

Founding Francophobe? Alexander Hamilton and the French, 1789–1800

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What do Alexander Hamilton and John Kerry have in common? The answer is probably not a great deal, though at least three things come to mind: they were marked for life by their early military experiences, they married women far richer than themselves, and they belong on the brief list of U.S. public figures of the first rank who knew French.

How well Hamilton knew French is impossible to say. Obviously there are no recordings of him speaking the language; nor, to my knowledge, are there any surviving letters written by him in French. There are, however, a number of letters to him in that language, for example, from his brother-in-arms, the Marquis de Lafayette, and his client Louis Le Guen, whom he defended in one of the most demanding law cases of his career. We can assume that they would not have written him in French if they weren't confident of his knowledge of the language. We also know that Hamilton assisted Washington in complex negotiations with the French army in America, and it seems clear that his grasp of the language was one of the many assets that he brought to the job of aide-de-camp. Although he never went to Europe, Hamilton maintained contacts with French officials in America and with exiles from the revolution. The famous Talleyrand, who knew Hamilton during his stay in Philadelphia in the mid-1790s, is supposed to have said that, along with William Pitt and Napoleon, Hamilton was one of the three greatest men of the age.

For our purposes, however, it was not Talleyrand but another French observer, Eleanor François Elie, the comte de Moustier, who provides the most useful insight into the subject. Moustier was the French minister (chief diplomatic representative) to the United States when Hamilton was appointed Secretary of the Treasury on September 11, 1789. The two men held a long conversation at Moustier's house on lower Broadway (New York was still the capital in 1789) on September 13, 1789. The main subject was the large

U.S. debt to France dating back to the war. Among other things, Hamilton told Moustier that the new U.S. government would pay France the arrears it had run up on the debt by borrowing new money in Amsterdam. After the meeting, Moustier sent a report to Paris in which he sized up Hamilton in the following way: "*Il est né anglais.*" "He was born English and I do not believe very well disposed toward France; he would ask nothing better than to disengage entirely this Republic [the United States] and place it in more intimate relations with . . . the Netherlands, present Allies of England."¹ Was Moustier right? My answer is that he was wrong on the details but had put his finger on essential point. A central—if not *the* central—theme of Hamilton's career as a foreign policy adviser and commentator was the attempt to free the United States of dependency on France. When he spoke in the 1790s of steering clear of European entanglements and avoiding permanent alliances, he essentially meant steering away from the existing permanent alliance with France signed in 1778, and consolidating closer ties with Britain. Let me try to show how and why this was the case.

II

First, where was Moustier wrong on the details? Hamilton was not, of course, "born English." He was born on the island of Nevis, the son of a Scottish father, James Hamilton, and a mother of French Huguenot background, Rachel Faucett, or Faucette. Though we do not know for sure, it was probably at his mother's knee that he began to learn his French. Moustier was basically right because Hamilton, as a British West Indian who came to the United States as a teenager in 1773, lacked the hostility to the imperial system of older and native-born Americans like Jefferson and Adams who had lived through the long controversy over taxation. As for the significance of his Huguenot origins, I have not seen evidence, as exists in the case of John Jay, for example, that it inclined Hamilton to sympathy for Britain, a haven for Huguenots who had been expelled from France by Louis

XIV, but this may be the case. It's also possible that Hamilton's Huguenot identity, made aware to him by his mother, helps to explain his attitude toward Catholicism and the French character. It's interesting to note, by the way, that three of his closest friends were of Huguenot origin, his fellow aide-de-camp John Laurens, Gouverneur Morris, and Jay.

We see Hamilton's dislike of Catholicism in a pamphlet written just before the war attacking the so-called Quebec Bill by which the British Crown liberalized treatment of French Canadian Catholics.² We see his view of the French character in a more famous pamphlet, "The Farmer Refuted," written in early 1775. In warning the British against military action against the colonies, Hamilton observed that although France had promised not to interfere in the dispute, "the promises of princes and statesmen are of little weight. . . . If we consult the known character of the French, we shall be disposed to conclude, that their present, seemingly pacific and friendly disposition [toward Britain] is merely a piece of *finesse*."³ It should be pointed out that this attitude was standard in the English-speaking Protestant world of the eighteenth century (and after), and Hamilton's generalizations were mild compared to those of some of his friends. After arriving in Paris in 1789, Morris wrote Washington of "the extreme rottenness" of French society and warned that the ingredients for a successful experiment in free government did not exist.⁴

The war itself had a paradoxical effect on Hamilton's foreign policy outlook. It actually served to increase his admiration for the British constitution and financial system which allowed London to mobilize resources for war on a scale never before imagined. In his attitude toward Britain one also senses the feeling: "I have something to prove to you, and the effort is worth little if it does not receive your approbation." His outlook was infused with a feeling of kinship and a desire for respect and recognition. It is no wonder that he differed with those who never ceased to look on Britain as an evil empire and a whore.⁵

Meanwhile, as an aide-de-camp (1777-81), he was thrown into close contact with the French officer corps and became friends with a number of Frenchmen, including Lafayette. But by and large, the wave of aristocratic French volunteers seeking plum positions in the American army proved to be an annoyance and an embarrassment. As the war dragged on longer than he had expected, Hamilton realized, as he wrote to John Laurens, that "the friendship of France is our *unum necessarium*." But the fact that French money and soldiers might "save us in spite of ourselves" was anything but reassuring. When the French army finally arrived, it was smaller than expected, and its high command rejected Washington's appeal for a frontal assault on New York. When Laurens was to be sent as envoy to Paris, Hamilton was worried that he might be too honest and hot-tempered to be effective at the French court. He wrote to him: "A politician My Dear Friend must be at all times supple—he must often dissemble." (Perhaps he was pulling his friend's leg, but he would follow his own advice as a member of Washington's court after 1789.)⁶

As the war wound down after Yorktown, Hamilton wrote a French acquaintance that he was in favor of continued Franco-American friendship, including privileged commercial relations. When a new British administration under the Earl of Shelburne offered generous peace terms to America in late 1782, Hamilton wrote Washington that he suspected British "insincerity and duplicity." But those words were written before he had learned that the French had been prepared to end the war with Britain *without* securing American independence and had opposed the American attempt (granted by the British) to establish the western boundary of the United States on the Mississippi.⁷ The French and their Spanish ally preferred a small and dependent America, and during the two decades between the end of the War of Independence and the Louisiana Purchase, Paris pursued a number of schemes to recover the empire it had given up in 1763.

