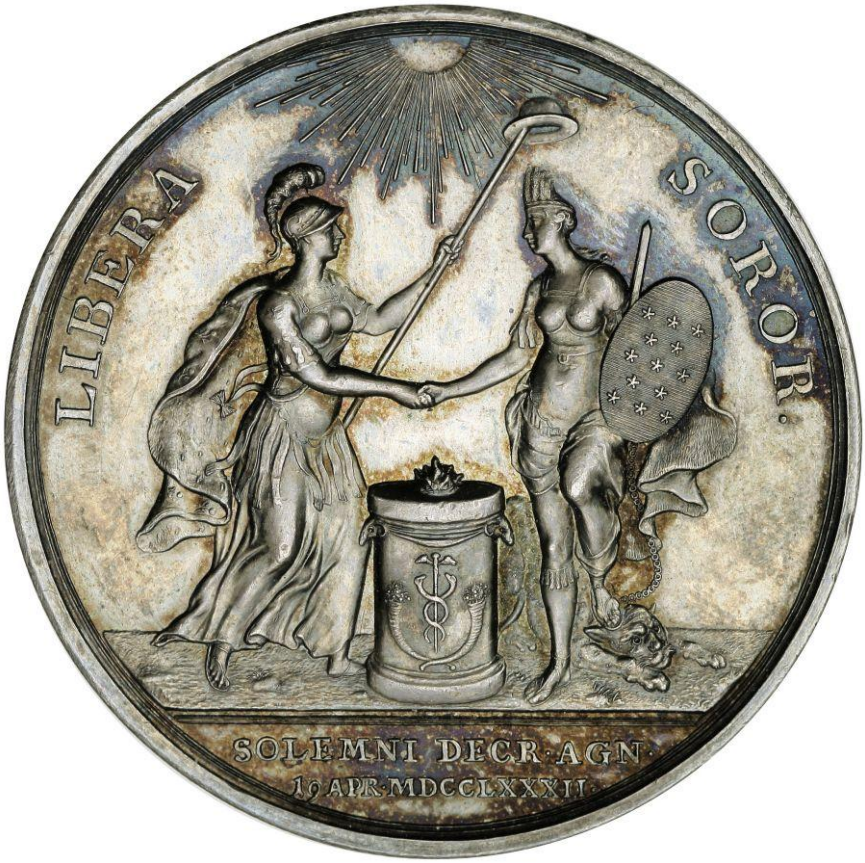
Lessons learned: American diplomats in the Netherlands, 1780-1801



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Supervised by Dr. E.F. van de Bilt

Jurriën Cremers

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"Perhaps we might say that the friendship between the Netherlands and the United States is a story that is not over, a tale of wonder and misunderstanding and friendship and mutual help for two hundred years."

– J.W. Schulte Nordholt, *The Dutch Republic and American Independence* (1982), p. 291

Cover illustration: A silver medallion made by Jean George Holtzhey in honor of the States-General receiving John Adams as an American envoy to the Dutch Republic on 19 April 1782. The front is shown, depicting the United States as "A Free Sister" to the Dutch Republic. The Dutch Republic places a Phrygian Cap, which signifies freedom and the pursuit of liberty, over the United States. The reverse side of the medallion portrays Britain in the form of a unicorn breaking its horn on "the rock of valor".

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Abbreviations:

JA	John Adams
JQA	John Quincy Adams
WVM	William Vans Murray

PJA	Papers of John Adams
DAJA	Diary and Autobiography of John Adams
WJQA	Writings of John Quincy Adams

Introduction

John Adams was convinced that "if there was ever among Nations a natural Alliance, one may be formed between the [American and Dutch] Republicks. (…) The Originals of the two Republicks are so much alike, that the History of the one seems but a Transcript from that of the other."[1] To John Adams, and many Americans of his time, it was clear that the Dutch Republic was useful as an example for state-building as well as an ally. The history of the heroic Dutch struggle against Spanish tyranny in the sixteenth century constituted a useful precedent for the American colonists who resisted British tyranny in the eighteenth century. And for at least the first century of its independence the Dutch Republic had demonstrated that a loosely confederated republic could hold its own on the international stage while enjoying unprecedented economic prosperity. Indeed, a loose confederation of North American states, not unlike the Dutch confederation, prevailed in the war against Britain.[2]

The history and institutions of the Dutch republic were well known – or believed to be well known – to educated people of the eighteenth century. The chapter on federal governance in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) praises the federal institutions of the Dutch republic. Smith's *Wealth of Nation*s (1776) includes dozens of references to the Dutch economic and political experience. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776) admires the Dutch political system, arguing that "Holland without a king hath enjoyed more peace for this last century than any of the monarchical governments in Europe".[3] In the United States parallels with Dutch politics were noted in the discussions that preceded adoption of the Articles of Confederation, in letters between revolutionary leaders, and in both the federalist and antifederalist papers. The general disposition of eighteenth-century Americans was that "we may derive from Holland lessons very beneficial to ourselves".[4]

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[1] JA, A Memorial To their High Mightinesses, the States General of the United Provinces of the Low Countries, 19 Apr. 1781, PJA 11:276-77.
[2] For a detailed description of the history of the Dutch Republic see J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (London 1995).
[3] Thomas Paine, *The Life and Writings of*; edited by D.E. Wheeler (10 vols.; New York 1908) 2:13, 50-51.
[4] J. Elliot (ed.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adaption of the Federal Constitution* (5 vols.; Washington, D.C., 1854) 3:255.

The final decades of the eighteenth century were of critical importance for the still fragile United States. Released from British patronage, the American nation now had to survive on its own in a hostile world engulfed by intrigue and conflict. The American people had embarked on a path to create a new republic which would secure their liberties and inalienable rights. During this critical period of state-building the American nation looked to, among others, the Netherlands as an example. The Dutch people, after all, had shown that a republican state could endure. [5] This thesis will focus on the question what lessons the United States learned from the Netherlands at the end of the eighteenth century, and to what extent the Netherlands could serve as an example for the new American nation.

This thesis will attempt to answer this question by investigating the reports and correspondence of American diplomats sent to the Netherlands. In an age when communications were slow and news from Europe was unreliable, diplomats were considered to be one of the most valuable sources of intelligence on European matters. They reported regularly on political, military, and commercial matters that were of interest to the American government. Diplomatic reports were a steady and relatively reliable supply of information. Though the United States desired to remain independent from European politics, in order to succeed in their war effort the United States desperately sought recognition of its independence by seeking closer ties with European powers. Diplomatic missions were established in, among other places, England, France, Spain, and the Netherlands. The diplomatic missions concentrated on two important responsibilities: reporting on significant activities in their countries of residence and executing formal diplomatic instructions transmitted to them from Congress and later also from the Department of State. The European diplomatic missions would keep the American government well informed and up to date.[6]

Because the Dutch Republic was an important center of European diplomacy as well as an international credit market the American government established a diplomatic

[5] American revolutionaries used reports from France for potential lessons for their own republic. It then seems possible that reports from the Netherlands could also have been used for potential lessons. See J. Appleby, 'Radicalizing the War for Independence: American Responses to the French Revolution', *American Studies* 41: 1 (1996), 7-16.

[6] C.A. van Minnen, *Yankees onder de zeespiegel: de Amerikaanse diplomaten in de Lage Landen en hun berichtgeving, 1815-1850* (Amsterdam 1991), 20-21.

mission there. By 1780 the Congress was confident enough to send a representative to The Hague in the hopes of obtaining a loan and gaining recognition of American independence. The first official envoy to the Dutch Republic was John Adams, who did everything in his power to have the States-General recognize the independence of the United States and him as its official minister. Another important part of his mission was to obtain loans from Dutch bankers to support the American struggle against Britain. After the States-General recognized American independence on 19 April 1782, John's mission was complete. But he was only officially recalled in 1788, and succeeded in 1794 by his son, John Quincy Adams. By the time John Quincy had arrived in The Hague the French armies were already marching north to establish a Batavian Republic. John Quincy's primary mission became to observe the consequences of the French intervention and how the French Directory treated neutral countries and its allies. In 1797 he was succeeded by William Vans Murray, a close acquaintance of both Adamses. Murray was appointed minister to the Batavian Republic at a time when the United States was on the verge of war with France and was engulfed by a political struggle between Federalists and Republicans. He too was instructed to keep a close watch on French action and intentions. Murray was recalled in 1801, when President Jefferson discontinued the office of minister to the Netherlands.

The letters sent by these three diplomats, this paper assumes, were considered to be of significant importance by the American government. The three diplomats, after all, were prominent figures in American politics and were recognized as such. In their own time they were well respected government officials. John Adams, for instance, was an influential member of Congress and his political works on government and constitutions were generally well read and received. He was considered knowledgeable enough on political matters to draft the Model Treaty and the Massachusetts Constitution, which were both used as models for later treaties and constitutions.[7] John Quincy, too, was a respected statesman in his time. One of the people who appreciated him the most was President Washington, who appointed him as minister to the Netherlands at a young age. Washington considered him to be one of the most valuable public officials abroad and

[7] C. Bradley Thompson, *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty* (University Press of Kansas 1998), 23-43; S. Elkins and E. McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (Oxford University Press 1993), 311-13; J. Ferling, *John Adams: a life* (Knoxville 1992), 1-3.

valued his diplomatic reports. Washington's Farewell Address of 1796 was in part inspired by John Quincy's political writings.[8] Finally, during his public career William Vans Murray earned the reputation of being an able statesman and devoted Federalist. During this time he had become personally and politically acquainted with George Washington, who appointed him as minister to the Netherlands, and John Adams, who was President during Murray's diplomatic mission. President Adams had such confidence in his diplomatic abilities that he sent Murray to Paris in 1800 to negotiate a peace with France to end the Quasi-War. Where others had failed, John believed Murray could succeed.[9] All three diplomats were then established statesmen and received important votes of confidence from their peers and political superiors, indicating that their diplomatic reports and any words of caution or praise would be taken seriously.

