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John Quincy Adams and George Washington

By SAMUEL FLAGG BEMIS¹

OVER forty years ago Mr. Worthington C. Ford delivered a paper before this Society entitled "Some Original Documents on the Genesis of the Monroe Doctrine."² From the private and public papers of John Quincy Adams he set forth the part which that Secretary of State played in the discussions leading up to the pronouncement of the Monroe Doctrine: both in the diplomatic discussions with Russia and England and in the deliberations of the United States Cabinet preceding the formulation of President Monroe's celebrated message. The *American Historical Review* for July and October, 1902, contained a longer essay by Ford, "John Quincy Adams and the Monroe Doctrine." In the latter article he expressed his conclusion that the documents analyzed showed that "the Monroe Doctrine was the work of John Quincy Adams."

Historical scholarship accepted this for a time, but recent careful studies have tended to qualify Ford's conclusion more and more and to give Adams less and less credit for the Monroe Doctrine as a statement of American foreign policy. Governor William A. MacCorkle did not want Massachusetts to pluck a jewel from the diadem of old Virginia, as he put it. In *The Personal Genesis of the Monroe Doctrine*, a little book published in 1923 as a reply to Ford's influential articles, he insisted that it was Monroe who first wanted (in the President's own words) "to make it known that we would view an interference on the part of the European powers and especially an attack on the colonies by them, as an attack on ourselves"; and the Governor stressed the fact that Monroe as President had the final responsibility for decision of policy. In his standard study of the origin of the Monroe Doctrine, Dexter Perkins³ accepted these qualifications of Ford's earlier judgment. T. R. Schellenberg,⁴ in

¹ This paper was read at the February, 1944, meeting.

² *Proceedings*, xv. 373-436; issued separately with the title "John Quincy Adams, His Connection with the Monroe Doctrine" (Cambridge, 1902).

³ *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1826* (Cambridge, 1927).

⁴ "Jeffersonian Origins of the Monroe Doctrine," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, xiv (February, 1934), 1-31.

1934, concluded that Jefferson's mind lay back of that principle of the Monroe Doctrine that separated Europe and America into two distinct spheres of policy independent of each other, and that it was a Frenchman, the Abbé de Pradt, who inspired Jefferson with that idea; Schellenberg thinks Jefferson more than any other man the author of the Doctrine. Miss Laura Bornholdt has removed the Abbé de Pradt from the picture.¹ In the most recent general examination of the subject Professor Arthur P. Whitaker² represents Jefferson and Monroe as the chief architects of the idea of the two spheres, the separate American system of policy, and the warning to Europe; Adams, he says, was rather the draftsman than the originator. Whitaker seems inclined to give Adams less credit than most of the previous scholars who had appraised the authorship of the Monroe Doctrine. None of these later writers, however, has given any attention to John Quincy Adams's associations with American foreign policy in the eighteenth century.

The Monroe Doctrine as contained in President Monroe's message to Congress of December 2, 1823, consisted, as everybody knows, of three principal dicta: (1) no more colonization of the New World by European powers; (2) abstention of the United States from European wars and entanglements—only when our rights were attacked or seriously menaced would we resent injuries or take measures for our defense in respect to Europe; (3) as a corollary to the second dictum, nonintervention by Europe in the American Hemisphere. Implicit in the whole Monroe Doctrine is the concept of separate spheres of policy, worlds apart, for Europe and for America, the New World versus the Old.

That John Quincy Adams was the sole author of the first dictum all scholars agree. That the second dictum, abstention from Europe's controversies, was expressed by the Fathers of American independence on various occasions from the Revolution until Washington's Farewell Address in 1796 and thereafter, notably by President Jefferson, is also agreed; in 1820 Secretary of State Adams repeated it officially in instructions to the United States Minister to Russia declining the invitation of Czar Alexander I to join the Holy Alliance. "The political system of the United States," he said then,

¹ "The Abbé de Pradt and the Monroe Doctrine," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, xxiv (May, 1944), 201-221.

² *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (Baltimore, 1941).

three years before the Monroe Doctrine, "is extra-European. To stand in firm and cautious independence of all entanglement in the European system, has been a cardinal point of their policy under every administration of their government from the peace of 1783 to this present day."¹ It will presently be seen that this was not in 1820 a new thought to John Quincy Adams.

It was the supposed danger of European intervention in Latin America in 1823 which produced the third dictum of the Monroe Doctrine: the warning to Europe against intervention in the New World. It is about this new principle that most of the controversy has been centered. In later studies I propose to give this problem of authorship further analysis. At this time I shall point out a certain very early association of John Quincy Adams with the second dictum, abstention from European political combinations—that is, the foreign policy of George Washington's Farewell Address, later repeated in the Monroe Doctrine—and with the general concept of the two separate spheres, or systems, of policy.²

It is necessary first to review Adams's relations with President Washington during the General's lifetime. Adams first met Washington when visiting his father, the Vice-President, and family in New York in 1789. A few months later the young law student drafted the address of welcome which the citizens of Newburyport presented to the President on the occasion of his visit to that town. He managed to be on hand at all the official functions which the General attended in the community. Washington remembered the young law student and kept his eye on him thereafter. Doubtless he knew that it was John Quincy Adams who in 1791 wrote the *Letters of Publicola*, reprinted extensively on both sides of the ocean, to refute Tom Paine's advice to the English people to overthrow their government and embody the rights of man in a written constitution like that of France. Later, in 1793, the President took pains to ascertain that it was young Adams who had written the letters of "Columbus" and "Marcellus," widely printed in the American newspapers, defending American neutrality against the purposes of French diplo-

¹ *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, Worthington C. Ford, Editor, VII. 49.