In June 1783, as a New York delegate to Congress, Hamilton voted against adherence to the so-called League of Armed Neutrality—Russia, Denmark-Norway,

Sweden, Prussia—formed in 1780 to resist British interference with neutral shipping. According to the Congressional resolution, the United States "should be as little as possible entangled in the politics and controversies of European nations." It is possible to see that decision as the beginning of an historic consensus with respect to a policy of non-entanglement. For Hamilton, however, non-entanglement was not so much an end in itself, as the means to preserve peace and avoid an unnecessary collision with Britain.⁸ He later observed that, while in Congress, he had been "struck with disgust at the appearance, in the very cradle of our Republic, of a party actuated by an undue complaisance to foreign power"—namely, France—and had "resolved at once to resist this bias in our affairs."⁹

Much has been made of the French Revolution as a factor in the bitter struggle between Hamilton and Jefferson over foreign policy after 1789. Jefferson was an enthusiast of the revolution, writing in a famous letter, "The liberty of the whole earth was depending on the issue of the contest, and was ever such a prize won with so little innocent blood? My own affections have been deeply wounded by some of the martyrs to this cause, but rather than it should have failed, I would have seen half the earth desolated. Were there but an Adam and Eve, left in every country, and left free, it would be better than it now is."¹⁰ Hamilton described his initial reaction in a letter to Lafayette as "a mixture of Pleasure and apprehension." He rejoiced at the effort to establish liberty, but feared "for the danger in case the success of innovations greater than will consist with the real felicity of your Nation," in other words, that things might get out of hand. Along with the "vehement character of your people" and the "interested refractoriness of your nobles," he dreaded "the reveries of your Philosophic politicians."¹¹ In 1793, in the heyday of Robespierre and the Jacobins, Hamilton denounced France's "open patronage" of revolution elsewhere in Europe, and annexation of conquered lands without the sanction of treaties.¹²

But the French revolution was not the cause of the Hamilton-Jefferson battle. Well before 1789, Hamilton suspected that France did not want a strong America. In his view, the foundations of a longer term community of interests—trade, finance, language, religion, a shared political culture—did not exist. The 1778 treaty of alliance was not only obsolete but potentially dangerous: America's guarantee of France's West Indian possessions *in perpetuity* might involve it in an unwanted war. Jefferson, by contrast, had spent much of the 1780s trying to wean America from its continuing dependence on British credit and manufactures, and to strengthen political and commercial ties to the France of Louis XVI. He wrote his friend James Madison in 1787, "nothing should be spared, on our part, to attach this country to us. It is the only one on which we can rely for support, under every event. Its inhabitants love us more, I think, than they do any other nation on earth."¹³ Even if the Old Regime in France had managed to limp along for another decade, Hamilton and Jefferson would still have been on a collision course when they were appointed to Washington's cabinet in 1789.

III

If Hamilton's bias against France was clear before he came treasury secretary, his bias toward Britain deepened as a consequence of his new job. His funding system depended on a steady flow of revenue to pay the interest on the consolidated national debt. The most reliable source of such revenue was the duty on imported goods, ninety percent of which were of British origin. Another salient fact was that British investors held a significant share of the U.S. debt, and later of the stock of the Bank of the United States. A commercial war, or worse a real war, with Britain would have destroyed Hamilton's financial handiwork and the credit of the federal government.

The historians Stanley Elkins and Erik McKittrick describe Hamilton's broader vision of "an immensely expanded and far-flung Anglo-American economy." Essential

preconditions included the end of hostilities with the Indians in the Northwest Territory, British withdrawal from the seven strategic forts on U.S. territory held in violation of the 1783 Peace Treaty, and the opening of the Mississippi River, closed to American traders by Spain in 1784.¹⁴ Hamilton imagined that "[T]he British, perceiving a vast new market to be supplied by way of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes, and the prospects for cheap food for the West Indies shipped down the Mississippi and across the Gulf, would find it entirely in their interest to assist us in getting the Mississippi opened, and to help protect our trade once it had been established there . . . It was wholly to their advantage to foster American trade, American growth, and even American territorial expansion: it all added up to ever-greater markets for British goods."¹⁵ After 1793, Hamilton would favor a stance helpful to Britain in the war of the First Coalition against France, and to the effort to preserve the European balance of power. Though he was always on guard against British highhandedness and sensitive to the charge of Anglophilia, there was no doubt a personal factor driving these policies. He told a British official in 1789, "I have always preferred a connexion with you to that of any other Country, *We think in English*, and have a similarity of prejudices, and of predilections"¹⁶

Hamilton's outlook can be seen in his reaction to the Nootka Sound crisis of 1790. When war seemed about to break out between Britain on one hand and Spain and France on the other, Washington solicited advice on what to do if the British crossed U.S. territory en route from Detroit to attack Spanish positions on the Mississippi. Hamilton's view was that if the British marched without asking permission and encountered U.S. forces, the avoidance of total humiliation required that they be resisted. On the other hand, if the British asked permission they should receive it. His answer took up a theme to which he would frequently return: America's alleged "obligations of gratitude" toward Paris and Madrid. Did such obligations really exist? The answer was no because

Gratitude is only due to a kindness or service, the predominant object of which is the interest or benefit of the party to whom it is performed. Where the interest or benefit of the party performing is the predominant cause of it . . . there can be no room for the sentiment of gratitude.

France and Spain had supported American independence not as an end in itself but to diminish British power. True, France was entitled to American esteem and good will, but this was "*very distinct from a spirit of romantic gratitude calling for sacrifices of our substantial interests.*" As for Spain, the fact that it restricted American navigation of the Mississippi gave it "slender claims" to good will. If war came there could be "no reasonable ground of doubt that we should be at liberty, if we thought it our interest, consistently with our present engagements with France, to join Britain against Spain."

Indeed, if Madrid continued to control navigation of the Mississippi, and used this leverage to win the loyalty of American settlers who needed the river to market their produce, war was to be preferred. "In an event of this sort we should naturally seek aid from Great Britain. This would probably involve France on the opposite side, and effect a revolution in the state of our foreign affairs." In summarizing the case for consenting to a request, Hamilton acknowledged Washington's fear that British acquisition of Spanish territory would be "dangerous to us." Yet, he observed, "evil is seldom as great, in the reality, as in the prospect." Having argued that continued Spanish possession of the Mississippi meant probable war or loss of the west, he did not see either of those things necessarily following from a British conquest.¹⁷

As it happened, the war that might have placed the United States at Britain's side did not occur in 1790, and Hamilton's plans for a reorientation of U.S. policy were complicated by a pair of factors. The first was the emergence of a party under Jefferson and Madison that was bitterly opposed to his financial measures and strongly attached to France. The second was the British government. The British rejected a commercial treaty

urged on them by Hamilton that would have reopened the lucrative West Indian and Canadian markets from which the American merchant marine was now excluded.

Hamilton described the resulting situation to a British contact in early 1791:

In the present state of things, nothing has happened between us and France, to give a tolerable pretence, for breaking off our treaty of Alliance with that Power and immediately forming one with you. A regard for National Decorum, puts such a decisive step as this, out of our reach, but I tell you candidly as an individual, that I think the formation of a [Anglo-American] treaty of commerce, would by degrees have led to this measure, which undoubtedly that Party with us, whose remaining animosities and French partialities influence their whole political conduct, regard with dissatisfaction.¹⁸

If the step was "out of reach" at present, Hamilton held to his basic line. In October 1792, Hamilton proposed "a defensive treaty of alliance" with Britain to end Spanish support of Indian tribes who preyed American settlers, and to open the Mississippi to Anglo-American navigation. According to Jefferson's notes, Washington rejected the idea on the grounds that "the remedy would be worse than the disease."¹⁹

Hamilton's next opportunity grew out of developments in France itself. With the rise of the Jacobins, the storming of the Tuileries Palace, and the imprisonment of the royal family in August 1792, the revolution entered a new and tumultuous phase. The National Assembly was disbanded, the Constitution of 1791 suspended, and a provisional government declared. The Paris Massacre was followed by the convening of a National Convention and the declaration of a Republic on September 20, 1792. The same day, a French army defeated Austrian, Prussian, and French *émigré* forces attempting to roll back the revolution at the battle of Valmy. In January 1793, the new powers that be in Paris sent Louis XVI to the guillotine. In February, they declared war on Britain, the United Provinces (the modern Netherlands), and Bourbon Spain.