Moreover, from about 1780 the situation in the Netherlands became increasingly important and of great interest to the American government. John Adams was sent to the Dutch Republic to have the States-General recognize American independence and provide a loan, which would aid the United States in its struggle against Britain. International recognition and aid, including the diplomatic mission to the Netherlands, were of vital importance to the American government. John Quincy Adams arrived in the Netherlands in 1794, a time when the Batavian Republic was being established. Since the outbreak of the French Revolution developments in France were followed intensely from the other side of the Atlantic. The diplomatic mission to the Netherlands suddenly became an ideal means for the United States to observe how France intended to liberate the European people and how it treated its allies. William Vans Murray started his diplomatic mission when foreign relations with France were deteriorating and tensions between the two countries were growing. Murray's reports kept the American government informed about France's plans and designs, and to what extent France controlled the policy of the Batavian Republic – an important American ally. All three diplomats were stationed in the Netherlands during critical periods for American state-

[8] S.F. Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York 1949), 35-37, 62-64.
[9] A. DeConde, 'William Vans Murray's Political Sketches: A Defense of the American Experiment', *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41:4 (Mar. 1955), 627-29; Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 676; Bernard Bailyn calls Murray "a political disciple of John Adams", *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (New York 1967), 372 n50.

building and foreign affairs, indicating that their reports from the Netherlands would not be taken lightly and could prove of significant importance to the United States.

Between 1780 and 1801 these three ministers sent home countless letters – a great deal of which was probably lost at sea – and diligently kept diaries. They regularly reported to their superiors – including the Secretary of State, the President of Congress, and the President of the United States – about the political situation in Europe and the Netherlands, and how it could affect the United States and its policies. Besides the official correspondence between the diplomats and government officials, private correspondence and diaries also play a significant role in this research. In the eighteenth century private correspondence networks enabled people to have confidence in the information transmitted over great distance. They developed communities underpinned by trust and knit together by so-called strong ties, such as a long-term friendship or family alliance – as opposed to so-called weak ties, such as with acquaintances and associates. Thus in their private letters and diaries the diplomats are often more honest and unrestrained than in their letters to their superiors, unraveling to us their passions, hopes, and disappointments. It shows us "the rich particularity of experience" and "the piquant aroma of life".[10] Additionally, sociological theory argues that in studying and portraying another nation, people often expose themselves. They appraise others by their own standards and try to fit them into their own framework and view of the world. In other words, what the diplomats feared or admired about Europe and the Netherlands reveals what they believed to be most important to them and the United States; what they believed the American nation should aim for or avoid.[11] Investigating the official and private correspondence of these three diplomats provides an insight into what preoccupied the minds of eighteenth-century Americans. Through the eyes of American diplomats in the Netherlands we can uncover how eighteenth-century Americans viewed Europe and what they could learn from the events in the Netherlands.

[10] D.J. Boorstin, *America and the Image of Europe: reflections on American thought* (Cleveland 1960), 66-67; Van Minnen, *Yankees onder de zeespiegel*, 9; N. Perl-Rosenthal, 'Private Letters and Public Diplomacy: The Adams Network and the Quasi-War, 1797–1798', *Journal of the Early Republic* 31:2 (Summer 2011), 283-311.

[11] A.N.J. den Hollander, *Visie en Verantwoording. Socoliogische essays over het eigene en het andere* (Assen 1968) 14-16; C. Strout, *The American Image of the Old World* (New York and London 1963), ix-xiii.

Filling a gap

Despite the apparent importance of the Netherlands to the United States – most notably as an important listening-post in Europe – between 1780 and 1801, not much has been written on how the Netherlands could serve as an example to the United States. The few studies that do focus on this time period are limited to Dutch influences on the establishment of the American Constitution in 1787-89.[12] Moreover, previous studies of Dutch-American relations in the eighteenth century tend to ignore or overlook the diplomatic relations between 1780 and 1801. They primarily focus on economic and trade relations or on diplomatic relations up to the Dutch recognition of American independence in 1782. Yet, the political situation in Europe and the Netherlands was becoming increasingly important to the United States as it could affect American politics as well. Maintaining diplomatic relations between the United States and the Netherlands was then an important way for the American government to stay informed about European affairs.

Historical works from the first half of the twentieth century do not provide an in-depth or satisfactory analysis of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Dutch Republic. They tend to consider Dutch-American relations as a small part within another more important framework of diplomacy and foreign relations.[13] The most prominent of these works are Samuel Flagg Bemis's *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (1935) and *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (1950), which focus on the relations of the United States with European superpowers such as France, Britain, and Spain. The European wars in which those powers were involved significantly influenced American foreign policy, and thus in turn influenced Dutch-American relations – which

[12] L.S. Kaplan, 'The Founding Fathers and the Two Confederations: The United States of America and the United Provinces of the Netherlands, 1783-89', in: J.W. Schulte Nordholt en R.P. Swierenga (eds.), *A Bilaterial Bicentennial: a history of Dutch-American relations, 1782-1982* (New York and Amsterdam 1982) 33-48; W.H. Riker, 'Dutch and American Federalism', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 18 (1957), 495-521; J.W. Schulte Nordholt, 'The Example of the Dutch Republic for American Federalism', in: J.C. Boogman and G.N. van der Plaat, *Federalism: History and Current Significance of a Form of Government* (Den Haag 1980), 437-49.

[13] The earliest of these works are Edler's *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution* (1911) and Westermann's *The Netherlands and the United States* (1935). Though the title indicates differently, Edler is primarily interested in the relations between the Dutch Republic and Britain. The United States is only introduced as a section of that framework. Westermann's work only briefly discusses Dutch-American relations in the eighteenth century as a prologue to the more important nineteenth century.

can only be understood within this bigger picture.[14] Like most historians of his time, Bemis does not study the Dutch-American relationship in its own right. In contrast, Van Wijk's *De Republiek en Amerika* (1921) is primarily interested in the relations between the Dutch Republic and the United States. But this study is limited to pamphlets as indicators of foreign relations and otherwise provides a shallow analysis of diplomatic relations.[15]

James Hutson justly argues that prior to about 1980 American historians have not given the Dutch role in the American Revolution the attention that it deserves, and that Dutch historians have not shown much interest in their country's efforts to establish relations with the new American state. Only the bicentennial of the Dutch recognition of American independence in 1982 would provide renewed interest in the Dutch-American relations. From around 1980 historians started to pay more attention to the diplomatic missions on both sides of the Atlantic.[16]

But even the works since then are primarily interested in either trade relations[17] or the diplomatic relations up to only 1782.[18] C.A. van Minnen does discuss the diplomatic missions between 1780 and 1801, but only briefly as a prologue to his study of the Dutch-American diplomatic relations in the nineteenth century.[19] It is true that R.R. Palmer incorporates John Quincy Adams in his study of Dutch-American diplomatic relations. He compares the diplomatic missions of John Adams and his son, and

[14] S.F. Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (New York 1935) 176-7; S.F. Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (New York 1950) 30-31, 43-44, 94-5.
[15] F.W. van Wijk, *De Republiek en Amerika, 1776 tot 1782* (Leiden 1921).
[16] J.H. Hutson, 'John Adams and the Birth of Dutch-American Friendship, 1780-1782', in: J.W. Schulte Nordholt en R.P. Swierenga (eds.), *A Bilaterial Bicentennial: a history of Dutch-American relations, 1782-1982* (New York and Amsterdam 1982) 19-20.
[17] See J.C. Riley, 'Foreign Credit and Fiscal Stability: Dutch Investment in the United States, 1781-1794', *The Journal of American History* 65:3 (Dec. 1978) 654-78; J.C. Riley, 'Financial and Economic Ties: The First Century', in: J.W. Schulte Nordholt en R.P. Swierenga (eds.), *A Bilaterial Bicentennial : a history of Dutch-American relations, 1782-1982* (New York and Amsterdam 1982) 49-65; G.M. Welling, *The prize of neutrality: trade relations between Amsterdam and North America 1771-1817, A Computational Study* (Groningen 1998); R.D. Congelton, 'America's neglected debt to the Dutch, an institutional perspective', *Constitutional Political Economy* 19:1 (2008), 35-59.
[18] J.W. Schulte Nordholt and J.H. Hutson focus on the diplomatic mission of John Adams and end their study with the recognition of American independence in 1782. J.H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington 1980); Hutson, 'John Adams and the Birth of Dutch-American Friendship', 19-32; J.W. Schulte Nordholt, *Voorbeeld in de Verte: De invloed van de Amerikaanse revolutie in Nederland* (Baarn 1979).
[19] C.A. van Minnen, 'Dutch-American Diplomatic Relations', in: H. Krabbedam, C.A. van Minnen, and G. Scott-Smith (eds.), *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations* (Middelburg 2009) 260-261; Van Minnen, *Yankees onder de zeespiegel*, 22-27.

concludes that while the senior Adams felt sympathetic for the Patriot cause the junior Adams kept his distance from Dutch politics. But how this shaped or influenced any form of diplomacy is left in the dark.[20] Even such a seminal work as *Four Centuries of Dutch-American relations, 1609-2009* (2009) only spends one 15-page essay on Dutch-American relations between 1780 and 1801. But even that essay by Wayne te Brake focuses on Dutch and American political situations separately and Dutch-American trade relations, and pays little attention to diplomatic relations and missions.[21]

To be sure, historians have studied the diplomatic missions of John Quincy Adams and William Vans Murray to the Netherlands. Their missions appear to have been studied as a necessary – yet not essential – part of their biographies, but not in their own right within the context of Dutch-American relations and American foreign policy. For instance, in the case of John Quincy historians are more concerned with his time as Secretary of State and President, of which Bemis's *John Quincy Adams and the Foundation of American Foreign Policy* (1949) is a good example. In this work John Quincy's diplomatic mission to the Netherlands is merely considered as a stepping stone towards the more important public offices later in his life. In the case of Murray, historians are more interested in his role during the peace negotiations with France in 1800. Only Hill's biography of Murray seems to seriously discuss his time in the Netherlands.[22] The diplomatic missions are not discussed within the context of American foreign policy or Dutch-American relations.

There appears to be a gap in the literature of Dutch-American diplomatic relations between 1782 and 1801, and this study could then complement the existing literature. This thesis attempts to provide an overview and a more complete picture of Dutch-American diplomatic relations in the final decades of the eighteenth century, focusing on what the Netherlands meant to eighteenth-century Americans and the newly formed United States.

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[20] R.R. Palmer, 'Two Americans in Two Dutch Republics : The Adamses, Father and Son', in: J.W. Schulte Nordholt en R.P. Swierenga (eds.), *A Bilaterial Bicentennial : a history of Dutch-American relations, 1782-1982* (New York and Amsterdam 1982), 7-8, 12-13.

[21] W. te Brake, 'The Dutch Republic and the Creation of the United States', in: H. Krabbedam, C.A. van Minnen, and G. Scott-Smith (eds.), *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations* (Middelburg 2009), 204-18.