² This paper is based upon Adams's official diplomatic correspondence, now preserved for the most part in the Department of State Records in the National Archives in Washington; on Mr. Ford's edition of the *Writings of John Quincy Adams* (7 vols., New York, 1913-1917); and on the *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, Charles Francis Adams, Editor (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1873-1876).

macy after the great war of the First Coalition began in Europe.

It was in the papers of "Marcellus" that John Quincy Adams had included a passage that is interesting to the student of the Farewell Address and of the Monroe Doctrine: ". . . as the citizens of a nation at a vast distance from the continent of Europe; of a nation whose happiness consists in a real independence, *disconnected from all European interests and European politics*, it is our duty to remain the peaceful and silent, though sorrowful spectators of the sanguinary scene."¹ And "Columbus" had warned his fellow citizens against the insidious wiles of foreign intrigue: ". . . of all the dangers which encompass the liberties of a republican State, the intrusion of a foreign influence into the administration of their affairs, is the most alarming, and requires the opposition of the severest caution. . . . The interference of foreigners upon any pretence whatever, in the dissensions of fellow-citizens, must be as inevitably fatal to the liberties of the State, as the admission of strangers to arbitrate upon the domestic differences of man and wife is destructive to the happiness of a private family. . . . If we inquire what is the cause which has been within a quarter of a century, fatal to the Liberties of *Sweden, of Geneva, of Holland, and of Poland*, the answer will be one and the same. It was the association of internal faction, and external power; it was the interference of other nations in their domestic divisions. . . ."²

The next year, 1794, when a vacancy appeared in the diplomatic service, Washington nominated John Quincy Adams to be Minister Resident of the United States at The Hague. The Senate unanimously confirmed the nomination. Obviously the Vice-President's son was an excellent appointment. He knew Holland from his youth there when his father had been Minister. He also knew Europe and its courts. He had fluent command of French and Latin. He could read Dutch, and although he had got rusty in his speaking knowledge of the language, he could soon retrieve it. He was deeply versed in the literature of history and politics as well as in polite letters. He was now a trained lawyer. He knew international law expertly. He had shown a firm grasp of the essentials of American foreign policy as understood by the Administration; this he had made evident by his comprehension not only of the problem of neutrality but also of the war crisis with England which had developed

¹ *Writings*, I, 140. The italics are mine.

² *Ibid.*, 158-160.

subsequently and had resulted in John Jay's mission to London in 1794 as a last resort for peace. He had, in short, an ideal training for diplomacy.

For the United States it was of vital importance to have a representative in Europe capable of grasping the whole international situation thrown up by the French Revolution. Since Jefferson's departure from Paris only one other American diplomat abroad had displayed a perspicacity adequate to understanding and appraising the unprecedented European situation. That was Gouverneur Morris, Jefferson's successor as Minister to France. But Morris had involved himself in the plots of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette against the Revolution. Washington had to recall him, at the request of the French Revolutionary authorities, after he had asked them to withdraw Genêt from the United States for plotting against our Government. Morris remained in Europe, with headquarters in London, a favorite at court, his views altogether colored by British policy; in fact he later traveled about the Continent sending in reports to the British Foreign Office.¹ His English prejudices made him of very little further usefulness to his own Government. The President did not see fit to appoint him to another diplomatic office, say at The Hague in 1794 instead of Adams, or to the legation at London when that fell vacant in 1796 and went to Rufus King.

James Monroe, whom Washington sent to France to balance Jay's mission to England, was as prejudiced an apostle of the French Revolution as Morris had been an opponent. He openly fraternized with the Revolutionary leaders in a spectacular and embarrassing way. His dispatches showed no unbiased analysis of the European war: they were full of his own fraternal doings, of his gentle urgings to the Committee of Public Safety and the succeeding Directory to observe neutral rights under the American treaty of 1778; they presented sympathetically French animus against Jay's negotiations and treaty. As will be seen, Monroe proved personally disloyal to President Washington as well as disloyal to his positive instructions to defend Jay's Treaty with energy.

In London, John Jay, during his few months' sojourn there, dealt exclusively with his own negotiation. Thomas Pinckney, regular

¹ *The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris*, Anne Cary Morris, Editor (2 vols., New York, 1888). See also Index entries for Morris in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore* (London, 1899), III.