If Hamilton and Jefferson had differed for years on policy toward France and Britain, these events served to engage the broader public and to polarize it along party lines. Jefferson, Madison, and their supporters (calling themselves Republicans), up to now preoccupied with defeating Hamilton's allegedly corrupt and monarchist domestic policies, rallied around the cause of the French Republic and came to see its struggle against the forces of reaction as inseparable from their own. Hamilton and his followers (soon to call themselves Federalists) were appalled by the murder of the king (the beginning of the Jacobin reign of terror) and what they saw as France's war of aggression against much of the civilized world. Matters came to a head in the spring of 1793 with the arrival in the United States of the thirty-year-old envoy of the French Republic, Citizen Edmond Genet.

IV

Genet's diplomatic misadventures, culminating in the U.S. request for his recall, can be attributed to several factors: he was impulsive and inexperienced, while his enthusiastic reception by both ordinary people and cabinet ministers like Jefferson fostered the illusion in his mind that he would have more clout with Washington's government than was to be the case. A basic problem, moreover, arose from his extravagant orders. Written in anticipation of war with Britain and Spain, they empowered him to negotiate a new treaty, to include a provision closing French and U.S. ports to British shipping, and a renewal of the U.S. guarantee of France's Caribbean colonies. In the meantime, Genet was to insist on strict observance of the existing treaty. Article 17 of the 1778 Treaty of Amity of Commerce permitted the privateers of the two countries to bring prizes into the ports of the other, while denying that privilege to those at war with France or the United States. Article 22 prohibited the enemies of France or the United States from fitting out privateers in the ports of either country. France interpreted this as allowing—though it did not explicitly say

so—its privateers to recruit and equip in U.S. ports. Genet carried stacks of blank letters of marque to hand out in America. Anti-British privateers had begun to sail out of Charleston even before he arrived in Philadelphia in May 1793. He also brought blank military commissions to serve his most ambitious objective: the conquest of Canada, Louisiana, and the Floridas, using U.S. territory as a base.²⁰

Perhaps because they are fond of the doctrine that "party differences should stop at the water's edge," historians have tended to play down the differences in Washington's cabinet over how to deal with Genet. One observes that Hamilton and Jefferson often "arrived at the same practical conclusion—for the simple reason that it was the most sensible one." For another, the principles of "steering clear of European conflicts at almost any cost and providing time and space" for economic development "remained a matter of consensus throughout the top reaches of the government." For other historians, "simply as a question of foreign policy, a division scarcely existed at all [in 1793] . . ." ²¹ This is far from the case.

Hamilton's handling of Genet reflected his wish to disentangle the United States from the French alliance, a task rendered urgent by the nature of the new government in Paris and its apparent wish to involve the United States in the war. Reasoning that it would be impossible in good faith to renounce the alliance or to refuse to receive Genet, he argued instead that the Frenchman be received conditionally and that the United States had the right to *suspend* the alliance pending the outcome of events. Hamilton's bid failed. With Jefferson's strong support, Washington ruled that the treaties were valid despite the change of government in France. At Hamilton's urging, however, Washington agreed to a public declaration of neutrality: U.S. citizens and territory would not be allowed to take part in the war. Over Republican objections, the declaration was issued without consulting Congress, an important precedent for the executive branch. ²²

Jefferson continued to wage a battle for what he called "manly" as opposed to "mere English neutrality," one that, without involving the United States in the war, allowed badly-needed U.S. provisions to reach France.²³ Hamilton, on the other hand, readily acquiesced to British insistence that the U.S. flag did not protect supplies purchased by France from seizure by Royal Navy cruisers.²⁴ At Hamilton's urging, moreover, the cabinet ruled that there could be no "commissioning, equipping and manning" of privateers in U.S. ports, a decision that seriously undercut Genet.²⁵ The question remained whether prizes already taken by French privateers sailing out of Charleston must be returned to their British owners, and whether the privateers would have to leave U.S. ports. Hamilton said yes; Jefferson said no. Washington adopted a compromise: the prizes would not be returned, but the privateers would have to go.

Writing in the newspapers as "Pacificus," Hamilton popularized his argument about gratitude toward France, made privately three years before. The basis of gratitude was "a benefit received or intended, which there was no right to claim, originating in a regard to the interest or advantage of the party, on whom the benefit is or is meant to be conferred." France had acted purely in its own interest in advancing American independence, and the reduction of British power was "adequate compensation." In any event, continued Hamilton, "If there was any kindness in the [French] decision, demanding a return of kindness from us, it was the kindness of Louis the XVI."²⁶ Anticipating Washington's Farewell Address, "Pacificus" cautioned against foreign friendships and attachments. "The former will generally be found hollow and delusive; the latter will have a natural tendency to lead us aside from our own true interest, and to make us the dupes of foreign influence." As usual this generic-sounding warning was directed against pro-French opinion in the United States.²⁷

In the end, the decision to ask for Genet's recall arose not from Pacificus's arguments but the impetuous envoy's own behavior. He continued to promote U.S.-based

privateering in defiance of U.S. policy to the point that he became an embarrassment to Jefferson and risked provoking a heavy-handed British reaction. The Republicans' worst enemies in arguing that the French cause was the cause of American security turned out to be the French. But Hamilton faced a similar problem in arguing that a stance favorable to the British was in American interests. A June 1793 British order-in-council authorized the seizure of all American wheat and flour bound for France. In conjunction with their invasion of the French West Indies in late 1793, the British seized hundreds of American merchantmen en route to and from the French islands. This produced outrage in the United States and led the two countries to the verge of war.

Many historians give Hamilton credit for orchestrating the John Jay peace mission to London and the resulting treaty, narrowly ratified by the Senate and signed by Washington in 1795. According to Samuel Flagg Bemis, the mission and treaty were the work of Hamilton, "to whom in the last analysis any praise or blame for the instrument must be given. . . . More aptly the treaty might be called Hamilton's Treaty." For another historian, "The Jay treaty . . . was peculiarly Hamilton's doing. He proposed it . . . chose John Jay for the mission, and drew Jay's instructions." For Elkins and McKittrick, "[t]he leading role in the devising of Jay's instructions, as has always been known, was played by Alexander Hamilton."²⁸ The problem with these claims is that Jay did not simply follow a script written for him by Hamilton. He helped to devise the instructions and (in a day and age when diplomats were not under daily supervision from home) exercised independent judgment during the negotiations as he had as a peace commissioner in 1782–83.

Hamilton's signal contribution, rather, was twofold. First, he saw that a seemingly hopeless situation in 1794 was ripe for a diplomatic breakthrough and helped to persuade an uncertain Washington to pursue it. In effect, Hamilton postulated a kind of strategic stand-off. Neither Britain nor United States could reduce the other, nor provide much help to its hypothetical allies. If either were misguided enough to provoke the other it would

end up doing serious damage to itself. In an unsolicited letter, he urged the president to choose between, on one hand, defensive steps together with a peace mission unhampered by prior U.S. reprisals against Britain, or on the other, a (probably unavailing) attempt to coerce it, accompanied by a pro forma demand for redress. There was no middle course.²⁹ Washington approved the mission the day after receiving this letter. Though, like most Federalists, Hamilton was deeply unhappy with parts of the resulting treaty, he saw that it secured the essential objects of Jay's mission, and became its most effective spokesman. The essential objects were the return of the forts, compensation for damages to American shippers, and above all continued peace allowing the infant United States to build up its strength.³⁰ Writing as "Camillus," Hamilton defended the treaty in twenty-eight essays for the press.