[22] P.P. Hill, *William Vans Murray, Federalist Diplomat* (Syracuse, NY 1971).

Prologue: American Diplomacy and Foreign Policy

Republican ideal of independence

In 1776 American colonists knew they were not merely replacing monarchy with an elective system of government. They were well aware that their experiment in republicanism was bold and potentially world changing. Americans had made a significant change from "subjects to citizens. (…) Subjects look up to a master, but citizens are so far equal, that none have hereditary rights superior to others."[23] The American republic would hold itself together from the bottom up. The new American nation would build on the citizens' willingness to defend their country and their willingness to sacrifice private desires for the sake of the public good. The republican experiment relied on the belief that Americans possessed a common moral and social sense.[24]

Only independence from the Old World could guarantee the success of the republican experiment. In at least the second half of the eighteenth century Americans considered the Old World of Europe and the New World of the United States not so much as different geographical locations but more as logical antitheses contrasting in ideas, values, and institutions.[25] Americans repeatedly told themselves that they had abandoned the bloody barbarism and savage violence of the Old World. They were confident that their society was becoming more civilized and sophisticated, but of course not to the point reached by the decadent Old World. It is precisely because Americans lacked the corrupting luxury of Europe, John Adams noted, that "the Civilization of America (…) is Superiour to that of Europe". The American people may have lacked the fine arts of Europe but in all other matters, especially agriculture, commerce, and government, they were superior. "In this respect America is infinitely further removed from Barbarity, than Europe."[26] The social distinctions between the wealthy few and the poverty-stricken many so evident in European society were absent from the American environment. The

[23] D. Ramsay, *A Dissertation of the Manner of Acquiring the Character and Privileges of a Citizen of the United States* (1789), 3.
[24] G.S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York 2009), 7-11.
[25] Boorstin, *America and the Image of Europe*, 19-20; Strout, *The American Image of the Old World*, ix-xii
[26] JA, Translation of Thomas Pownall's *Memorial* (1780), PJA 9:199.

fact that the great bulk of Americans were landowners radically separated them from the rest of the world. The American environment was ideally suited for republicanism. To Americans it seemed they were born to be independent citizens.[27] As an independent nation the United States learned to fend for itself. Precisely because Americans were separated from Europe and "remote from all other aid, we are obliged to invent and execute; to find means within ourselves, and not to lean on others".[28]

The new American nation established a policy of free trade avoiding military foreign alliances. The United States wanted to achieve an independent existence, secure from the corrupting influence of Europe. Foreign alliances would only, and inevitably, drag the country into European wars, weakening the country and damaging its commerce in the process. A weakened United States was susceptible to foreign intervention and domination, something Americans had already experienced at the hands of Great Britain and thus sought to avoid. Americans believed that commercial conventions and agreements were sources of friction and political conflict. In order to avoid such conflicts, and thus remain neutral and independent, the United States wanted to establish a commercial system of free trade. Such a system would eliminate all cause for tension and political conflicts.[29]

The policy of non-intervention was followed during the war with Britain and during, at least, the presidencies of George Washington and John Adams. Soon after the United States declared itself independent in 1776 Congressman John Adams, who was considered the most knowledgeable person when it comes to foreign relations, was assigned the task to set up a draft treaty – called the Model Treaty – which could be used as a blueprint for future treaties. The Model Treaty was intended to promote free trade, while avoiding any political connections with foreign powers. The United States intended to remain neutral from European politics and wars. Presidents Washington and Adams would more than once do everything in their power to avoid conflict with European powers. Washington's Farewell Address of 1796 best conveys the American non-intervention policy:

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[27] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 43-46.
[28] Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson, 28 March 1787, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* 11:251.
[29] F. Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: ideas of early American foreign policy* (Princeton University Press 1961), 44-54.

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

Involvement with European affairs would only bring ruin to the United States and the American government should therefore steer clear of "permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world".[30]

The United States joins the balance of power

In the United States there existed a consensus on how to conduct foreign policy, which was based on the European notions that there existed a balance of power among nations – that no one nation should be able to overpower the rest – and that every nation acted out of self-interest. Americans had become familiar with these ideas as former citizens of the British Empire and adopted them because during the American Revolution they subscribed to a theory of politics set forth by English Opposition writers, which proclaimed that every political controversy could be explained as an imbalance of power. An important characteristic of American foreign policy was the thought that this delicate European balance of power could be carefully manipulated and be used to the advantage of the United States.[31]

Americans came to believe that they played an essential role in the balance of power. During every crisis between Britain and France in the New World, the American colonies were fervently defended by the British. The British feared that if the American

[30] Washington, 'Farewell Address', 76-77. A more detailed account of American suspicion of external threat can be found in J.H. Hutson, 'The Origins of The Paranoid Style in American Politics': Public Jealousy from the Age of Walpole to the Age of Jackson', in: Hall, Murrin, and Tate (eds.), *Saints and Revolutionaries: Essays on Early American History* (New York and London, 1984), 332-72.

[31] Bemis, *Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 13-15; Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 1-3; Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address*, 89-98; Van Minnen, *Yankees onder de zeepsiegel*, 10.

colonies would fall into French hands, they would lose their naval dominance and the balance of power would shift in favor of France. Consequently, Americans started to believe that whoever controlled the American colonies, or had sole trading privileges with them, dominated naval commerce and therefore also the European balance of power.[32]

The Model Treaty indicates how the United States attempted to use the balance of power for its own benefit. The goal of the Model Treaty was to dissolve the British trade monopoly of American commerce and invite all nations, including Britain, to trade with the United States on equal terms. Creating a system of free trade between the United States and Europe, instead of a trade monopoly, would maintain a balance of power. Britain would lose its trade monopoly and naval dominance, while other European powers such as France gained the opportunity to challenge British naval hegemony. Furthermore, free trade would provide the basis for a friendly relationship with both Britain and France, thus providing the opportunity to call on their support when the other attempted to subjugate the American colonies. American independence could then be ensured.[33]

American foreign policy and the Dutch Republic

The period of gradual estrangement from Britain after 1763 was a critical stage in the development of American diplomacy. The American colonists' sense of affinity with Britain was fading, and cries for independence were becoming louder and more widespread. In the months following the battles at Lexington and Concord on 19 April 1775 the Continental Congress assumed the character of a working government and began to treat Britain as a hostile foreign power. The necessity of taking common action in response to British provocation drew together the thirteen separate colonies, which had in many ways closer links with Britain that with each other.

The decision to establish sources of communication and intelligence in Europe, most notably Britain and the Netherlands, was a part of that process. The American colonies were desperate for any foreign aid in their struggle against Britain. Unwilling as

[32] Bemis, *Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 3-5; Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 3-11.
[33] Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 26-32; Van Minnen, *Yankees onder de zeespiegel*, 10.

yet to send ambassadors abroad, the Continental Congress voted to appoint a committee to correspond with "friends" in Britain and elsewhere on 29 November 1775. By creating such institutions the colonies initiated a process of nation building and organized diplomacy.[34]

On the following day the new Committee of Secret Correspondence notified Arthur Lee, a former colonial agent in London, of his appointment as a representative in Britain. Ten days later Benjamin Franklin, one of the committee members, wrote a similar letter to a correspondent in the Dutch Republic: Charles William Frédéric Dumas. Franklin had become acquainted with Dumas in 1767 and witnessed his favorable disposition toward liberty and the struggle of the American colonies. Residing in The Hague, a place where "Ambassadors from all the Courts reside", Dumas was requested to make use of such a situation and gather information on the disposition of European countries concerning an alliance of friendship with the American government.[35]

By 1777 rumours had reached the Continental Congress, and John Adams as a member, of the possibility of Dutch support for American independence, or at least of antipathy towards Britain's rule of the seas.[36] Whether such rumours were authentic or false, it was easy for Americans to believe that the Dutch Republic would show support. After all, it was a confederation of states that had fought off tyranny and won freedom from a foreign, imperial ruler and was primarily governed by a representative body: the States-General. In July of that year Congress briefly considered sending an American representative to the United Provinces, but this was eventually postponed because Congress wanted to know for certain the sentiments of the Dutch government beforehand. Like most monarchs in Europe the Dutch Stadtholder, a hereditary head of

[34] J.R. Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (Yale University Press 1985), 3-9; *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 3:392.

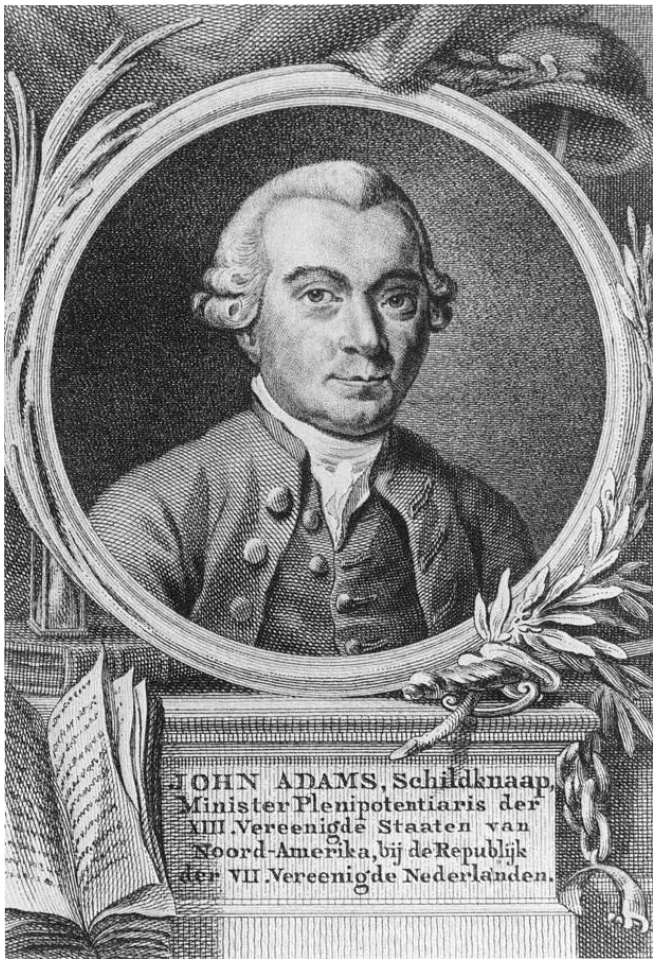
[35] J. Sparks, The *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution* (Boston 1830), vol. 9:253-4; Committee of Correspondence to Arthur Lee, 30 Nov. 1775, Papers of Benjamin Franklin, 22:280-1; Franklin to Dumas, 9 Dec. 1775, Papers of Benjamin Franklin, 22:287-91 & Sparks, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 9:255-57. For a more detailed description of Dumas's life and correspondence see Schulte Nordholt, *Voorbeeld in de Verte*, 52-60.

