the People, and to usurp for themselves the reins of Government; destroying afterwards the very engines by which they have lifted them to unjust dominion.

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Towards the preservation of your Government and the permanency of your present happy state, it is not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretences. One method assault may be to effect, in the forms of the Constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system, and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you are invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of Government as other human institutions; that experience is the surest standard by which to test the real tendency of the existing Constitution of a country: that facility in changes upon the credit of mere hypotheses and on the exposure to perpetual change, from the endless variety of hypotheses and opinions: and remember, especially that for the efficient management of your common interests, in a country so extensive as ours, a Government of as much vigour as is consistent with the perfect security of Liberty is indispensable. Liberty itself is in such a Government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest Guardian. It is indeed more than a name, where the Government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the Society within the limits prescribed by the laws and to maintain all in the secure and enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you the danger of Parties in the State, with particular reference to the four of them on Geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the Spirit of Party, generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human Mind. It exists under different shapes in all Governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but in those of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a democratic despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of one Individual: and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of Public Liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely overlooked), the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of Party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise People to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the Public Councils and enfeeble the Public administration. It agitates the Community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, fomented occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which has a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and interests of one country, are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the Administration of the Government and serve to keep alive the spirit of Liberty. This within certain limits is probably true, and in a Government of a Monarchical cast Patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favour, upon the spirit of party dissension; but those of the popular character, in Governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From its natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And since being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be, by force of public opinion, to mitigate and not to quench; it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest instead of warming it should consume.

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free Country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective Constitutional spheres: avoiding the exercise of the Powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create whatever the form of government may be, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power, and proneness to abuse it, which predominates in the human heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power; by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each a Guardian of the Public Weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern: some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If in the opinion of the People the distribution or modification of the Constitutional powers be any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designeth: there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is a customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance any transient benefit which the use can at any time yield.

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Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indisputable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism who should labour to subvert these Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and citizens. The mere Politician with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections to private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Court and Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.

'Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The Rule extends with more or less force to every species of free Government. Who that is a sincere friend to liberty with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric.

Promote then as an object of primary importance, Institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge and proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use sparingly as possible: avoiding occasions of expence by cultivating peace, but remembering also timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expence, but by vigorous exertion of time of Peace to discharge the Debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burthen which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims rests to your Representatives: but it is necessary that public opinion should cooperate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty it is essential that you should practically bear in mind, that towards the payment of the public debts there must be Revenue; that to have Revenue there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant; that the intrinsic embarrassment inseparable from the choice of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties) ought to be a decisive motive for a candid and temperate construction of the Conduct of the Government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining Revenue which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

Observe good faith and justice towards all Nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be wrong for a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great Nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and example of a People always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the time and things the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be derived from a steady adherence to it? Can it be, that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a Nation with the virtuous? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human Nature and is rendered impossible by its vices?

In the execution of such a plan nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies between particular Nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded; and that in place of the amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The Nation, which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one Nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to render the quarrel and intractable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obnoxious enmities, and bloody contests. The Nation, prompted by ill will and resentment sometimes impels the Government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity, and adopts through passion what reason would reject; at other times, it makes the animosity of the Nation subservient to projects of hostility instigated by pride, ambition and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the Liberty, of Nations has been the victim

So, likewise, a passionate attachment of one Nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for a favourite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in quarrels and Wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justification: It leads also to concessions to the favourite Nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the Nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained; and by exciting jealousy and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld: And it gives to corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favourite Nation) facility to betray, or to sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity; gilding with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable regard for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition corruption or infatuation.

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As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the enlightened and independent Patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic practice the arts of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public Councils! attachment of a small or weak, towards a great and powerful Nation, dooms the former to be the satellite.

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me fellow citizens) the jealous people ought to be constantly awake; since history and experience prove that foreign influence the most baneful foes of Republican Government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial; it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it. Excessiveness for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another, cause those whom they actuate to see danger on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real Patriots, who may intriguers of the favourite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

The Great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign Nations is in extending our commercial relations with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let us fulfil them, with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she is engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships, or enmities:

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain united under an efficient government, the period is not far off, when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interests shall counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the European Ambition, Rivalship, Interest, Humour or Caprice?

'Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent Alliances, with any portion of the foreign world. So long as we are now at liberty to do it, for let me not be understood as capable of patronising infidelity to former engagements (I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy). I repeat it therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in future it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectably defensive posture, and safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, liberal intercourse with all Nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. In our Commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favours or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying by gentle streams of Commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing with Powers so disposed; in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our Merchants, and to enable the Government to support them: conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit; temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances dictate; constantly keeping in view, that 'tis folly in one Nation to look for disinterested favours from another, that it must pay with a portion of its Independence for whatever it may accept under that character; that such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favours, being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect to receive upon real favours from Nation to Nation. 'Tis an illusion which experience must cure, which a just philosophy will to discard.

In offering to you, my Countrymen these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope to make the strong and lasting impression, I could wish; that they will controul the usual current of the opinions, or prevent our Nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the Destiny of Nations: But I even flatter myself, that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign Intrigue, to guard against the Impostures of pretended patriotism; this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude

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your welfare, by which they have been dictated.

How far in the discharge of my Official duties, I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public Records and other evidences of my conduct must Witness to You and to the world myself, the assurance of my own conscience is, that I have at least believed myself to be guided by it

In relation to the still subsisting War in Europe, my Proclamation of the 22d. of April 1793 is the intended Plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice and by that of Your Representatives in both Houses of Congress the spirit of that measure has continually governed me; uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert it

After deliberate examination with the aid of the best lights I could obtain I was well satisfied that under all the circumstances of the case, had a right to take, and was bound in duty and interest, to take a Neutral position. Having taken it, I determined, as far as should depend upon me, to maintain it, with moderation, perseverance and firmness.

The considerations, which respect the right to hold this conduct, it is not necessary on this occasion to observe, that according to my understanding of the matter, that right, so far from being derogated of the Belligerent Powers has been virtually admitted by all.

The duty of holding a Neutral conduct may be inferred, without any thing more, from the obligations of justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate relations of Peace and amity toward other Nations.

The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavour to gain time to our country to set on foot its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption, to that degree of strength and consistency, which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

Though in reviewing the incidents of my Administration, I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may lead. I shall also carry with me the hope that my Country will never cease to view them with indulgence; and after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its Service, with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the Mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love toward it, which is as natural to a Man, who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several Generations, I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat, in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow Citizens, the benign influence of good Laws under a just Government, the ever favourite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual labours, and dangers.

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