Republicans excoriated Jay's handiwork as a groveling surrender to Britain and a violation of U.S. commitments to the French.³¹ Jefferson's view of it, colorfully conveyed to Philip Mazzei, was that "Men who were Sampsons in the field and Solomons in the council [namely Washington] . . . have had their heads shorn by the harlot England." But even Jefferson acknowledged the force of "Camillus's" efforts: "Hamilton is really a colossus to the anti-republican party—without numbers, he is a host within himself."³²

V

Worn down after years in office, and eager to put his personal finance's on a sounder footing, Hamilton retired as treasury secretary in January 1795. But finding himself without trusted advisers during the extended treaty controversy, Washington continued to solicit Hamilton's views, and to draw him back into the game. Among Hamilton's concerns as an informal adviser were how to handle French policy after the failure of the final Republican attempt to kill the treaty in the House of Representatives in

April 1796, and the upcoming retirement of Washington. Indeed the two issues were closely connected in his mind.

In January 1796, the French foreign minister, Charles Delacroix, drew up a plan to deal with France's recalcitrant ally. France's minister in Philadelphia, Pierre Auguste Adet would help the Republicans to elect Jefferson to the presidency, after which the United States would renounce the Jay treaty and invade Canada. The previous year, during negotiations leading to Spain's departure from the war, the French had tried to persuade Madrid to retrocede Louisiana. In March 1796, Adet dispatched a French cartographer to reconnoiter the Mississippi Valley. The dream of a second North American empire was still alive. One may question how seriously the rest of the Directory took Delacroix's plan, but there is no doubt that the French, with the help of local supporters, were planning to intervene in American politics. The Jay treaty, meanwhile, prompted a new French maritime policy. In July 1796, the Directory announced that French raiders would confiscate British goods found on American ships. Or rather they would take *all* goods carried on American ships headed for British ports, in theory paying for what they decided was not British property.³³

Hamilton warned his protégé and successor, Oliver Wolcott: "The Government must play a skilful card or all is lost." A "faithful organ" of the administration should be sent to Paris to explain the treaty. If the French claimed the West Indian guarantee, they should be told—in contradiction with Hamilton's real views—that it was up to Congress to decide. "For to gain time is everything."³⁴ Hamilton emphasized to Washington, "It is all important that the people should be satisfied that the Government has made every exertion to avert Rupture as early as possible." If no explanation were given, it would "bring serious censure upon the Executive. It will be said that it did not display as much zeal to avoid misunderstanding with France as with G Britain [in 1794]."³⁵

By "playing a skilful card," Hamilton meant above all fostering the appearance of absolute even-handedness on the part of the Washington administration with respect to the British and the French. The onus of a possible break must be seen to fall squarely on the shoulders of Paris. Break or no break, the situation must not be allowed to help the Republicans recover from their defeat on the treaty and to advance their fortunes in the elections. Such was the state of Hamilton's mind when Washington asked him to help prepare a farewell message in mid-1796.

Hamilton's contribution was to rewrite Washington's draft in such a way that it could not be accused of being a Federalist apology or a piece of election-year propaganda—even though it was both. Among other things, Hamilton eliminated Washington's reference to the "virulent abuse" the president had suffered at the hands of pro-French newspapers. In Hamilton's version, Washington was not a self-pitying victim but a sage and self-effacing patriarch. His counsels were those "of an old and affectionate friend—counsels suggested by laborious reflection and matured by a various experience."³⁶ If readers drew the conclusion that France and its domestic supporters were the real threats to peace and union and that the French alliance was a dangerous anachronism, so much the better. But Hamilton's phraseology did not betray the slightest bias. If anything, Hamilton's version conveyed the impression of greater impartiality than Washington's, while making the same basic points: "nothing is more essential than that antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others should be avoided." It also evinced a somewhat greater deference to the requirements of the French treaty: "The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign Nations ought to be to have as little political connection with them as possible—so far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled—with circumspection indeed but with perfect good faith."³⁷

In contrast to Washington's unequivocal call for no foreign engagements, Hamilton left the door open to "occasional alliances for temporary emergencies." This was a

reminder that alliances *were* sometimes necessary but should last no longer than the interests of the parties dictated. Hamilton added: "Europe has a set of primary interests which have none or a very remote relation to us." Hence America would be unwise to implicate itself in the "ordinary vicissitudes" of European politics. It is hard to imagine that he really believed the first point, a cliché contradicted by reality. The second point begged the question: what about Europe's extraordinary vicissitudes, the bid for hegemony of a Louis XIV or the current French regime? Washington's draft spoke of the day when America would be able "to bid defiance, in a just cause, to any earthly power." For Hamilton, "the period [was] not distant . . . when we may choose peace or war as our interest guided by justice shall dictate." Washington let Hamilton's more explicit language stand.³⁸ Hamilton's purpose was to discredit, without openly repudiating, the alliance with France, while nudging the address toward a recognition of America's long-term inseparability from the European state system that it otherwise would not have had.³⁹

When it came to discrediting the alliance, however, Hamilton's efforts were of limited effect compared to those of the Directory itself. At the end of October 1796, a month after the publication of the Farewell Address, the French minister Adet wrote Secretary of State Thomas Pickering to announce France's aggressive new policy toward American shipping. In an insulting flourish, he leaked his letter to the pro-French Philadelphia *Aurora*. Adet's maneuver, coordinated with local Republican leaders, was designed to influence the popular election of presidential electors in Pennsylvania, scheduled for November 3.⁴⁰ Adet upped the ante in a second letter on November 15, 1796. Declaring the Jay treaty the equivalent of an Anglo-American alliance, he announced that both the commercial relations enshrined in the Franco-American treaty, and his own functions as minister, were suspended until the U.S. government embraced its old policy of

friendship. The message could be interpreted as an ultimatum: either elect Jefferson, the Republican candidate for president, or face war with France.

Though Adet's first message probably helped the Republicans in Pennsylvania, historians generally agree with Hamilton's assessment that heavy-handed French interference served "in the main" to rally public support for a Federalist administration. The French had overplayed their hand. The Federalist candidate for president, John Adams, defeated Jefferson by a margin of seventy-one electoral votes to sixty-eight.⁴¹

VI

During the early days of the new administration, Hamilton's letters and articles display conflicting preoccupations. On one hand, he was progressively outraged by reports of French attacks on American shipping, and Republican passivity in the face of behavior he considered more egregious than that of the British in 1793–94. On the other, he saw the need for the Federalists to bend over backward to appear even-handed in the domestic arena, while the crumbling of the First Coalition and France's growing power fed his fear of a direct French attack on the United States.⁴² Underlying all this was a nagging uncertainty: with a new president in Philadelphia, would he continue to be part of the game?⁴³

"The question now," he wrote in February 1797, "is whether she [France] shall be aggrandized by new acquisitions, and her enemies reduced by dismemberments, to a degree, which may render her the Mistress of Europe, and *consequently* in great measure of America." So much for the view that Europe and America were separate systems whose vicissitudes had no connection with one another! Hamilton spelled out what he meant to his friend Secretary of War James McHenry: "If things shall so turn that Austria is driven to make peace & England left to contend alone—who can guarantee us that France may not *sport* in this country a *proseliting* army?"⁴⁴