[36] For example, C.W.F. Dumas wrote to the Committee of Foreign Affairs on 14 June 1777 that "the great majority, almost the whole of our merchants, are for you. The regencies of our cities, and among others Amsterdam, seem to take part with the Court, which is allied with and friendly to England. But all this is precarious, and will change with your fortune. Let us hear of a successful campaign, and your friends will show themselves, your partizans will multiply." Sparks, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 9:326-27. Another example can be found in a letter from JA to Abigail Adams, 3 April 1777, AFC 2:197-9.

state tasked with maintaining peace and order in the Dutch Republic, disapproved of a revolt against the sovereignty of a legitimate monarch – fearing that his own claim to the throne would be jeopardized. Very few European monarchs were prepared to recognize a rebel American diplomat.[37] Furthermore, the Stadtholder had political and family ties with the British Crown. Congress feared that "possibly their connections with England, might make receiving an American Minister, as yet inconvenient, and (…) a little embarrassing".[38] For now no official representative would be sent to the Dutch Republic.

[37] Bemis, *Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 113-16.
[38] *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 8:523, 527; American Commissioners at Paris to C. W. F. Dumas, 10 April 1778, DAJA, 4:44–45.

Chapter 1: John Adams, 1780-1782



John Adams, engraving by Reinier Vinkeles, 1782

John Adams (1735 – 1826) came to prominence during the early stages of the American Revolution. The revolutionary events he experienced as a lawyer in Boston would shape him into one of the most important and influential Founding Fathers. From 1774 to 1777 John represented Massachusetts in the Continental Congress, where he was an avid proponent of declaring independence. In later years he was sent on several diplomatic missions to Europe, including to France and the Netherlands, to secure peace and sign treaties.

Throughout his life John spent many hours studying history and the science of government. His ruling dogma was balance. The equilibrium of king, lords, and commons that had characterized the English constitution was a shining example of a mixed government. It was the royal government that had corrupted it and paved the way for tyranny. A perfectly balanced constitution and government would save the United States from a tyranny of one person or many. Adams published his thoughts in several influential works, such as *Thoughts on Government* (1776) and *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States* (1787), and brought them into practice when drafting the Massachusetts Constitution (1780).

John's credentials as a revolutionary and political theorist secured him two terms as Washington's vice president from 1789 to 1796 and one term as President from 1796 to 1800. During his Presidency he continued Washington's policy of neutrality. John chose to pursue a course he thought best for the nation, though it was fraught with personal political dangers. He encountered fierce attacks from Jeffersonian Republicans, as well as opposition from his own Federalist Party led by Alexander Hamilton. After losing the Presidential elections to Thomas Jefferson in 1800 he retired to Massachusetts.[39]

1.1 – Missions to Paris

Even though Congress did not yet send a representative to the Dutch Republic in 1777, Adams did not forget about the possibilities of allying the Dutch. He had started reading Dutch history, particularly Cardinal Bentivoglio's *History of the Wars in Flanders* (1654, translated in 1678), and noted the remarkable similarities between the American cause and the Dutch revolt. John, like many Americans, felt sympathy and connectedness with the Dutch people.[40] But before he could act on these sympathies John was sent on two

[39] Bradley Thompson, *Spirit of Liberty*, 23-43; Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 311-13; Ferling, *John Adams*, 1-3.
[40] D. McCullough, *John Adams* (New York 2001), 242-43; J.W. Schulte Nordholt, *'Tot ik John Adams leerde kennen': een schets in woord en beeld van John Adams' diplomatie in de Nederlanden, 1781-82*, &

missions to Paris, first from April 1778 to August 1779 and then from November 1779 to July 1780.

On his first mission to Paris in the spring of 1778 John replaced Silas Deane as member of a diplomatic commission alongside Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee, a position which did not suit him. He soon learned that quarrels and disputes caused "Parties and Divisions among the Americans" in France. The three commissioners hardly attended the same social gatherings or meetings. Even after Deane had returned to the United States the quarrels did not stop, as he accused John of conspiring to steal his commission and accused Arthur Lee of being in contact with the British. In the spring of 1779 John was relieved of his commission and left frustrated, only to return a year later to negotiate a peace with Britain and face the same difficulties as before.[41] John believed that divisions among the commissioners "must have disagreeable if not pernicious effects" on the diplomatic mission, but more importantly on American credibility and reputation. Conflicts among the envoys expose weaknesses and divisions, and undermine any displays of unity and strength. Such circumstances limit the possibilities of procuring foreign aid and are "ruinous to the American Cause". John tried to remain "wholly untainted by these Prejudices".[42]

While John insistently avoided the "incessant dinners and dissipations" of French elite society, Franklin seemed to feel comfortable in that environment.[43] Franklin did his best to fit in and played the role expected of him by Vergennes, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Franklin did not want to push too hard on the American ally and believed the French court should be treated with "decency and delicacy". It was Franklin's intention "to procure what Advantages I can for our Country, by endeavouring to please this Court".[44] To John this strategy seemed passive and showed a lack of interest. Franklin was not sufficiently pressing France to adequately aid the United States.

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van zijn huis in Quincy, Massachusetts (The Hague and Amsterdam 1982), 15; JA to Abigail Adams, 21 July 1777, AFC 2:286-7; JA to JQA, 21 July 1777, AFC 2:289-92.

[41] Ferling, *John Adams*, 198-200, 207-08; Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 38-44; E.F. van de Bilt, *Becoming John Adams: the making of a Great American in Leiden, 1780-1782* (Leiden 2005), 17-18.
[42] JA, *Diary*, 21 Apr. 1778, DAJA 2:304-5; JA, *Diary*, 8-12 Feb. 1779, DAJA 2:345-53; JA, *Autobiography*, DAJA 4:43, 68-77, 87, 109.
[43] JA, *Autobiography*, DAJA 4:67-8.
[44] Franklin to Pres. of Congress, 9 Aug. 1780, Papers of Benjamin Franklin 33:160-65.

It appeared that instead of fulfilling his duties, Franklin was preoccupied with indolence and debauchery. John even accused the "old conjuror" of living a "fullsome and sickish" life of leisure.[45]

Yet, the disunity among the American commissioners and Franklin's behavior were not what was damaging the American cause the most; it was France's sinister design to influence American policy. John was initially convinced that France had a benevolent disposition toward the American cause. France was "a Rock upon which we can safely build" and "the only Foundation on which our Union can rest securely".[46] Due to the war between Britain and the United States an "incurable animosity" would persist for generations between both countries.[47] Because Britain had become a natural enemy to the United States, and had been France's enemy for centuries, John had "the strongest reasons to depend upon the friendship and alliance of France". He was convinced that the United States "will be for ages the natural bulwark of France" and France in turn will be "the natural defence of the United States" against the hostile and rapacious spirit of Britain.[48]

John soon became convinced that the situation in France was not what it initially seemed to be. At first he believed that an alliance with France would bring a swift end to the war with Britain. But his hopes of an early peace dissipated by the end of 1778, and John grew concerned about the usefulness of an alliance with France. For the first time he spoke of the alliance as "a delicate and dangerous connection". He expressed fear that France doubted the military capability and economic stability of the United States, and that France was beginning to treat the United States as a second-class partner. French officials would not share intelligence on British military plans nor would they consult on

[45] Adams to Samuel Adams, 7 Dec. 1778, PJA 7:256; Adams to Lovell, 20 Feb. 1779, PJA 7:420; JA, *Diary*, 10 May 1779, DAJA 2:367; JA, *Diary*, 12 May 1779, DAJA 2:369; Adams to Thomas McKean, 20 Sept. 1779, PJA 8:162. For a more detailed description of Franklin's diplomacy see Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy* (Chicago 1954), pp. 154-66.
[46] JA to Warren, 4 Aug. 1778, PJA 6:347-48; JA to Pres. of Congress, 4 Aug. 1779, PJA 8:109 n3.
[47] JA to Samuel Chase, 1 July 1776, PJA 4:354; JA to Warren, 4 Aug. 1778, PJA 6:348-49; JA to Pres. of Congress, 4 Aug. 1779, PJA 8:111-12.
[48] JA to Samuel Adams, 28 July 1778, PJA 6:326.

joint military operations. John warned that France might seek to influence American foreign policy "by attaching themselves to Persons, Parties, or Measures in America".[49]

John was convinced that Franklin's method of "decent and delicate" diplomacy was only furthering France's plan. His diplomacy of gratitude would unavoidably give France too much leeway to influence American policy. John believed that anything but an equal friendship with France would ruin the United States and its goals. In his draft of the Model Treaty John had already insisted that only dealing with European powers on equal terms could prevent a repeat of British colonial rule. So if the United States were to continue to play the part of a grateful servant, Britain would have merely been replaced by France and the United States would still not be independent. While Franklin sincerely believed in the "generous benevolence" of the French, John was convinced that French support for the American cause was not an act of altruism. It was only "because England is the natural Ennemy of France, that America in her present situation is her natural Friend".[50] Despite Vergennes's arguments that France was making war only for the United States and that their "causes are now common causes never to be separated", John believed that beneath Vergennes's diplomatic style there appeared to lurk a sinister design to reduce him – and America – to a demeaning dependency.[51]

John's objective became to banish gratitude from the diplomatic dialogue between France and the United States. John believed the American independence played a decisive role in the European balance of power in favor of the French and at the expense of the British. Britain's strength "had become so terrible to France and would soon have been so fatal to her" that American independence worked in favor of France. The French would not have been so powerful "without the Seperation of America from Great Britain

[49] J. Ferling, 'John Adams, Diplomat', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 15:2 (Apr. 1994), 233; JA to Samuel Adams, 27 Nov. 1778, PJA 7:234; JA to Gerry, 5 Dec. 1778, PJA 7:248; JA to Roger Sherman, 6 Dec. 1778, PJA 7:254; JA to Samuel Adams, 14 Feb. 1779, PJA 8: 413.
[50] Ferling, *John Adams*, 225-26; JA to S. Adams, 27 Feb. 1779, PJA 7:413.
[51] Ferling, *John Adams*, 201-3; Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 71-2. Vergennes to Gerard (French minister to the U.S.), 22 Apr. 1778, cited by Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 17 and Bemis, *Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 18n. Examples of JA's belief that France is self-interested and wants to make the United States dependent upon French gratitude can be found in: JA to S. Adams, 27 Feb. 1779 PJA 7:413; JA, *Diary*, 28 Aug. 1780, DAJA 2:446; JA to Abigail Adams, 18 Dec. 1780, AFC 4:35.

and her Alliance with France".[52] As a result John believed that the United States did not have to approach France with a servant's trembling gratitude but was justified in treating her as an equal. John feared that if the United States continued to play the role of obedient servant "too much will be demanded of us" and that France "may have too much influence in our deliberations".[53]

This fear of dependence would be the driving force behind John's departure to the Dutch Republic in the summer of 1780. Rather than staying in France, John thought he would be of more use by procuring a loan from Dutch bankers and diminishing the United States' dependence on the French. When John eventually left for the Dutch Republic Franklin reported to Congress that he went to try "whether something might not be done to render [Congress] less dependent on France". Believing "that America has been too free in expressions of gratitude to France; for that she is more obliged to us than we to her; and that we should show spirit in our applications".[54] Being solely dependent upon France, John believed, would cause French dominance over American foreign and internal policy.