Minister to Great Britain since 1792, showed little grasp of the European situation. He concerned himself with protests against British violations of neutral rights and with impressments, and made no particular observation of Continental affairs.¹ Then, at the beginning of 1795, he was off to Madrid on the mission extraordinary that resulted in the notable treaty of that year with Spain. Pinckney's departure left the London legation in care of his inexperienced private secretary, one William Allen Deas, *chargé d'affaires ad interim*. Deas could not be counted on for any adequate analysis of the great picture of European politics. On John Quincy Adams, then, unexpectedly fell the task of reporting to the United States Government the wars of the French Revolution.

The new Minister's letters from his first legation, where he considered himself paid a good salary—\$4,500 a year—for doing nothing at all, were to be of real service to his country in laying the bases of its foreign policy. Suddenly The Hague had become a place of extraordinary significance, particularly for an American diplomat. It was a listening post in the resounding amphitheater of European power politics. It was a perfect testing ground for any ally of the new French Republic with its revolutionary program and propaganda. John Quincy Adams's reports helped to correct the partisan impressions and advice of James Monroe and to strengthen the resolution of the first President, in a very critical period of American foreign relations, not to allow the United States to become, like the Netherlands, a tool of French diplomacy for the purposes of purely European polity.

In his "Columbus" letters in Boston in 1793, John Quincy Adams already had cited the Netherlands as one of the examples of modern history showing how association of internal faction with foreign power was fatal to the liberties of any people. For a century two political factions had contended for supremacy in that ancient republic, buffer state between British sea power and French land power: the Orange Party, which was the party of the hereditary executive, the Stadtholder, and owed its ruling position to alliance with Great Britain and Prussia; and the more liberal Patriot Party, which sought the aid of France to oust its rivals from authority.

When Adams arrived at The Hague in December, 1794, the

¹ I have described his activities, from his official dispatches, in "The London Mission of Thomas Pinckney," *American Historical Review*, XXVIII (January, 1923), 228-247.

unfortunate Netherlands was the sinking prey of foreign powers. In those portions of the state still defended by unpopular British troops the Patriots were secretly shaping their ranks as fifth columnists (to use a modern phrase) in support of the French invasion. No real Dutch patriots rose to defend the sovereignty and independence of the United Provinces. Seeking their own selfish desires first, the rival political factions perfectly served the purposes of foreign intrigue, hegemony, and, ultimately, annexation and complete loss of independence.

From his legation in The Hague the American Minister accurately described, in dispatches to the Secretary of State and in more revealing confidential letters to his father, how the French forces occupied the whole country, expelling the British troops and the Stadtholder's government. He gave due credit to the correct conduct of the army of "liberation" toward the people of the country and their property, whatever their previous political allegiance. He told how democratic societies on Jacobin models sprang up like tulips all over the Low Countries as he had seen them blossom two years before everywhere in the United States. Scarcely a village in the seven provinces but had its political club, and they sent delegates to a central assembly.¹ Small groups of revolutionaries, working behind the scenes, used the Dutch democratic societies as instruments of revolution to supplant the old régime by the Batavian Republic, set up on French models. These groups were the "unseen spring," Adams reported to the Secretary of State, which gave all visible motion to the Revolution, without the "people" knowing how it came to pass.² As he wrote these lines, he had in mind the democratic societies that, under the impulse of the French Revolution, had flourished so recently in his own country, where Federalists and Republicans contended with each other, so a French revolutionary government might plausibly conclude, like Orangemen and Patriots, the one a faction apparently partial to British policy, the other seemingly a party of French interest.

French intervention and conquest overthrew the old government of the United Provinces and created the Batavian Republic. The

¹ John Quincy Adams to the Secretary of State, Nos. 47, 48, July 22, 1795. Department of State (National Archives), "Despatches, The Netherlands," I (1794-1796).

² John Quincy Adams to the Secretary of State, No. 25, The Hague, February 15, 1795. *Writings*, I, 285-291.

Batavian Republic speedily made a treaty of peace and alliance with the French Republic and changed sides in the war. From her new ally France extracted an indemnity of 100,000,000 florins, together with territorial rectifications, including the cession of Dutch Flanders, and a potential naval base at Flushing. Abruptly the Netherlands found itself the enemy of its former allies, Great Britain and Prussia, and the victim of the latest guarantor of its independence, France. The conquest of the Netherlands was a most portentous demonstration of French power for aggrandizement through the new technique of propaganda and "liberation" as well as by force of arms.

John Quincy Adams soon realized that the correct conduct of the armies of invasion was no assurance of benevolence. On the contrary, it masked an implacable exploitation of the hitherto prosperous provinces for the benefit of France. "The French are still here as conquerors," he wrote to the Secretary of State in the spring of 1795, "and the substance of independence is not so scrupulously preserved as its forms."¹ Nominal independence and republican fraternity did not mitigate the usual consequences of conquest: billeting of troops, requisition of clothing, fuel, and food, the continued support of an army of foreigners, the forced circulation of depreciated *assignats*. Toward the end of his service at The Hague, in 1797, he reported the net result (for unhappy Dutchmen) of France's revolutionizing of the country: "In the course of two years since the establishment of what is called their liberty, they have paid nearly twenty per cent upon the whole capital of every individual in forced loans, have had their commerce almost entirely suspended, have lost almost all their colonies, have seen the value of a large portion of the property left them depreciate nearly one-half, and have the prospect evidently before them of seeing themselves made the victim of both parties, whenever a peace shall be concluded."²

Such were the reports in John Quincy Adams's official dispatches to the Secretary of State. It was for his father that he reserved his most intimate political analyses and reflections. To John Adams he expressed his hopes and fears for American foreign policy and for

¹ John Quincy Adams to the Secretary of State, No. 30, The Hague, March 17, 1795. Department of State (National Archives), "Despatches, The Netherlands," 1.