Hamilton's obsession became defensive measures combined with a mission to try to preserve peace, gain redress for the spoliations, and downgrade political relations. He wished to "get rid of that [the French] Treaty by mutual *consent*," or failing that, to replace the guarantee with a more limited commitment, and one non-operable in the present war.⁴⁵ This time, the mission was to be a three man affair including a prominent Republican like Madison, a middle of the road figure, and a Federalist chaperone. If France refused to receive it, still "the great advantage results of shewing in the most glaring light to our people her unreasonableness—of disarming a party of the plea that all has not been done which might be done—of refuting completely the charge that the *actual* administration desires War with France."⁴⁶ Though he failed to persuade his Federalist friends of the idea, Adams himself decided to adopt it. (John Marshall, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and Elbridge Gerry were dispatched to Paris.) Indeed, during the early days of the administration, there was reason to believe that Hamilton and the new president would see eye to eye.⁴⁷

This was not to be the case. Hamilton's famous rivalry with Adams, like the one with Jefferson, grew out of a series of political and philosophical differences, combined with feelings of mutual suspicion and contempt. Adams, basically a nativist, looked on Hamilton as a foreigner and power-grabbing opportunist. He disliked Hamilton's domestic fiscal program and believed with some reason that his ostensible ally had opposed him in the election of 1796. (Hamilton had expressed a preference to friends for the Federalist vice presidential candidate, Thomas Pinckney.) Hamilton, at times an intellectual snob, thought Adams was overrated as a statesman and thinker, and doubted whether a man noted for his vanity and irascibility was temperamentally fit for the job. When it came to foreign policy, the basic disagreement once again revolved around the French.

Though no Francophile or partisan of the Revolution, Adams shared the Republicans' animosity toward the British. He later spelled out his basic approach to foreign policy as follows:

1. That neutrality in the wars of Europe is our truest policy; and to preserve this alliance ought to be avoided as much and as long as possible. But, if we should be driven to the necessity of an alliance,
2. then France is our natural ally; and
3. that Great Britain is the last power, to which we should, in any, [except] the last extremity, resort for any alliance, political or military.⁴⁸

In early 1798, when the probable failure of the peace mission made war with France appear likely, Adams wrote his cabinet: "Will it not be imprudent in us to connect ourselves with Britain in any manner, that may impede us in embracing the first favourable moment of opportunity to make a separate peace?"⁴⁹ Hamilton's view (conveyed through McHenry) was that a formal alliance with Britain would indeed be risky and unnecessary but that, in view of a possible war, the United States and Britain should begin to plan joint action against Louisiana, the Floridas, and Spain's South American possessions.⁵⁰

Not long after this exchange, news arrived of the attempt of messieurs "X," "Y," and "Z" (agents of the Directory) to solicit bribes from the American envoys as a condition for beginning a negotiation. A wave of anti-French feeling swept through the country. The treaties with France were suspended and American vessels were authorized to attack French cruisers and privateers. Federalists in Congress pushed through measures—the notorious alien and sedition acts—designed to clamp down on pro-French and Republican dissent. Last but not least, Congress passed a law expanding the existing regular army from four to sixteen regiments. Adams recalled Washington to be titular head of the "new army" but bitterly resisted the appointment of Hamilton as second-ranking officer and

day-to-day commander. After a bureaucratic tug of war with Hamilton's supporters, Adams threw in the towel.

The question of Hamilton's intentions and role during the "quasi war" of 1798–1800 continues to stir debate and to sully his historical reputation. For a long line of pro-Adams commentators (beginning with Adams's grandson, Charles Francis Adams), Hamilton sought to cover himself with glory in a quixotic campaign against the Spanish empire, to use the iron fist against Republican resistance (centered in Virginia) to Federalist policy, and even to alter the regime in an authoritarian direction. According to Joseph Ellis, for example, Hamilton "hoped to march his conquering army through Virginia" and then all the way to Peru, offering the intervening territories "membership in an expanded American republic."⁵¹ Naturally, Hamilton's partisans tell a different story: the former aide-de-camp was not pursuing juvenile dreams of glory, but following the dictates of duty. During the anti-French hysteria provoked by the XYZ revelations, he was an isolated voice of moderation. Hamilton was not a would-be Cromwell but "an American Churchill warning of a gathering storm about to vent its fury on the Western Hemisphere."⁵²

The truth, as is often the case, lies somewhere in between. There is no real evidence that Hamilton intended to use the army to crush pro-French dissent or to tamper with the constitution. At the same time, there can be little doubt that he desired, assumed, planned for, and tried to hasten a war with Spain and France. Though he occasionally referred to South America, his primary objective was closer to home, and of *long-standing importance*: opening the Mississippi and preventing a new French empire in America by taking control of New Orleans and the Floridas. The United States would provide the army. Britain would provide the fleet. Though he rarely dwelled on it, there was undoubtedly an additional consideration, one he cited in a newspaper article in April 1798: "History proves, that Great Britain has repeatedly upheld the balance of power there [in Europe], in

opposition to the grasping ambition of France." By acting together with Britain the United States would play a part—in its own interest—in carrying out this historic task.⁵³

But this is not the whole story. In an August 1798 letter to Rufus King, U.S. minister to London Hamilton spelled out the personal part he envisioned: "With regard to the enterprise in question I wish it much to be undertaken but I should be glad that the principal agency was in the UStates—they to furnish the whole land force necessary. The command in that case would very naturally fall upon me."⁵⁴ Not long before this Hamilton had referred to his fellow former artillery officer Napoleon Bonaparte as "that unequalled conquerer, from whom it is painful to detract; in whom one would wish to find virtues worthy of his shining talents."⁵⁵ Though not a would-be Napoleon, did Hamilton covet the taste of Napoleonic renown that the conquest of New Orleans would bring him? It is inconceivable that he did not.

Hamilton secured Washington's endorsement of an offensive strategy for the new army and worked long and hard to overcome daunting (and at times comical) problems of recruitment and supply. Against the advice of the commander of the regular army on the western frontier, General James Wilkinson, Hamilton pushed through a plan to create a river-borne strike force based near Louisville, KY, able to carry out a rapid attack on New Orleans from the north. In the final analysis, however, the fate of the army project depended on at least two factors beyond Hamilton's control. The first factor was the French. Hamilton, like the British government for a time, assumed that France would provide a pretext for war by taking New Orleans from the Spanish or otherwise provoking the United States. Unfortunately for Hamilton, the French had other plans.

In mid-1798, Napoleon committed a large army to what truly *was* a quixotic venture: a campaign in the Middle East. Nelson's destruction of the French fleet at the battle of the Nile in August 1798 meant that the French were in no position for the time being to conduct operations in the Western Hemisphere. Indeed, Paris grew concerned

about a possible Anglo-American naval agreement, and began to signal that it wanted a settlement with the United States. Hamilton's frustration with these developments was evident by early 1799. Fearing that Lafayette might be sent to negotiate a settlement, Hamilton wrote him to try to nip the idea in the bud. To Congressman Harrison Gray Otis, chairman of the House committee on defense, he recommended a law empowering the president, in case negotiations had not begun by August 1, or had begun but ended in failure, to declare that a state of war existed, and to send U.S. forces into action. "If France is really desirous of accommodation, this plan will accelerate her measures to bring it about." When had the Directory, he probably reasoned, complied with an ultimatum from a country like the United States? If France did not want a deal, "it is best to anticipate her final vengeance, and to throw whatever weight we have into the Scale opposed to her."⁵⁶

The second factor Hamilton could not control was the president. Unfortunately for Hamilton, Adams, too, had other plans. By nominating a new minister to France in February 1799, and after some hesitation sending another three-man peace mission in October, Adams undermined the rationale for Hamilton's army and rendered its use in battle increasingly remote. It is difficult to rank the reasons for Adams's embrace of peace talks in the face of High Federalist opposition and the plausible argument that French government could not be trusted. There would seem to be at least four: first, Adams recognized that the recent mobilization efforts—the anti-sedition laws, the new regiments, the taxes imposed to pay for them—were increasingly despised by the public and grist for the mill of the Republican opposition to his administration; second, a formal state of war with France was not necessary but if it came would strengthen the argument for cooperation with the British; third, a final attempt to negotiate would put France to the test and unite American opinion in case of failure; last but not least, having been forced to swallow Hamilton's appointment as second-in-command of the army, and worried about

the power he might accumulate in that capacity, Adams was determined to do all he could to deny the West Indian interloper his splendid war.