Desire to remain independent from Europe

John's experiences in France intensified his belief that the United States should remain independent from Europe – a belief he had continuously voiced as a member of Congress and had put into practice while drafting the Model Treaty. Although John was convinced that all the European powers rejoiced in the American cause, he believed that none of them "wishes to see America rise very fast to power". It seems the European powers supported American independence in order to restore a balance of power by damaging the British naval hegemony, not to let the United States replace Britain. John was convinced that the European powers were entirely self-interested, only caring about their own power and influence and not about the liberties of the American or European people. The actions of France had made this perfectly clear to him. John argued that the United States should "above all things avoid as much as possible entangling ourselves with

[52] Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 72; JA to Edme Genet (official in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 9 May 1780, PJA 9:291; JA to Dumas, 31 Jan 1781, PJA 11:89; JA to Edmund Jenings, 31 Jan. 1781, PJA 11:89-91.
[53] JA to Roger Sherman, 6 Dec. 1778, PJA 7:254; JA, *Diary*, 20 May 1783, DAJA 3:122.
[54] Franklin to Pres. of Congress, 9 Aug. 1780, Papers of Benjamin Franklin 33:160-65.

[European] war and politics. (…) America has been the sport of European wars and politics long enough."[55]

John was also convinced that the United States should shy away from European cultural influences, fearing the impact Europe would have on Americans. He wrote to his wife that "there is everything here that can inform understanding, or refine the taste, and indeed one would think that could purify the heart. Yet it must be remembered there is everything here, too, which can seduce, betray, deceive, corrupt and debauch."[56] When the young New England merchant Elkanah Watson wrote to inquire what sort of manners he should cultivate in anticipation of touring Europe, John advised him "to cultivate the manners of your own country, not those of Europe".[57] It was the honourable and virtuous character of the American people that would bring him success in life, not corrupted European manners.

1.2 – Growing interest in the Dutch Republic

During his missions in France John had not forgotten about the possibilities of a Dutch alliance and had learned a great deal more about the Dutch Republic. For instance, he stated that "in Holland there is more friendship for us, than I was aware before I came to France".[58] On his way back home in the summer of 1779 he yearned to go to the Dutch Republic and wrote that his "own inclinations would have led me to Holland: But I thought my honour concerned to return directly home".[59] Soon after returning to Braintree he noted in his diplomatic statement to Congress that he thought an alliance between the Dutch and American republics was possible and useful. He stressed the similarities of religion, constitutions, the fight for independence and most of all "the attractions of commercial interests" between the two republics. A representative should

[55] JA to Samuel Huntington, 18 Apr. 1780, PJA 10:151.
[56] JA to Abigail Adams, Apr. 1780, AFC 3:333.
[57] JA to Elkanah Watson, 30 Apr. 1780, PJA 9:256.
[58] JA to S. Adams, 21 May 1778, DAJA 4:107.
[59] JA, *Diary*, 22 June 1779, DAJA 2:390. He also mentioned in his autobiography that after his recall in Spring 1778 "there was but one Country to which I thought it possible Congress would send a Minister at that time, and that was Holland. But there was no hope that Holland would then receive a Minister, and I thought Congress ought not to send one there as yet". JA, *Autobiography*, DAJA 4:109.

be sent to the Dutch Republic with full powers and clear instructions for borrowing money.[60]

John believed he was perfectly qualified for such a job, even writing to a friend in Congress that he would not mind a commission to Holland without added pay – next to his existing commission in France to negotiate a peace with England.[61] Nevertheless, on 21 October 1779 Congress chose Henry Laurens.[62] But for whatever reasons, Laurens did not sail for Europe until the fall of 1780 and was then captured by the British. Between the time of Laurens's appointment and his departure rumours accumulated both in France and the United States that the relationship between the Dutch and British governments was deteriorating – a recurrent theme in John's dispatches to Congress throughout the spring of 1780. John noted that "it looks as if England would force the Dutch into the War, but if they take a Part it will certainly be for Us. Oh that Laurens were there. Oh that Laurens were there!"[63] By 20 June Congress felt it should not waste more time and empowered John, or alternatively his friend and colleague Francis Dana, to act in Laurens's place in obtaining a Dutch loan until Laurens himself arrived.[64]

By the time this news reached John – a letter was only sent 11 July – he had already decided to pay a visit to the Dutch Republic. John left on 27 July so he "might form some acquaintances or correspondences there and collect some intelligence that might be useful the United States".[65] During his stay in the Dutch Republic John industriously gathered and transmitted intelligence for Congress. Notable historians of American diplomacy considered eighteenth-century The Hague a sort of listening post for European politics in general.[66] Also, John himself stated about The Hague that "there is not in Europe a better Station to collect Intelligence, (…) not a better Situation from whence to circulate Intelligence, through all parts of Europe, than this".[67] From there he could not only gather information about the Dutch disposition towards the American

[60] JA to Pres. of Congress, 4 Aug. 1779, PJA 8:112.
[61] JA to Elbridge Gerry, 18 Oct. 1779, PJA 8:213.
[62] McCullough, *John Adams*, 242; Lovell to JA, 19 Oct. 1779, PJA 8:218; Journals of the Continental Congress, 15:1186, 1198, 1230.
[63] Ferling, *John Adams*, 228-29; McCullough, *John Adams*, 247-48; JA to Lovell, 29 March 1780, PJA 9:92.
[64] Journals of the Continental Congress, 17:534-537.
[65] JA to Huntington, 23 July 1780, PJA 10:26; JA, *Diary*, 27 July 1780, DAJA 2:442.
[66] Bemis, *Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 126; Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 75.
[67] JA to Pres. of Congress, 14 aug 1780, PJA 10:68-73 .

cause, but he could also learn of the dispositions of other European countries and have "Influence upon the publick opinions of several Nations".[68] After a couple of months in the Dutch Republic John told Franklin that it is "of vast importance to us, to obtain an acknowledgment of our independence from as many other sovereigns as possible", even calling it the "end and aim of his existence". International recognition of American independence would improve the bargaining position of the United States in peace negotiations with Britain.[69]

John argued that the Dutch were fed lies by British agents about the American cause. As early as 1777 Dumas reported that the Dutch people "complain everywhere of knowing nothing of [American] affairs, but what the English wish Europe should know; and on this subject we have often to wait some months before the truth is unfolded from a heap of impostures".[70] Educating the Dutch would increase the possibilities of procuring a loan, and save the American cause from its demise. During his first few months in the United Provinces John observed the extensive British propaganda machine and noted the "ignorance of America". In a letter to Congress he described a situation in which "there have been Persons enough employed and well paid by our Ennemies, to propagate Misinformation, Misrepresentation, and Abuse". "Swarms of Agents" were propagating the British side, yet there was nobody "to turn the Attention of the Publick towards [American] Affairs".[71] John states that the Dutch Republic "had been grossly deceived". The Dutch people have little knowledge of the wealth and resources of the United States, and believe England is more powerful than it actually is.[72] He concluded that

> it is necessary for America to have Agents in different parts of Europe, to give some Information concerning our affairs, and to refute the abominable Lies that the hired Emissaries of Great Britain circulate in every Corner of Europe. (…) The universal and profound Ignorance of America here, has

[68] JA to James Lovell, 20 Sept. 1780, PJA 10:164-5.
[69] JA to Edmund Jenings, 3 Jan. 1781, PJA 11:12; JA to Franklin, 23 May 1781, PJA 11:328-9; JA to Edmund Jenings, 31 Jan. 1781, PJA 11:89-91.
[70] Dumas to Committee of Foreign Affairs, 14 June 1777, Sparks, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 9:326-27.
[71] JA to Pres. of Congress, 25 Sept. 1780, PJA 10:176-8.
[72] JA to Pres. of Congress, 14 Oct. 1780, PJA 10:270-71.

> astonished me. It will require Time, and a great deal of Prudence and Delicacy too to undeceive them. [73]

During his stay in the Dutch Republic John was very active as a publicist and a propagandist for the American cause by composing communications for publication in French, Dutch, and British newspapers.[74]

Suspicious of Franklin and Vergennes

John's departure to the Netherlands was resisted by both Franklin and Vergennes. In the past Franklin had continuously opposed sending a minister to multiple European courts, including the Dutch Republic. As early as 1777 Franklin was of the opinion "that a Virgin State should preserve the Virgin Character, and not go about suitoring for Alliances, but wait with decent Dignity for the Applications of others". [75] Franklin opposed John's mission to the United Provinces writing to John that he has "long been humiliated with the Idea of our running about from Court to Court begging for Money and Friendship".[76] John felt the same "mortification of soliciting for money" as Franklin, but argued that there was no reason to be ashamed of borrowing money to maintain a war that had been going on for six years against an enemy that did the same.[77] But John believed there was a sinister design behind Franklin's desire to limit the number of American diplomats in Europe and his objection to John's departure to the Dutch Republic. John believed that Franklin sought more power and wanted to "sweep Europe clear of every Minister but himself".[78]

John was also suspicious of Vergennes, who he believed was merely aiding the American cause out of self-interest and wanted to keep the United States dependent upon French gratitude. John reported that France's desire to continue the war was waning and that France would exit the war as soon as possible. He feared for the success of the

[73] JA to Franklin, 14 Oct. 1780, PJA 10:269-71. He would argue the same in the Spring of 1781: JA to Francis Dana, 18 Apr. 1781, PJA 11:267-70; JA to Pres. of Congress, 16 May 1781, PJA 11:317-9.
[74] John Thaxter to JA, 7 Aug. 1780, AFC 3:391-95 n5; JA to Cotton Tufts, 9 Dec. 1780, AFC 4:29-31.
[75] Franklin to Arthur Lee, 21 March 1777, Papers of Benjamin Franklin 23:510; JA to Robert Livingston, 6 Sept. 1782, PJA 13:430-2.
[76] Franklin to JA, 2 Oct. 1780, PJA 10:269-71.
[77] JA to Franklin, 14 Oct. 1780, PJA 10:169-71.
[78] JA to Arthur Lee, 10 Oct. 1782, PJA 13:525; Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 73-4.