² John Quincy Adams to the Secretary of State, No. 94, February 17, 1797. Department of State (National Archives), "Despatches, The Netherlands," 11.

the survival of American nationality in a war which he had correctly seen, from the moment of his return to Europe,¹ as a titanic duel between France and England. One by one France was knocking out the Continental members of the coalition: the Netherlands, Prussia, and Spain fell in 1795; Sardinia would soon have to make its separate peace (1796); Austria's defeat was only a matter of time (1797). Then England would stand alone. French diplomacy would next try to shut up the ports of the Continent against all trade with England and close the United States to England, too, if possible, while France mobilized the naval power of the European nations for invasion of England and a final blow against the mistress of the seas. The young Minister Resident was the first of his countrymen to foresee the Continental System. He realized that the attitude and policy of the United States as it attempted to steer its way between the two mighty combatants would be a matter of life or death for itself, as it had been for the Netherlands. Neutrality and Jay's Treaty with Great Britain were the touchstones of this policy. French diplomacy and the democratic societies would try to destroy both.²

. . . I have several reasons to suppose [he wrote to his father on May 22, 1795] that the policy of the French government at present is to make *use* of the United States, as they are now making use of these Provinces, that is, as an instrument for the benefit of France, as a passive weapon in her hands against her most formidable enemy. . . .

If these conjectures have as much foundation as I apprehend, the whole French influence in America will exert itself with more than usual activity to prevent the ratification of the treaty, and to produce at all events a war between the United States and Great Britain, not assuredly from regard to our interest which they respect as much as they do that of their friends and allies the Hollanders, but because they are sensible of how much importance our commerce is to Great Britain, and suppose that the loss of it would make that nation outrageous for peace, and compel the Minister to make it upon the terms they are disposed to dictate. . . .

If the [Jay] treaty should not be ratified, the French will exert themselves

¹ His very first dispatch contained this statement: "At this moment they [the French] might probably dictate their own terms of Peace to all their enemies except Great Britain, and it is not improbable that at the opening of the ensuing season, these two great rival nations will be the only remaining combatants upon the field." John Quincy Adams to the Secretary of State, No. 1, London, October 22, 1794. Department of State (National Archives), "Despatches, The Netherlands," 1.

² John Quincy Adams to Dr. Thomas Welsh, April 26, 1795, *Writings*, I, 339n.-340n.; John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, May 16, 1795, *ibid.*, 340n.; John Quincy Adams to John Adams, May 22, 1795, *ibid.*, 353-363, and September 12, 1795, *ibid.*, 408-417.

for the purpose of hurrying us into a war, which may hasten their means of making peace, and in which they may be under no obligation of making a common cause with us. Their partizans, perhaps, in declamations or in newspapers will promise wonders from their co-operation; their official characters possibly may employ a great number of what they call *phrases*, but will have no power to contract any substantial engagements; we shall be friends, brothers, allies, fellow-freemen, loaded with all the tenderness of family affections introduced by a political prosopopeia into national concerns, and the final result of the whole matter will be, that all this tender sympathy, this amiable fraternity, this lovely coalescence of liberty, will leave us the advantage of being sacrificed to their interests, or of purchasing their protection upon the most humiliating and burdensome conditions, and at the same time of being reduced to the condition of glorying in our disgrace, and hailing the instrument of our calamity as the weapon of our deliverance.

I wish that the situation of affairs in America may be such as shall afford a full demonstration, that these are ideas merely visionary, *and above all I wish that we may never have occasion for any political connections in Europe.*¹

. . . I believe [he again wrote to his father on September 12, 1795] the intention is to draw the United States into it [the European war], merely to make tools of them, in order to procure advantageous terms for others, who would leave us in the well, after using our weight to get themselves out of it. It would be a war in which we should have everything to lose and nothing to gain. . . .²

A little wisdom and a little moderation [he wrote to his mother from The Hague on May 16, 1795] is all we want to secure a continuance of the blessings, of which faction, intrigue, private ambition and desperate fortunes have concurred in exertions to deprive us. The government of the United States need not even appeal to the judgment of posterity, whose benedictions will infallibly follow those measures which were the most opposed. The voice of all Europe already pronounces their justification; the nations which have been grappling together with the purpose of mutual destruction, feeble, exhausted, and almost starving, detest on all sides the frantic war they have been waging; those who have had the wisdom to maintain a neutrality have reason more than ever to applaud their policy, and some of them may thank the United States for the example from which it was pursued.³

Events in America were clear enough demonstration of the accuracy of Adams's analysis of the external forces of the French Revolution. The popular opposition to Jay's Treaty, the equivocal relation of Secretary of State Randolph to the French legation, leading to his downfall and resignation, and French efforts to stir up a radical opposition either to block Jay's Treaty by withholding the necessary appropriations in the House of Representatives or to defeat

¹ *Writings*, I, 356–362. The italics are mine.