Adams's decision to seek peace with France in late 1799, followed soon after by Washington's death and the dissolution of the new army, marked the effective end of Hamilton's public life. By way of epilogue, he pursued a final objective: the thwarting of Aaron Burr. The reasons for his obsession with Burr were numerous, but one in particular deserves mention. For Hamilton, Burr was not only ambitious, unprincipled, and—because of his large debts—subject to bribery, he was a well-known partisan of the French Revolution and Napoleon! In fact, Hamilton told Gouverneur Morris, there was the rub: if chosen president by the House of Representatives after the deadlocked 1800 election, Burr would be bought by the French and take the United States into the war: "He is bankrupt beyond redemption except by the resources that grow out of war and disorder or by a sale to a foreign power or by great peculation. War with Great Britain would be the immediate instrument. He is sanguine enough to hope every thing—daring enough to attempt every thing—wicked enough to scruple nothing."⁵⁷ In opposing Burr in 1800, Hamilton acted, among other reasons, on the basis of his longstanding preoccupation with the French.

VII

It is clear that the attempt to free the United States from the risks entailed in the 1778 French alliance, and to prevent France from creating a new empire that would control the Mississippi Valley and threaten U.S. territory, was a central theme of Hamilton's career. Just as Jefferson and Madison considered the grand project begun in 1776 incomplete as long as the new nation remained dependent on British goods and capital and subject to British commercial discrimination, Hamilton considered it incomplete as long as the United States remained subject to the political will of France. The French Revolution and

subsequent European war brought this Federalist-Republican disagreement to a boil, but they were not its basic cause.

It would be misleading to conclude that Hamilton was single-handedly responsible for America's disentanglement from its first permanent alliance. Ironically, it was the peace mission dispatched by Adams and opposed by Hamilton that reached an agreement terminating the alliance (the Convention of Môtrefontaine, signed September 30, 1800) by consent of the two sides. But Hamilton was undoubtedly the most consistent and influential spokesman for the party that favored a reorientation of U.S. foreign policy away from France.

Does this mean that Hamilton was America's founding Francophobe, the intellectual father of those Americans who today see France as congenitally untrustworthy, driven by resentment and envy of American power, and bent on thwarting the legitimate foreign policy objectives of the United States?⁵⁸

The answer is no. Although Hamilton shared to a degree the typical Anglo-American Protestant suspicion of the French character, he did not see the French—or any other nation—as congenitally untrustworthy or anti-American. What he once said of individuals, applied to nations: "The supposition of universal venality in human nature is little less an error in political reasoning than the supposition of universal rectitude."⁵⁹ Nations did not always keep their word, and were subject to perverse passions. But above all they pursued their selfish interests. Given the competitive and violent nature of the state system—one in which it was foolish to show or expect gratitude—nations had little choice. This was true of France. It was true of Britain. It was true of the United States. The fact of the matter, in Hamilton's view, was that once the War of Independence had ended, American and French interests no longer coincided. France, harboring dreams of a new empire, wanted a weak and dependent America and had little to offer commercially. Britain looked with equanimity on an America that extended at least as far as the Mississippi, while U.S. and

British economic interests, and later geopolitical interests vis-à-vis France, in Hamilton's view, fitted like hand and glove.

If he were looking at Franco-American relations today, Hamilton would readily see (to resort to a similar cliché) that the shoe is on the other foot. If France was the aspiring hyper-power of the 1790s, now it is the United States that appears to aspire to world hegemony, and in ways which directly impinge on the interests of the French. It is doubtful whether Hamilton would condemn France, or question its motives, for trying to restrain and counterbalance a nation as powerful and overbearing as the United States, and to preserve some margin for maneuver for itself. That is what weaker states have always done. It could be added that what Hamilton abhorred and feared most about French policy in the 1790s was its radicalism and loss of self restraint. After 1793, the French were no longer pursuing a legitimate defensive war but seemed bent on changing regimes in their own image across Europe. By the end of the decade, they seemed bent on amassing wealth and power as ends in themselves.

Does this mean that today's hegemonists and practitioners of preventive war have *no* claim to Hamilton's legacy? Here the answer is a little more complicated. The basic, unanswered question at the heart of Hamilton's outlook is once you have succeeded in creating institutions and pursuing policies which allow an infant state to survive and prosper, what is to prevent you at a later stage from over-reaching yourself abroad and endangering liberty at home? Is it really possible to be rich and austere, powerful and moderate, imperial and republican at the same time? The foreign policy legacy of Jefferson is fundamentally ambiguous because his message can be read to support the notion of America as passive exemplar of liberal values, but also of America as crusader, with a mission to reform the world. It would be comforting to think that Hamilton is different, that he left behind a clear set of prescriptions, and that his legacy is the rightful property of one side or the other—the prudent realists or the bold hegemonists—in today's foreign

policy debate. But this is not the case. In the end, Hamilton's message, like Jefferson's, is ambiguous. One part of it, preoccupied with survival and consolidation, is prudence, solvency, and the achievement of strength through peace. The other part, preoccupied with power and glory, is the "imperial temptation": the impulse to cut Gordian knots with force, the tendency toward hubris, and the loss of self-control.⁶⁰ Hamilton's achievements entitle him to a sustained revival of interest in his life and a rank second to none in the national pantheon. But his career counsels skepticism and vigilance toward those who invoke the Machiavellian prerogative to "be not good" in the name of national security, or who propose world hegemony as a compelling national goal.

Endnotes

1. "Conversation with Comte de Moustier," Sept. 13, 1789, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (hereafter cited as *PAH*), 5:306–08.
2. See Alexander Hamilton (hereafter cited as AH), "Remarks on the Quebec Bill," parts one and two, *PAH*, 1:165–76.
3. AH, "The Farmer Refuted," Feb. 23, 1775, *PAH*, 1:155–64. See also Gilbert L. Lycan, *Alexander Hamilton and American Foreign Policy: A Design for Greatness* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 47.
4. Morris to Washington (hereafter GW), Apr. 29, 1789, in Morris, *A Diary of the French Revolution*, 2 vols., ed. Beatrix Cary Davenport (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 61; description of Paris, *ibid.*, 73.
5. Thomas Jefferson (hereafter TJ) refers to England as "the harlot" in a famous letter to Philip Mazzei, Apr. 24, 1796, quoted in Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 869, n. 82.
6. James Thomas Flexner, *The Young Hamilton* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), 158. AH to Laurens, May 22, 1779, *PAH*, 2:53; AH to Laurens, Feb. 4, 1781, *ibid.*, 2:26: 407.
7. On close Franco-American ties, see AH to the Vicomte de Noailles, Apr. 4, May 18, May 24, 1782, *PAH*, 26: 424–28. On Shelburne's offer, AH to GW, Mar. 17, 1783, *PAH*, 3:291.
8. Congressional resolution on Armed Neutrality quoted in Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), 75.