American cause and intended to seek aid outside France. Initially Vergennes refused to give John a passport to travel to the Dutch Republic, but he eventually accepted John's requests to avoid angering the American government. A Dutch loan would, after all, make the United States less dependent on France: something John desired and Vergennes hoped to avoid.[79]

John was convinced that he was constantly being pursued by spies, including those of Franklin and Vergennes. The capitals of Europe were full of international agents, constantly informing their superiors on every important action and event.[80] As early as 1779 John informed his wife that "there are Spies upon every Word I utter, and every Syllable I write—Spies planted by the English—Spies planted by Stockjobbers—Spies planted by selfish Merchants—and Spies planted by envious and malicious Politicians".[81] During his stay in France John "was afraid to keep a journal" because he believed that "the house was full of spies, some of whom were among my own servants".[82] Even in the Dutch Republic, away from Franklin and Vergennes, John did not feel safe. He "was pursued into Holland by the intrigues of Vergennes and Franklin, and was embarrassed and thwarted, both in my negotiations for a loan and in those of a political nature, by their friends, agents, and spies, as much, at least, as I ever had been in France".[83]

Despite being suspicious of Franklin and Vergennes, John was never hostile in his correspondence to Vergennes and Franklin and did not complain about either of them to Congress prior to his departure to the Netherlands. But in the summer of 1780 a chain of events culminated in a serious rift with both Vergennes and Franklin, confirming and intensifying John's suspicions. In March 1780 Congress had devaluated the dollar in a desperate measure to curb rampant inflation. France was unhappy about the measure, and Vergennes informed John that France opposed any revaluation of American currency unless an exception was made for French merchants. Vergennes portrayed the measure as an act of bad faith towards France, implying it would have serious consequences for their alliance. John, already convinced that France intended to keep the United States

[79] Ferling, *John Adams*, 229; Ferling, 'John Adams, Diplomat', 237-245; Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 66; Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 18 Oct. 1779, PJA 8:213.
[80] Bemis, *Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 13-15; JA to Robert Livingston, 14 Feb. 1782, PJA 12:233-35.
[81] JA to Abigail Adams, 20 Feb. 1779, AFC 3:174.
[82] JA, *Autobiography*, DAJA 4:78.
[83] JA to Marcy Warren, 3 Aug. 1807, quoted in Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 88.

dependent upon French gratitude, could not accept such requests. He argued that France and the United States were equals and that France should not receive any preferential treatment.

A frustrated Vergennes had had enough: he closed all communications with John and henceforth only dealt with Franklin. Moreover, Vergennes tried to have John recalled. Vergennes directed the French minister in Philadelphia to see what could be done to have John recalled. Simultaneously, Vergennes sent his correspondence with John to Franklin, asking him to inform Congress of John's insubordinate behavior towards France. Franklin could have merely forwarded John's letters, but instead added a letter of his own to Congress. It appears Franklin was also fed up with John. Franklin knew perfectly well that his letter was a devastating indictment, stating that "Mr. Adams has given extreme offense to the court here". Franklin believed the French "court is to be treated with decency and delicacy" and that "an expression of gratitude is not only our duty, but our interest".[84]

John's experiences in France had made him suspicious of Franklin and Vergennes, and their actions in the summer of 1780 increased these suspicions. He was now fully convinced that Franklin and Vergennes were working together to remove him from Europe and, more importantly, to increase French influence on American policy. During his mission in the Dutch Republic Franklin's and Vergennes's malignant plan continued to undermine John actions, or so he believed.

1.3 – John Adams in the Dutch Republic

John arrived in the Dutch Republic filled with enthusiasm; he was very optimistic about allying the Dutch and procuring a loan. John settled in Amsterdam to come in closer contact with bankers and merchants, and people "who were able and desirous to promote

[84] Ferling, *John Adams*, 226-28; McCullough, *John Adams*, 239-42; Franklin to Pres. of Congress, 9 Aug. 80, Papers of Benjamin Franklin 33:160-65.

the American cause".[85] After a few weeks John wrote to his wife Abigail that he was pleased with the Dutch Republic and that the Dutch "deserve the imitation of my countrymen". A few days later John wrote that he doubted "whether there is any nation of Europe more estimable than the Dutch" and that the Dutch "ought to be the examples to the world".[86] Also, John reported to Congress about the possibilities of procuring a loan, stating that "I am since my arrival here been more convinced than ever, that Congress might open a considerable loan here".[87] By procuring a Dutch loan "Commerce may be extended between the two Republicks and the political Sentiments and System of Holland changed" in favor of the American cause.[88] In his letters and diary John was ecstatic about the possibilities. It seems the books he had read and the stories he had heard prior to his visit were accurate descriptions of Dutch greatness.

However, John would soon discover that the reality was quite different than his initial expectations. Disappointment would cause him to adopt virtually the opposite opinion, believing the Dutch Republic had lost its greatness and was in decline.[89] John's opinion changed after a few months when he experienced difficulties procuring a loan from the Amsterdam bankers and realized how complex and retarded the Dutch political system was. He referred to the "general Littleness arising from the incessant Contemplation of Stivers and Doits, which pervades the whole People".[90] When John first arrived in the Dutch Republic he was informed that there were plenty of possibilities to procure a loan. But he found that "almost all the professions of Friendship to America, which have been made, turn out upon Trial to have been nothing more than little Adulations to procure a Share in our Trade".[91] Few people in the Dutch Republic were willing to provide a loan and risk losing their money if Britain won the war. The Dutch

[85] Ferling, *John Adams*, 229; McCullough, *John Adams*, 247; JA to Sigourney, Ingraham, & Bromfield, 11 Apr. 1781, PJA 11:255-56; JA to Franklin, 27 Apr. 1781, PJA 11:289; JA to Samuel Adams, 15 June 1782, PJA 13:125-6.
[86] JA to Abigail Adams, 4 Sept. 1780, AFC 3:410; JA to Abigail Adams, 15 Sept. 1780, AFC 3:413-4.
[87] JA to Pres. of Congress, 14 Aug. 1780, PJA 10:68-73.
[88] JA to Pres. of Congress, 23 Aug. 1780, PJA 10:86.
[89] McCullough, *John Adams*, 249; J.W. Schulte Nordholt, 'The Impact of the American Revolution on the Dutch Republic', in: Library of Congress, *The Impact of the American Revolution Abroad* (Washington 1976), 42.
[90] McCullough, *John Adams*, 263; JA to Abigail, 18 Dec. 1780, AFC 4:35. Other examples of JA's difficulties of obtaining a loan can be found in his letters: JA to Franklin, 4 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:325-6; JA to Alexander Gillon, 12 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:337; JA to Pres. of Congress, 15 Jan. 1781, PJA 11:51.
[91] JA to Pres. of Congress, 19 Sept. 1780, PJA 10:160-1; JA to Franklin, 24 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:369; JA to Arthur Lee, 6 Dec. 1780, PJA 10:395-96; JA to Pres. of Congress, 14 Dec. 1780, PJA 10:410-11.

people showed little interest in the American cause and seemed to provide aid only for commercial reasons. The news that in November 1780 the American army had suffered major military defeats, including the treason of General Benedict Arnold, worsened the chances of getting a loan. John was informed that "never has the credit of America stood so low as it does at this hour", and in turn informed Congress to "depend upon no money from" the Dutch Republic.[92]

John was disappointed to find the Dutch Republic in such a "deplorable and melancholy situation". To him it seemed that "all the brilliant and sublime Passions are lost, and succeded by nothing but the Love of Ease and Money". The Dutch Republic was "sunk in Ease, devoted to the Pursuits of Gain".[93] It was not only John Adams who noted this decline of the Dutch Republic. James Harris, the English envoy, confirmed this view. He stated that "virtue, the main spring of a commonwealth, no longer subsisted among the Dutch: the public was poor; the great riches of individuals destroyed the equality necessary to a free state; (…) their government, their administration, their consequence, their whole Republic, were in the last stage of degradation, debasement and decay".[94] Furthermore, the Dutch habitually admired the British, their natural ally. It would be hard and take a lot of time to change those old habits. The Dutch government was unwilling to abandon its habits and ally themselves with the United States at the cost of declaring war to the British.[95]

Pernicious effects of factionalism & the importance of balance

What made matters worse was that the Dutch Republic was torn by party quarrels. Dutch political society was divided between the pro-English supporters of the Stadtholder and

[92] Ferling, *John Adams*, 229-30; McCullough, *John Adams*, 250-51; Westermann, *The Netherlands and the United States*, 3-4; Van Wijk, *De Republiek en Amerika*, 6-7; Van der Capellen to JA, 28 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:379; JA to Pres. of Congress, 30 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:386.
[93] JA to Pres. of Congress, 16 May 1781, PJA 11:318-19; JA to Pres. of Congress, 27 May 1781, PJA 339-40.
[94] J. Harris, *An Introduction to the History of the Dutch Republic for the last ten years, reckoning from the year 1777* (London 1788), 108-9. As far back as 1751 the Earl of Chesterfield observed about the Dutch Republic that "the necessary principle of a republic, *Virtue*, subsists no longer there. The great riches of private people (though the public is poor) have long ago extinguished that principle and destroyed the equality necessary to a commonwealth." Philip Dormer Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, 'Some Account of the Government of the Republic of the Seven United Provinces', in *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield*, B. Dobrée (ed.) (6 vols.; New York 1932) 3:609 n1.
[95] JA to Pres. of Congress, 17 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:353-55; JA to Pres. of Congress, 25 Dec. 1780, PJA 10:433-35.