² *Ibid.*, 409.

³ *Ibid.*, 340n.

Washington for reelection in 1796, or even to overthrow his Government by revolution: all this foreign intermeddling showed that French diplomacy was bent on treating the United States as it did the satellite republics which it set up for its own purposes in Europe, under the spell of the principles of the great Revolution. Adams had diagnosed correctly from its European examples the danger of the French Revolution for America. Marching under the cloak of the rights of man, the Republic had launched France again upon a career of conquest and plunder far more formidable than that of Louis XIV. John Quincy Adams saw this with clear eyes¹ and he kept his Government's attention continually on it in a way that no other American diplomat could have done.

The French Foreign Office looked upon the United States as "the Holland of the New World." Washington must go, declared the new French Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Directory, Citizen Delacroix: "A friend of France must succeed him in that eminent office. . . . We must raise up the people and at the same time conceal the lever by which we do so. . . . I propose to the Executive Directory to authorize me to send orders and instructions to our minister plenipotentiary at Philadelphia to use all the means in his power . . . to bring about the right kind of revolution and Washington's replacement, which, assuring to the Americans their independence, will break off treaties made with England and maintain those which unite them to the French Republic."²

James Monroe, who as senator had voted against Jay's nomination, and whom Washington by way of ingratiating had sent to France to defend American neutrality while Jay negotiated in England, urged the Directory not to try revolution in America until they should see what happened in the Presidential election of 1796. He was none too loyal to his chief. "Left to ourselves," he slyly hinted to Delacroix, "everything will I think be satisfactorily arranged and *perhaps in the course of the present year*: and it is always more grateful

¹ "With all the attachment of my countrymen for France I believe [really he *hoped*] they have too much sense and virtue, as well as knowledge of their own interest, to be either persuaded or bullied by her into a war for her benefit, when it has certainly become on her side a war merely of conquest and plunder, provided no new cause of resentment be given them by the future conduct of Britain." John Quincy Adams to John Adams, The Hague, July 21, 1796, *Writings*, II. 13.

² See my article, "Washington's Farewell Address: A Foreign Policy of Independence," *American Historical Review*, XXXIX (January, 1934), 257-258.

to make such arrangements ourselves than to be pressed to it.”¹ The Directory took Monroe’s advice, to await Washington’s overthrow in the coming American election. Meanwhile it declared (decree of July 2, 1796) that France would treat American ships precisely as Great Britain did, thus setting aside the maritime principles of the Franco-American treaty of 1778. After communicating the text of this decree, the French Minister in Philadelphia announced, in a burning manifesto full of French propaganda, the suspension of diplomatic relations with the United States. These steps were calculated to scare the electorate not to vote for Washington again.

But George Washington did not choose to run again in 1796. He did not want any longer to be buffeted ungratefully in the public prints by “a set of infamous scribblers” who misrepresented and tortured every act of the Executive with a view to making it appear odious.² Doubtless he questioned whether he could be reelected. Certainly he could not again have been reelected unanimously. At any rate, he did not want a third term. He had not desired a second. He had wished to spend his declining years in “the shades of retirement” at beloved Mount Vernon. Already at the end of his first “federal cycle” he had yearned to go home to the banks of the Potomac, and it was then, in 1792, that originally he had prepared to issue a valedictory to his fellow citizens. Only when convinced that his Presidency was necessary to mold national unity while the Constitution took hold on the people and the nation, and that his retirement might blight negotiations under way with Great Britain and Spain for the redemption of the western territory, had he consented to serve a second term. Even so he hoped to be able to resign within a year or two and turn the government over to the Vice-President, presumably John Adams. Outbreak of the Anglo-French War in 1793 and the problem of neutrality blighted that hope. At last in 1796 it seemed possible for him to lay down the burden.

The Farewell Address to the people of the United States, September 19, 1796, upon announcing his retirement at the end of his second term of office, had a much different content than the docu-

¹ *American Historical Review*, xxxix (January, 1934), 258. The italics are mine. Before he left the Presidency, Washington recalled Monroe from Paris for not defending Jay’s Treaty with the arguments that Secretary of State Pickering had instructed him to employ. He never knew how far Monroe had gone in disloyal insinuations against himself.

² George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, Mount Vernon, June 26, 1796. *The Writings of George Washington*, John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor, xxx. 101–104.

ment which he would have used in 1792, when the occasion called merely for virtuous consecration of the new Union. In the four years since then a volcanic force had erupted upon the European world. Under Washington's leadership American neutrality and American nationality had barely resisted the tidal wave that swept across the Atlantic, had survived it only at the price of Jay's Treaty and the temporary concession to British sea power. Now in 1796 intervention of the French ally in American domestic politics again threatened neutrality. It was to that danger that Washington pointed his Farewell Address.