9. On pro-French party, AH, Letter From Alexander Hamilton, Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq. President of the United States, Oct. 24, 1800, *PAH*, 25:188.

10. TJ to William Short, Jan. 3, 1793, in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, et al., 32 vols. to date (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950–) (hereafter cited as PTJ), 25:14.

11. AH to Lafayette, Oct. 6, 1789, *PAH*, 5:425.

12. "Pacificus No. 2," July 3, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:55–63.

13. As Daniel Lang argues, "The memory of this successful manipulation of the European balance system [during the war] to force concessions from Britain would . . . remain the basis on which Jeffersonian strategic thinking rested for the next three decades." *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 71. See also Charles R. Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Toward the United States, 1783–1795* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969), 21–31; Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 70–74. On Jefferson's English purchases, see *ibid.*, 72. TJ letter to Madison, quoted in Lang, *Foreign Policy*, 78. Along with the above, an insightful source on Jefferson's foreign policy views is Doron S. Ben-Atar, *The Origins of Jeffersonian Commercial Policy and Diplomacy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

14. They were located at Dutchman's Point and Pointe au Fer at the north end of Lake Champlain; , Oswegatchie on the St. Lawrence River; Oswego on Lake Ontario; Niagara, between Lakes Ontario and Erie; Detroit, between Lakes Erie and Huron; and Michilimackinac, controlling the passages connecting Lakes Huron, Michigan, and Superior.

15. Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 123–24, 400 (The words quoted are those of the authors rather than AH himself). On the link between import duties and federal revenues, see also Forrest McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1979), 151. On British investment and Anglo-American economic relations in general, see Bradford Perkins, *The First Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1795–1805* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955), 10–14. Over forty years after its publication, this remains an essential source on the 1790s. Another valuable source is Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*. According to Ritcheson (188), the total value of imports into the U.S. between Aug. 1789 and Sept. 1790 was \$15,388,409. Of this, \$13,797,168 came from Britain. On British investment in the U.S. public debt, see *ibid.*, 205–209. According to Article 2 of the treaty, "His Britannic Majesty shall, with all convenient speed . . . withdraw his Armies, Garrisons & Fleets from the said United States and from every Port, Place and Harbour within the same." For the full text, see Hunter Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America* (Washington, 1931), 2:151–56.

16. AH conversation with Major George Beckwith, as reported by Beckwith to Lord Dorchester, *PAH*, 5:482–90. Emphasis in original.

17. *PAH*, 7: 37–57. At the end of his paper Hamilton addressed a second contingency, one he said was actually more likely to materialize. This was that the British would cross U.S. territory *without* asking permission. If, he argued, British forces moved through uninhabited country, resulting in no contact with U.S. citizens or posts, it would be enough to remonstrate, without committing the United States to war. "But, if as it is to be feared will necessarily be the case, our post on the

Wabash should be *forced* . . . there seems to be no alternative but to go to war with them; unwelcome as it may be. It seems to be this, or absolute and unqualified humiliation: Which . . . is in almost every situation a greater evil than war."

18. AH conversation with Beckwith, Feb. 16, 1791, *PAH*, 8: 44.

19. On AH's statement and GW's comment, see "Notes of Cabinet Meeting on Southern Indians and Spain," Oct. 31, 1792, *PTJ*, 24:547–49.

20. On Genet's orders, see Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 332–34; ed. note, *PTJ*, 26: 685–86.

21. Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 336, 355; Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948–81), 3:11; Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 124. Lycan, in *Alexander Hamilton and American Foreign Policy*, p. 153, adopts a similar line. "The French Frenzy" is the title of chap 6. of Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1974) (orig. pub. 1958). See also John Alexander Carroll and Mary Wells Ashworth, *George Washington: A Biography* (New York: Scribner's, 1957), 7:4.

22. AH's written argument observed that the Revolution had been "attended with circumstances, which militate against a full conviction of its having been brought to its present *stage*, by such a *free, regular, and deliberate* act of the nation, and with such a spirit of justice and humanity, as ought to silence all scruples about the validity of what has been done, and the morality of aiding it, even if consistent with policy." Suspension of the treaties now, he added, would actually be less offensive to France than refusing in the breach to honor the treaty guarantee, as the United States, for reasons of self-preservation, would surely have to do. See AH and Henry Knox to GW, May 2, 1793, *PAH*, 14: 367–96.

23. TJ to JM, May 13, 1793, *PTJ*, 26:25–27; TJ to Monroe, May 5, 1793, *ibid.*, 25:660–63; TJ to JM, June 9, 1793, *ibid.*, 26:239–42.

24. AH conversations with Hammond, between April 2 and May 17, 1793 (as reported by Hammond to Grenville), *PAH*, 14:273–74. Grenville had written Hammond explaining British policy on March 12, 1793. Writing later in a Philadelphia newspaper, Hamilton called insistence on "free ships make free goods" under the circumstances a "species of Knight errantry." See "No Jacobin No. III," Aug. 8, 1793, *PAH*, 15:206.

25. See TJ to Hammond, May 15, 1793, *ibid.*, 26:38–40. On cabinet meeting see Flexner, *George Washington*, 42; Carrol and Ashworth, *George Washington*, 68. TJ, "Notes on the *Citoyen Genêt* and Its Prizes," May 20, 1793, *PTJ*, 26:71–72. See also TJ memo to GW, April 28, 1793, *ibid.*, 25:611.

26. "Pacifcus No. 4," July 10, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:82–86; "Pacifcus No. 5," July 13–17, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:90–95.

27. "Pacifcus No. 6," July 17, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:100–106; "Pacifcus No. 7," July 27, 1793, *ibid.*, 15:130–35.

28. Samuel F. Bemis, *Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 373; Broadus Mitchell, *Alexander Hamilton: The National Adventure*, 2 vols., 2:331; De Conde, *Entangling Alliance*, 110; Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 396. According to Lawrence S. Kaplan, "it was Hamilton who crafted the instructions Jay was to follow." *Alexander Hamilton: Ambivalent Anglophile* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2002), 114. To Lawrence's credit, he adds (119) that "Jay was much more than Hamilton's mouthpiece."

29. AH to GW, Apr. 14, 1794, *PAH*, 16:266–79.

30. A less foreseen but highly significant benefit was the treaty's impact on Madrid. Fearing that the treaty portended an Anglo-American alliance against them, the Spanish gave in to U.S. demands for free navigation of the Mississippi and a port of deposit at New Orleans. Those provisions, along with the abandonment of Spanish claims in the Old Southwest (east of the Mississippi and north of West Florida), were included in the Treaty of San Lorenzo el Real (or "Pinckney's treaty," after Thomas Pinckney who negotiated it), signed October 27, 1795.

31. They pointed, for example to article 25 which said that British privateers could now enter U.S. harbors with their prizes, and neither side was to receive privateers or prizes of the other's enemies. The article contained the rather disingenuous proviso that nothing in the treaty shall "be construed or operate contrary to former and existing public treaties" with other states. To the fury of critics, moreover, the United States acquiesced in the British definition of neutral rights. Article 17 authorized British ships to confiscate enemy property on neutral ships. Article 18 provided that food and provisions could at times be considered contraband, though in such cases they would be paid for in full.

32. TJ to Philip Mazzei, Apr. 24, 1796, quoted in Lycan, *Alexander Hamilton and American Foreign Policy*, 242. TJ to Madison, September 21, 1795, quoted in *PAH*, 18:478, "Introductory Note."

33. Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 508–09, on France and the Jay treaty; Flexner, *George Washington*, 317; AH to GW, June 16, 1796, *PAH*, 20: 225–26.