the pro-American Patriots, who were unhappy with the current political situation and wanted to reform the political system. John noted that the Dutch were "divided among themselves in interest and sentiment" and that "the factions that are raised here (…) have been conducted with an indecent ardor, thwarting, contradicting, calumniating each other". He was convinced that party divisions had pernicious effects on a country and believed that "the character of this people must change, or they are finally undone". [96]

Throughout his life John was convinced of the evils that factions and party division brought with them. As early as 1765 John condemned "the Rancour of that fiend, the Spirit of Party".[97] In a letter discussing the ratified Massachusetts Constitution, which he drafted, he states that "there is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our [Massachusetts] Constitution."[98] John believed that the creation of factions and parties should be limited and controlled. A constitutional balance would serve this purpose and is the key to establishing an enduring free government. According to John ancient republics deteriorated over time – as seemed to be happening to the Dutch Republic – because improperly mixed government could not control human nature and the vices and passions of its subjects, which eventually lead to factionalism.[99]

John believed that ambition, which he refers to as "the passion for distinction", was the central feature of man's psychology when acting in the political realm. Though this passion tends to promote and nurture genius, in politics it leads to corruption and abuse of power. The key task of a constitution was to allow ambition to serve the public interest by creating opportunities to both satisfy and press this ambition into the service of the public good. A balanced constitution would allow men to distinguish themselves, but would also obstruct self-serving schemes and the formation of factions. Compromise would be a prerequisite to political achievement, and compromise would be accomplished only through appeal to the public good. Without a balanced constitution there would be no way of controlling factions short of despotism. In particular, John saw

[96] JA to Pres. of Congress, 16 May 1781, PJA 11:318-19; JA to Pres. of Congress, 27 May 1781, PJA 339-40; JA to Secretary of State Livingston, 16 May 1782, PJA 13:49; JA, *Diary*, 4 Dec. 1782, DAJA 3:89.
[97] JA, *Diary*, 14 July 1765, DAJA 3:284.
[98] JA to Jonathan Jackson, 2 Oct. 1780, WJA 9:511.
[99] Bradley Thompson, *Spirit of Liberty*, 136-47.

the cleavage between rich and poor as a primary source of faction which a constitution must control. In John's view, the poor are too readily attracted to material gain and lawlessness, while the rich too often are attracted to power and corruption. Both groups, he believed, are apt to plunder each other. John opposed the French philosophes' ideas of a unified government intended to express the "general will" of the people. Instead, John was convinced that an ideally balanced constitution should establish an autonomous executive power, a bicameral legislature, and an independent judiciary. These three elements would create the ideal mixed constitution and government.[100]

John wished to export these principles – keeping in mind the cultural and social differences – to European countries such as the Dutch Republic, correcting the faults in their constitutions and governments. He believed European intellectuals had neglected the study of government and the science of society, which had fallen behind other arts and sciences. Only a perfectly mixed government and balanced constitution could control factionalism and save the Dutch Republic.[101] The first step towards exporting American ideals was convincing European people of the importance of the American cause. John set out to convince the Dutch to support the American cause. He received help from Dutch Patriots, who, like John, tried to convince the Dutch government to acknowledge American independence. Joan Derk van der Capellen, a Dutch nobleman, was the first and most prominent figure in the country to champion the American cause. He defended the American cause on multiple occasions and even petitioned to gather a loan for the United States, investing a great sum of his own fortune. The lawyer, scholar, and editor Johan Luzac was another man who came to John's aid, frequently publishing John's material in his *Gazette de Leyden*.[102]

Ironically, their efforts to convince the Dutch government to recognize American independence were intensifying the divisions in the Dutch Republic. As opposed to the Patriots, the Stadtholder and his followers naturally wanted to obstruct recognition of an unlawful rebellion. The historian Adriaan Kluit, one of the Stadtholderate's proponents, described "the evil of American freedom" as "the origin and beginning of all *subsequent* disasters, calamities and losses suffered by the Republic". It was "an exaggerated

[100] Bradley Thompson, *Spirit of Liberty*, 158-82.
[101] Bradley Thompson, *Spirit of Liberty*, 101; JA to Abigail, 14 March 1788, *Letters of John Adams*, 213.
[102] McCullough, *John Adams*, 249.

people's government". Similarly, politician Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel declared that "the resulting Union of North America which was a pure democracy turned many a head as if there were no freedom outside that Constitution".[103] Debates over recognizing American independence increased tensions and divisions in the Dutch Republic.

The war with Britain and increasing sympathies for the American cause

A threat of war with Britain, at the end of 1780, would further increase the tensions and divisions in the country. At the end of the 18th century the Anglo-Dutch relations were deteriorating. Since the commencement of war between Britain and the American Colonies Dutch merchants were secretly trading with the colonists, even though they had signed a treaty with Britain. The British government was well aware of the illegal trade and regularly complained. In January 1776 British admiral James Young complained that the "very pernicious traffic" between the Dutch and American colonists was "so general and done in so public a manner as to be no secret to any person in the West Indies islands". Young was quite right that the trade was not a well kept secret; on 16 November 1776 a ship flying the colors of the American Congress was saluted when it arrived at the Dutch colony of St. Eustatius. In the spring of 1780 Britain started to retaliate and seized Dutch ships carrying contraband intended for the American Colonies. In the first month about 200 Dutch ships were captured. Out of fear the Dutch Republic sought protection from the League of Armed Neutrality, a league of Northern European maritime nations who endorse the right of neutral countries to trade by sea without hindrance. But before the Dutch Republic could join the League Britain had found a pretext to declare war. A British vessel had captured Henry Laurens in September 1780, who was carrying a treaty concluded in secret between the American William Lee and the burgomaster of Amsterdam. Though the treaty was illegitimate, as the Amsterdam burgomaster did not represent the Dutch government, for Britain it was enough to provoke a conflict. The British delegate to the Dutch Republic, Sir Joseph Yorke, presented the States-General

[103] Adriaan Kluit, *Iets over den laatsten Engelschen oorlog met de Republiek* (Amsterdam 1794), 145-51; George W. Vreede (ed.), *Mr. Laurens Pieters van de Spiegel en zijne Tijdgenooten (1737-1800)* (4 vols.; Middelburg 1874-77), 2:82.

and Stadtholder with an ultimatum with ridiculous demands, which would undoubtedly, and intentionally, lead to war.[104]

The Dutch Republic became engulfed in a "violent Crisis" and the Dutch people were living in constant fear of war. For the Dutch the prospect of war was such a terrible thing and "the greatest of Evils" that every man is "afraid to do the least thing that England can complain of and make a noise about". As long as this crisis continued, John noted, the Dutch Republic would not recognize American independence nor provide a loan to Congress. He states that the continuous threat of war "keeps up the Panick and while this Panick continues, I shall certainly have no Success at all. No Man dares engage for me, very few dare see me."[105] When the war finally broke out in December 1780, the fear of starting a war was replaced by the fear of continuing the war. Merchants and bankers were cautious of providing a loan to the United States because they feared being pointed out to mobs and soldiers as people who contributed to the continuance of the war with Britain. John was being "avoided like a pestilence by every man in government".[106]

John was hopeful the situation would change, and rightfully so. The Dutch people were starting to show increasing sympathy for the American cause. In addition to the economic interest there was a political and spiritual sympathy – even a feeling of affinity – with the American cause by the end of 1780.[107] For instance, James Harris declared that "the example of fortunate resistance in the British colonies in America had an influence on the tempers and sentiments of men all over Europe, but particularly in the United

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[104] Bemis, *Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 157-59; Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 78-80; Te Brake, 'Dutch Republic and the Creation of the United States', 205-8.

[105] Numerous letters discuss the crisis and the fear of war in the Dutch Republic, and consequently the reluctance to provide a loan: JA to Franklin, 24 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:369; JA to Pres. of Congress, 25 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:372; JA to Franklin, 30 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:383-85; JA to Jean Luzac, 30 Nov. 1780, PJA 386-87; JA to Pres. of Congress, 30 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:385-86; JA to James Warren, 9 Dec. 1780, PJA 10:404-5; JA to Pres. of Congress, 25 Dec. 1780, PJA 10:433-35.

[106] JA to Pres. of Congress, 14 Jan. 1781, PJA 11:44-45; JA to Francis Dana, 18 Jan. 1781, PJA 11:55-6; JA to Franklin, 15 Feb. 1781, PJA 11:147; JA to Pres. of Congress, 19 March 1781, PJA 11:247; JA to Franklin, 10 Apr. 1781, PJA 11:254; JA to Franklin, 16 Apr. 1781, PJA 11:261; JA to Pres. of Congress, 16 May 1781, PJA 11:317-19; JA to Robert Livingston, 21 Feb. 1782, PJA 250-58.

In a letter to Robert Livingston on 25 February 1782 JA discusses the fear of mobs. He describes a similar crisis the Dutch Republic went through in 1748, which the Dutch people remember very well: "the Populace arose in Amsterdam to demand, that the City should be for joining England and making an hereditary Stadholder. Innumerable Houses were pillaged, all the furniture, and they say millions of Ducats thrown into the Canals. They were obliged at last to fire upon the People, and whole Crowds were driven headlong into the Canals, where hundreds perished in Mud and Water." PJA 12:266-70.

[107] Schulte Nordholt, 'The Impact of the American Revolution on the Dutch Republic', 45.