Outlined and strictly held to the outline by Washington, but embellished by the phraseology of Alexander Hamilton, whose mind moved in unison with the President's in these matters of statecraft, the Farewell Address invoked the spirit of national unity against the divisions of political and sectional "factions" and the opportunity that "factions" and sections opened to foreign intrigue and interference, presenting a danger to independence itself. From this it proceeded to lay down the great rule of conduct for foreign policy: abstention from the *ordinary* vicissitudes of European politics and the *ordinary* combinations and collisions of European friendships and enmities—in brief, as little *political* connection as possible with foreign nations.

We can say that John Quincy Adams's contributions to the American press and his subsequent letters from The Hague to his father had an appreciable influence upon the mind of the President as he thought over what he desired to say in the Address. The President had read and commended the earlier letters of "Marcellus" and "Columbus." It has already been noted how they led to the younger Adams's appointment in 1794 to the foreign service. John Adams communicated to Washington his son's private letters from The Hague. The President was reading these earlier letters from John Quincy Adams to his father at the very time, in the summer of 1796, he was drafting, with Hamilton's aid, the Farewell Address. In acknowledging four received from Quincy in August, 1795, the President wrote to John Adams on August 20: "They contain a great deal of interesting matter, and No. 9 [May 22, 1795] discloses much important information and political insight. Mr. J. Adams, your son, must not think of retiring from the walk of life he is in. His prospects, if he continues in it are fair, and I shall

be much mistaken if, in as short a period as can be well expected, he is not found at the head of the diplomatic corps, let the government be administered by whomsoever the people may choose."¹

Without pausing to comment on this highly authoritative appraisal of John Quincy Adams's abilities and future prospects, let us now compare some of the ideas, even some of the words, of the Farewell Address with the letters of "Marcellus" and of "Columbus" in 1793. In doing so, I shall refer to the text of Washington's original first draft of suggestions for the Address (May 15, 1796)² in order to show how John Quincy Adams paralleled Washington's thinking independently of Alexander Hamilton, who certainly agreed with both and thought along similar lines. It is quite possible, indeed likely, that the Vice-President showed his son's letters also to Hamilton.

Conspicuous among the admonitions of the Farewell Address are: (1) to exalt patriotically the national words, *America, American, Americans*; (2) to beware of foreign intrigue; (3) to have no political connections with the foreign nations of distant Europe with their different set of primary interests. In all three of these features of the immortal document can be discerned the thought of John Quincy Adams, occasionally suspicious traces of his phraseology.

Observe first the name *America*.

Emphasis on the word *American* is common to the three documents:

<i>John Quincy Adams</i>	<i>Washington's First Draft</i>	<i>The Farewell Address</i>
Is this a condition tolerable to the imagination of <i>American</i> ³ freemen? . . . Was it worthy of the generous and heroic self-devotion, which offered the slaughtered thousands of our friends and brethren, as a willing sacrifice at the holy altar of <i>American</i> ³ Independence, to	That every citizen would take pride in the name of an American, and act as if he felt the importance of the character by considering that we ourselves are now a distinct Nation the dignity of which will be absorbed, if not annihilated, if we enlist ourselves (further than	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, Manners, Habits

¹ *Writings*, I. 408n.-409n. "Fair" prospects meant in those days most excellent prospects.

² See Victor H. Paltsits, *Washington's Farewell Address, in Facsimile, with Transliterations of All the Drafts of Washington, Madison, and Hamilton, together with Their Correspondence and Other Supporting Documents, Edited with a History of Its Origin, Its Reception by the Nation, Rise of the Controversy respecting Its Authorship, and a Bibliography* (New York, New York Public Library, 1935). Horace Binney long since had settled definitively the question of authorship in *An Inquiry into the Formation of Washington's Farewell Address* (Philadelphia, 1859).

³ The italics are mine.

be made the miserable bubbles of foreign speculation, to be blown like feathers to and fro as the varying breath of foreign influence should be directed: to be bandied about from one nation to another, subservient to the purposes of their mutual resentments, and played with as the passive instruments of their interests and passions? Perish the *American!*¹ whose soul is capable of submitting to such a degrading servitude! Perish the *American,*¹ whose prostituted heart could forsake the genuine purity of our national worship, and offer at a foreign shrine the tribute of his slavish adoration!²

our obligations may require) under the banners of any other Nation whatsoever.³

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.⁴

Similarly the advice to beware of foreign intrigue is common to the three documents:

John Quincy Adams

Among the nations of antiquity, the *Athenians* were equally distinguished for the freedom of their government, the mildness of their laws, the sagaciousness of their understanding, and the urbanity of their manners. Their Constitution was purely democratic, and their penal laws were few; but the bare appearance of a stranger in the assemblies of the people, they made punishable with death, from a deep and well-grounded

Washington's First Draft

And moreover, that we would guard against the Intrigues of *any* and *every* foreign Nation who shall endeavor to intermingle (however covertly and indirectly) in the internal concerns of our country—or who shall attempt to prescribe rules for our policy with any other power. . . .⁵

The Farewell Address

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me fellow-citizens,) the jealousy of a free people ought to be *constantly* awake; since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican Government. . . .⁶

¹ The italics are mine.