34. AH to Wolcott, June 15, 1796, *ibid.*, 20:223–24; AH to GW, May 20, 1796, *ibid.*, 20:190–95.

35. AH to GW, June 16, 1796, *ibid.*, 20:225–26; AH to Wolcott, June 15, 1796, *ibid.*, 20:223–24; AH to GW, July 5, 1796, *ibid.*, 20:246–47.

36. AH to GW, July 30, 1796, *PAH*, 20:265. For the Hamilton draft, *ibid.*, 20:265–88. An example of toned down "egotism" is the passage (287) beginning, "Neither ambition nor interest has been the impelling cause of my actions." See also, *ibid.*, 20:267–69, 286.

37. *Ibid.*, 20:282, 284; Flexner, *George Washington*, 301.

38. Flexner, *George Washington*, 284–85; Victor Hugo Paltsits, *Washington's Farewell Address* (New York: New York Public Library, 1935), 146, 155, 170. Hamilton's version stood in this case except that Washington changed the word "dictate" to "counsel."

39. On the overall question of authorship, Joseph Ellis sums up the matter thusly: "Some of the words were Madison's; most of the words were Hamilton's; all the ideas were Washington's."

Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Knopf, 2000), 148. It is more accurate to say that a few of the words were Madison's, many of the words were Hamilton's, and most, but certainly not all, of the ideas, were Washington's.

40. *American State Papers, Foreign Relations*, 1:576–77; Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 520–21.

41. "The Answer" by "Americanus", Dec. 8, 1796, *ibid.*, 20:421–34. John C. Miller, *Alexander Hamilton: Portrait in Paradox* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 450; DeConde, *Entangling Alliance*, 476–77.

42. The final months of the Washington administration (Adams was inaugurated on March 4, 1797) coincided with the crumbling of the First Coalition against France. Bonaparte's victories over the Austrians at Arcola, Rivoli, and Mantua raised the prospect that France's main continental opponent would be knocked out of the war. In October 1796, the British had proposed peace to France on the basis of the return of Belgium to Austria. Even before their Italian successes, the French had rejected British terms. To further complicate matters, France and Spain were now allies, and the Royal Navy faced the combined fleets of France, Spain, and the Netherlands. The death of Catherine the Great in November 1796, raised the prospect that Russia would also leave the war.

43. AH to King, Feb. 15, 1797, *PAH*, 20:515; AH to GW, comparing French and British behavior, Jan. 19, 1797, *ibid.*, 20:469–70.

44. "The Warning No. II," Feb. 7, 1797, *ibid.*, 20:509–512 (emphasis added). AH to McHenry, Mar. 22, 1797, *ibid.*, 20: 575.

45. AH to GW, Jan. 25–31, 1797, *ibid.*, 20:480–81; AH to Sedgwick, Feb. 26, 1797, *ibid.*, 20:521–23.

46. AH to McHenry, Mar. 22, 1797, *ibid.*, 20:574–75; AH to Pickering, Mar. 29, 1797, *ibid.*, 20:556–57. For similar appeals on the commission, see AH to Pickering, Mar. 22, 1797, *ibid.*, 20:545–46; AH to Wolcott, Mar. 30, 1797, *ibid.*, 20:567–68; AH to William Loughton Smith, Apr. 5, 1797, *ibid.*, 21:20–21.

47. Hamilton wrote Rufus King, "I believe there is no danger of want of firmness in the Executive. If he is not ill-advised he will not want prudence. I mean that I believe that he is himself disposed to a prudently firm course." AH to King, Apr. 8, 1797, *PAH*, 21:26.

48. For Adams's philosophy of foreign affairs, see Adams to James Lloyd, Mar. 29, 1815, John Adams, *Works of John Adams*, 10 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1851–65; reprinted, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 10:147.

49. McHenry to AH, Jan. 26, 1798, enclosing Adams's memo to his cabinet, Jan. 24, 1798, *PAH*, 21: 339–40.

50. AH to McHenry, Jan. 27–Feb. 11, 1798, *PAH*, 21:341–46. Hamilton presumably meant New Orleans would be American as well. In transmitting this to Adams, McHenry specified New Orleans. See Manning J. Dauer, *The Adams Federalists* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), 178.

51. Charles Francis Adams, *The Life of John Adams* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1871), 532, 520–21, 525, 540–41; Ellis, *Founding Brothers*, 194.

52. See McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton*, 339, 344; Karl-Friedrich Walling, *Republican Empire: Alexander Hamilton on War and Free Government* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 210, and chap. 9 in general.

53. AH, "The Stand No. IV," Apr. 12, 1798, *ibid.*, 21: 412–13.

54. He wrote Miranda that it was now too late in the year, "the Winter however may mature the project." "The plan in my opinion ought to be, a fleet of Great Britain, an army of the states." The United States was raising a force of about twelve thousand men. "I am appointed second in command." On an earlier letter from Miranda (dated February 7, 1798), Hamilton had noted, "I shall not answer because I consider him as an intriguing adventurer." Perhaps he chose to answer this time (though he told King to decide, depending on circumstances, whether to deliver it) because he was confident that he, and not the Venezuelan, would be in command. See AH to King, Aug. 22, 1798, *PAH*, 22: 154–55; AH to Miranda, Aug. 22, 1798, *ibid.*, 22: 155–56. Miranda to AH, Apr. 6 [June 7], 1798, *PAH*, 21: 399–402. Miranda had sent this letter c/o Pickering who forwarded it to Hamilton. See Pickering to AH, Aug. 21, [–22] 1798, *PAH*, 22: 147. See also Miranda to AH, Feb. 7, 1798, *PAH*, 21: 348–50, with Hamilton's annotation.

55. AH to Wolcott (with enclosure), June 5, 1798, *ibid.*, 21: 485–87; AH, "The Stand No. III," April 7, 1798, *ibid.*, 21:404; Walling, *Republican Empire*, 209.

56. AH to Lafayette, Jan. 6, 1799, *ibid.*, 22: 404–05; see also Lafayette to AH, Aug. 12, 1798, *ibid.*, 22: 71–77. In his letter Lafayette had not mentioned the possibility of becoming minister, but he did express his desire to come to America and urged the U.S. to meet France half way. At any moment, Hamilton warned Otis, Madrid might retrocede Louisiana to Paris. The executive must be equipped with the power "to meet and defeat" such a plan, in other words, to take possession for the United States. Hamilton wrote, "I have been long in the habit of considering the acquisition of those countries as essential to the permanency of the Union, which I consider as very important to the welfare of the whole." He continued, "if universal empire is still to be the pursuit of France, what can tend to defeat the purpose better than to detach South America from Spain, which is the only Channel, through which the riches of *Mexico* and *Peru* are conveyed to France? The Executive ought to be put in a situation to embrace favorable conjunctures for effecting the separation." AH to Otis, Jan. 26, 1799, *ibid.*, 22: 440–41.

57. AH to G. Morris, Dec. 24, 1800, *ibid.*, 25: 271–73.

58. For a convenient summary of this view see John Miller and Mark Molesky, *Our Oldest Enemy: A History of America's Disastrous Relationship with France* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

59. See The Federalist No. 76, in AH et al., 387.

60. "Among the statesmen of the early republic he [Jefferson] is more responsible than any other for warning of the hazards that must attend the role of crusader. Yet he is also the statesman who is more responsible than any for evoking the perennial attractions of this role." Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 256. See by the same authors, *The Imperial Temptation* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1992).