² Letter of "Columbus," December 4, 1793, *Writings*, I, 159. The letters of "Columbus" stress throughout the words *America*, *American*, and *Americans*, as an appeal to national pride and exaltation, and as a distinction from state or sectional appellations.

³ Paltsits, *Washington's Farewell Address*, 169.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 142–143.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 154–155.

John Quincy Adams
(continued)

conviction, that of all the dangers which encompass the liberties of a republican State, the intrusion of a foreign influence into the administration of their affairs, is the most alarming, and requires the opposition of the severest caution. . . . The interference of foreigners upon any pretence whatever, in the dissensions of fellow-citizens, must be as inevitably fatal to the liberties of the State, as the admission of strangers to arbitrate upon the domestic differences of man and wife is destructive to the happiness of a private family. If the partizans of any particular faction cease to rely upon their own talents and services to support their influence among their country men, and link themselves in union with an external power, the principle of self-defence, the instinct of self-preservation itself, will suggest a similar connection to their opponents; whichever of the party nominally prevails, the whole country is really enslaved; alternately the sport of every caprice, that directs the conduct of two foreign sovereigns, alternately the victim of every base intrigue which foreign hatred and jealousy may disguise under the mask of friendship and benevolence.¹

The advice against political connections with foreign powers appears uniformly throughout the three documents:

¹ Letter of "Columbus," December 4, 1793, *Writings*, I. 157-159.

John Quincy Adams

... as the citizens of a nation at a vast distance from the continent of Europe; of a nation whose happiness consists in a real independence, disconnected from all European interests and European politics. . . .¹

Washington's First Draft

That we may avoid connecting ourselves with the Politics of any Nation, farther than shall be found necessary to regulate our own trade; . . .²

The Farewell Address

The Great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign Nations is in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little *political* connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled, with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.³

So clearly do the thoughts of the younger Adams, even little traces of his phraseology, appear in the Farewell Address that one may wonder whether Washington may not have had still before him the letters of "Columbus" when he drew up the first draft of that document. Of course this is not to say that John Quincy Adams was unduly responsible for the ideas of the Farewell Address. Until he heard of its pronouncement, he did not even know it was being formulated. Presumably the Address would have been given out, in somewhat the same form, if Adams had never lived, for these ideas already were common to American statesmen and diplomatists of the time.⁴ They were the fruit of American diplomatic experience since the Declaration of Independence. Indeed, unbeknownst to Adams, the United States had just declined two offers of European alliance—one from Sweden and Denmark in 1794 for a new Armed Neutrality, and another from Spain in 1795 for a triple alliance with France to guarantee the territories of all in the New World—and it was acutely nervous about its "perpetual alliance" with France. John Quincy Adams shared these principles of foreign policy and validated them from his observation, on the spot, of the wars of the French Revolution. Thus validated, they had reinforced Washington's own opinions and even shaped their expression a little.

Despite his own preference that Washington might serve another term in order to be sure to keep the country out of the European war,⁵ John Quincy Adams read with much satisfaction the text of

¹ Letter of "Marcellus," April 24, 1793, *Writings*, I. 140.

² Paltsits, *Washington's Farewell Address*, 169. ³ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴ Cf. my article, "The Background of Washington's Foreign Policy," *Yale Review*, XVI (January, 1927), 316-337.

⁵ John Quincy Adams to Christopher Gore, July 26, 1796, *Writings*, II. 13.

the Farewell Address when finally it reached The Hague. "The reception of the President's address to the people might serve as another indicative to France of the temper of our people," he wrote, for French consumption, to Joseph Pitcairn, United States Consul in Paris. "From that let them judge of the success that has attended all their endeavors to tear our benefactor from our hearts; let them see the issue of all their manœuvres and all their libels; of their Baches and Randolphs in America, as well as their Theremins and their Paines in Europe. . . . Can France possibly believe that Mr. Jefferson, or any other man, would dare to start away from that system of administration which Washington has thus sanctioned, not only by his example, but by his retirement?"¹

For the benefit of the student of the Monroe Doctrine we may quote the younger Adams once more, in these final weeks of President Washington's administration, on separation from the politics of Europe, although it is only a repetition of what he had already said before the Farewell Address was drafted. Writing to his father after he had read the text of the Address, he said: "The President, indeed, has told us, and I am profoundly convinced of the justice and importance of the advice, that we ought not to involve ourselves at all in the political systems of Europe, but to keep ourselves always distinct and separate from it."²

Is it not evident that John Quincy Adams actively shared, indeed independently conceived in his own mind from his diplomatic experience in Europe during the early wars of the French Revolution, the instinctive concept of the Fathers against involvement in the political systems of Europe? Indeed was he not thinking, at this early period, of what later appeared more clearly as the concept of the two separate systems, or spheres, of policy, European and American, that run through the Monroe Doctrine? And ought not historians of the Monroe Doctrine to take this into consideration?

To the President himself Adams had a chance to express himself directly upon the occasion of executing a small personal errand:³ "I fervently pray that they [the people] may not only impress all its

¹ John Quincy Adams to Joseph Pitcairn, January 31, 1797, *Writings*, II. 95-96.

² John Quincy Adams to John Adams, The Hague, January 14, 1797, *Writings*, II. 88.

³ This concerned investigation into the source of the donation of a sword that had come into Washington's hands from someone in the town of Solingen. See George Washington to John Quincy Adams, September 12, 1796, *Writings of George Washington*, XXXV. 207-209.

[the Farewell Address's] admonitions upon their hearts, but that *it may serve as the foundation upon which the whole system of their future policy may rise*, the admiration and example of future time; that your warning voice may upon every great emergency recur to their remembrance with an influence equal to the occasion; that it may control the fury of domestic factions and check the encroachments of foreign influence; that it may cement with indissoluble force our national Union, and secure at once our dignity and our peace."¹

John Quincy Adams at least had helped to inspire the warning voice of 1796. His first diplomatic commission, from the Father of His Country, had enabled him to play a part in laying the foundation of a system of American foreign policy for a century to come.

Adams's European experience had convinced him that neutrality was essential for a continuance of the American constitutional union and even the independence of the United States in that epoch of its history. If the United States preserved its neutrality, its independence, and its union, he wrote to Sylvanus Bourne, United States Consul at Amsterdam, it would be thanks to Washington. "At the present moment if our neutrality be still preserved, it will be due to the President alone. Nothing but his weight of character and reputation, combined with his firmness and political intrepidity, could have stood against this torrent that is still tumbling with a fury that resounds even across the Atlantic. He is now pledged, and he is unmoved. If his system of administration now prevails, ten years more will place the United States among the most powerful and opulent nations on earth."²

Already Adams was envisioning an American system. "The American [system] will infallibly triumph over the European system eventually," he wrote privately from London to the Secretary of State,

¹ John Quincy Adams to George Washington, February 11, 1797, *Writings*, II. 119. The italics are mine. Washington wrote to Adams a graceful acknowledgment from Mount Vernon, June 25, 1797: ". . . the approbation of good and Virtuous Men is the most pleasing reward my mind is susceptible of, for any Service it has been in my power to render my Country." *Writings of George Washington*, XXXV. 476.

² John Quincy Adams to Sylvanus Bourne, December 24, 1795, *Writings*, I. 467. "This, my good friend," Adams continued, "is not the language of a courtier. You and I have known the time when *not to applaud* the man who united all hearts was almost held to be a crime. Should that time return again while he lives, *my* tribute of veneration and gratitude shall again remain silent in my heart. But now, when he does not unite all hearts, when on the contrary a powerful party at home, and a mighty influence from abroad, are joining all their forces to assail his reputation and his character, I think it my duty as an American to avow my sentiments as they concern that man." *Ibid.*, 467-468.

Timothy Pickering, "provided it be pursued with the same perseverance."¹

The rising young diplomat's veneration of Washington contrasted strongly with his father's final reservations on Washington's place in American history. One wonders what the elder statesman of Quincy may have mused when he learned that his son had christened his first child George Washington Adams,² born in Berlin, April 13, 1801, after the Father of His Country had ceased to live in mortal flesh.

"My child was yesterday baptized by the name of George Washington; and may the grace of Almighty God guard his life and enable him, when he is come to manhood, to prove himself worthy of it! I was not induced merely by the public character of that great and good man to show his memory this token of respect. President Washington was, next to my own father, the man upon earth to whom I was indebted for the greatest personal obligations. I knew not whether upon rigorous philosophical principles it be wise to give a great and venerable name to such a lottery-ticket as a newborn infant—but my logical scruples have in this case been overpowered by my instinctive sentiments."³

George Washington, whose foreign policy laid the basis for an American system, remained John Quincy Adams's hero of history without reproach or reservation. Adams was deeply affected when the General died. Washington's character, he wrote from Prussia, would to all ages be a model of human virtue untarnished by a single vice. "The loss of such a man is a misfortune to mankind. To our country it is a heavy calamity."⁴ His was "one of the greatest names that ever appeared upon earth for the pride and consolation of the human race. I feel it as an inestimable happiness to have been the contemporary and countryman of that man."⁵

¹ John Quincy Adams to Timothy Pickering, *Private*, London, December 22, 1795, *Writings*, I, 465. Adams opened himself to Pickering much more than he had done to Randolph.

² The tragic death of George Washington Adams in early manhood was the greatest personal affliction which John Quincy Adams had to bear. *Memoirs*, VIII, 159–160. For circumstances of the young man's death, April 30, 1829, less than a month after the father vacated the White House, see *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 4, 1829.

³ John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, quoted, without date, by Dorothe Bobbé in her sprightly (but not always accurate) *Mr. and Mrs. John Quincy Adams* (New York, 1930), 113. She explains that she had read the correspondence and private papers of John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Adams, John and Abigail Adams, Thomas Boylston Adams, and Joshua Johnson, among others. *Ibid.*, 303.

⁴ John Quincy Adams to Joseph Pitcairn, February 4, 1800, *Writings*, II, 451, n. 1.

⁵ John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, February 11, 1800, *Writings*, II, 453.