Provinces".[108] Similarly, Van der Capellen and the more moderate Patriot Herman Hendrik Vitringa declared that "the North American spirit of freedom" had spread throughout the Dutch Republic.[109] Joseph Mandrillon, a French author and bookseller, even argues that pamphlets on the American cause would instigate the revolutionary Patriot movement in the following years: "if one wishes to know the origin of the first fermentation amongst the inhabitants, I think one should ascribe it to the excellent works published in England on the subject of the American was and primarily to those by Doctor Price, which have been translated into Dutch and read with extraordinary eagerness by all ranks and classes of Burghers".[110]

John was one of the pamphlet writers who fervently propagated the American cause and opposed any form of Anglo-Dutch relations. In John's eyes Britain was treating the Dutch Republic as one of their colonies, thinking of "nothing but devouring Holland". Under such tyranny the Dutch Republic showed "every Symptom of an Agony, that usually preceeds a great Revolution", and it eventually drove a wedge between Britain and the Dutch Republic.[111] He believed that signing a treaty of amity and commerce with the United States – the "only remaining barrier against despotism" – would save the Dutch Republic from such a situation of tyranny and fear. France was saved from ruin and experienced an increase in reputation, wealth, and power by allying themselves and trading with the Americans, showing that the United States is a "country whose friendship and alliance is worth cultivating".[112]

John's Memorial to the States-General, presented on 19 April 1781, is a perfect example of his propaganda for the American cause. He presented his arguments in the hopes of convincing them to recognize American independence and open trade relations. One of the major themes in his Memorial is the comparison between the American cause

[108] Harris, *Introduction to the History of the Dutch Republic*, 286.
[109] Van der Capellen, *Brieven*, 114, 211, 249, 284, 342; C.L. Vitringa, *Gedenkschrift* (4 vols.; Arnhem 1857-64), 1:100.
[110] Joseph Mandrillon, *Gedenkschriften betrekkelijk tot de Omwenteling in the Vereenidge Nederlanden in 1787* (Dunkirk 1792), 96.
[111] JA to Pres. of Congress, 16 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:350-52; JA to Franklin, 30 Nov. 1780, PJA 10:383-85; JA to Pres. of Congress, 25 Dec. 1780, PJA 10:433-35; JA to Dumas, 6 Feb. 1781, PJA 11:116-17; JA to Pres. of Congress, 19 March 1781, PJA 11:247.
[112] JA to Edme Genet (official in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 9 May 1780, PJA 9:291; JA to Dumas, 31 Jan 1781, PJA 11:89; JA to Edmund Jenings, 31 Jan. 1781, PJA 89-91; JA to Edmund Jenings, 27 Feb. 1781, PJA 11:164-65.

and the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish. Such a comparison was in vogue in the American colonies at an early stage; Pauline Maier cites an example from as early as 1772. Maier cites a newspaper article which declared that the American colonies "soon put in practice their mediated plan, of the United Provinces, after the example of the Dutch, and form an independent commonwealth".[113] For the American colonists the Dutch example showed that a revolt against a strong king could succeed, and that they could survive independently as a loosely confederated republic.[114] The comparison was also frequently hauled on the other side of the Atlantic, most notably in Antoine Marie Cerisier's *Le Politique Hollandais* (1781-2) which compared King George III with Philip II of Spain and George Washington with William of Orange.[115] In his Memorial John makes similar comparisons. He notes the similarities between the American and Dutch republics, stating that they "are so much alike, that the History of one seems but a Transcript from that of the other" and that "a natural Alliance may be formed between the two Republicks, if ever one existed among Nations". Another major theme in the Memorial is the economic benefits the Dutch Republic could gain from trading with the American colonies. John argues that a "Connection with the United States would be useful to this Republick" because the Dutch Republic can then "shake off the Shackle" of English political and economic pressure and benefit from American trade and commerce.[116] Furthermore, the United States would not form competition for the Dutch merchants since American trade will be "retarded" by independence and it will then be long "before the Trade of America will interfere with that of any Nation".[117] According to John there is then no reason to try to remain friends with Britain, and every reason to sign a treaty with the United States.

[113] P. Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York 1972), 217, 263-64; McCullough, *John Adams*, 253-54.
[114] Te Brake, 'Dutch Republic and the Creation of the United States', 206-7.
[115] A.M. Cerisier, *Le Politique Hollandais* (Amsterdam 1781-82), 118-41.
[116] JA, A Memorial to their High Mightinesses, the States General of the United Provinces of the Low Countries, 19 April 1781, PJA 11:272-82.
[117] JA to Van der Capellen, 9 Dec. 1780, PJA 10:402-3; JA to Edmund Jenings, 22 March 1781, PJA 11:226; JA to Abigail Adams, 22 May 1781, AFC 4:121-22; JA to Robert Livingston, 19 Feb. 1782, PJA 12:140-45.

Dutch recognition of American independence

As John had hoped the situation in the Dutch Republic was changing. How big a role John played is difficult to determine, but what is clear is that by early 1782 propaganda and excitement had created an atmosphere wherein recognition could be brought about. The American cause was becoming more popular and serious indications were given of a disposition to acknowledge American independence. A series of petitions were published in the early spring of 1782 to convince the States-General to recognize American independence. These petitions did not contain businesslike prognoses based on costs and benefits. Instead, they contained notions of brotherhood and improbable illusions about an unlimited prosperity in commerce. John was also becoming more popular, as he had "lately grown much into fashion".[118] The States-General eventually recognized American independence and recognized John as the American representative to the Dutch Republic on 19 April 1782, exactly a year after John had presented his memorial.[119]

To John the recognition of American independence by the Dutch Republic was one of the most important events in American history. The American cause had triumphed over a long habit of friendship between the British and the Dutch, over commercial interests and over the intrigues of courts and ruling families.[120] JA writes that "the Standard of the United-States waves and flies, at the Hague, in triumph over Sir Joseph York's Insolence and British Pride. When I go to Heaven, I shall look down, over the Battlements, with pleasure, upon the Stripes and Stars, wantoning in the Wind, at the Hague."[121]

In his letters and diary JA left no doubt as to who brought about the recognition of the United States. It was JA himself who had "planted the American Standard at The Hague". It was "that well-hove Harpoon-Iron the memorial of the 19th of April 1781 – and other innumerable measures taken in consequence of it, by the same hand" that

[118] Schulte Nordholt, 'The Impact of the American Revolution on the Dutch Republic', 48-50; JA to Livingston, 10 March 1782, PJA 12:304-5; JA to Abigail Adams, 22 March 1782, AFC 4:300-1.
[119] Van de Bilt, *Becoming John Adams*, 23-4.
[120] JA to Robert Livingston, 16 May 1782, PJA 13:48-49; JA to Philip Mazzei, 3 July 1782, PJA 13:151; JA to James Warren, 6 Sept. 1782, PJA 13:439-40.
[121] JA to Francis Dana, 17 Sept. 1782, PJA 13:472.

prevented the Dutch Republic from making peace with Britain and stimulated the Dutch to recognize the American independence.[122]

It is important to note that John sometimes downplayed his role in the recognition of American independence. For instance, in a letter to the Secretary of State he states that his Memorial had led to military victories and patriotic zeal among the Dutch, but in the same letter he downplays it by saying: "What a Dust We raise, said the Fly upon the Chariot Wheel? It is impossible to prove that this whole Letter is not a similar delusion to that of the Fly."[123] Also, this letter was sent on February 21, prior to the official recognition of American independence. At this time he was still cautious about celebrating "his" victory. After the official recognition in April John was overjoyed and left little doubt in his statements that he alone should be praised for the recognition, especially in private correspondence. It is true that in September 1782 he states that the American "cause could not have succeeded here without the aid of France".[124] But again this was a letter to the Secretary of State. His tone in private correspondence is quite different, in which he is often more unrestrained in his expressions and beliefs. Such statements, I believe, are then peculiarities and are not representative for John's general disposition.

Schulte Nordholt seems to agree with John's own interpretation, stating that "it was due to his spirit of enterprise and self-assurance that the recognition of his country was in fact effectuated". He became convinced that John was the prime-mover behind the recognition of American independence by the Dutch Republic.[125] But such a conclusion seems to be one-sided. It is hard to believe that John alone brought about the recognition of American independence while other factors were also at play, such as other foreign ministers and the Dutch people themselves.

James Hutson represents an opposing – and more convincing – view to Schulte Northolt's statement, arguing that John's own accounts are not accurate descriptions of reality. He states that John was ignorant about what was happening in early 1782, his

[122] JA to Edmund Jenings, 1 June 1782, PJA 13:91; JA to James Warren, 6 Sept. 1782, PJA 13:438-40.
[123] JA to Robert Livingston, 21 Feb. 1782, PJA 12:255-56. JA refers to a passage in Francis Bacon's *Of Vain-Glory*: "The fly sat upon the axle-tree of the chariot wheel, and said, What a dust do I raise! So are there some vain persons, that whatsoever goeth alone or moveth upon greater means, if they have never so little hand in it, they think it is they that carry it."
[124] JA to Robert Livingston, 4 Sept. 1782, PJA 13:419.
[125] Schulte Nordholt, 'The Impact of the American Revolution on the Dutch Republic', 48.

illness – lasting from August 1781 to June of the following year – being partly to blame.[126] Furthermore, he had avoided contact with Vauguyon, the French diplomat to the Dutch Republic, and knew little about his activities. John, therefore, could judge Vauguyon's actions only by what he saw of him in public. However, in 1781-82 Vauguyon was directed by Vergennes to pursue a policy of circumspection, especially in his efforts to produce a Dutch acknowledgement of American independence. Vauguyon's efforts thus remained out of the public eye. France initially opposed recognition, but after the British defeat at Yorktown Vergennes feared Britain would make a quick, separate peace with the Dutch Republic. Successful peace negotiations would restore the pro-British Stadtholder's credibility and his position of power, simultaneously undermining the position of the pro-French Patriots. To avoid losing Dutch allies it became imperative for Vergennes to obstruct the peace negotiations, and Dutch recognition of American independence would be a step towards that goal. It would create "an invincible obstacle to the actual reconciliation of England and Holland". Hutson thus argues that French diplomatic policy and Vauguyon's efforts made the recognition of American independence possible.[127] Due to Vauguyon's policy of circumspection John had no idea of his plans and still believed France was opposing Dutch recognition of American independence. John wrote to his friends that "the finesse and subtilty of the 2 ministers were exhausted to defeat me", and that they were "certainly mortified at the prospects of my success". Believing in French malevolence made it easier for John to exaggerate that Dutch recognition was brought about entirely due to his efforts.[128]

But what these two authors seem to overlook or underestimate is the influence of the Dutch people themselves on the recognition of American independence. For instance,

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[126] JA's illness lasted from August 1781 until June 1782, until after the Dutch recognition of American independence in April 1782. A "malignant nervous Fever" had left him "broken to Pieces and worn out". He continuously states that he was unable to write as often as he wished and was "incapable of that attention to Business which is necessary". It seems the fever left him uninformed of important events in the Dutch Republic. Ferling, *John Adams*, 237-38; McCullough, *John Adams*, 264-67; John Thaxter to Franklin, 30 Aug. 1781, PJA 11:472; Franklin to JA, 5 Oct. 1781, PJA 12:3; JA to Francis Dana, 14 Dec. 1781, PJA 12:133-34; JA to Samuel Adams, 15 June 1782, PJA 13:125; JA to James Warren, 17 June 1782, PJA 13:127-28.

[127] Hutson, 'John Adams and the Birth of Dutch-American Friendship, 1780-82', 27-29; Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 103-4, 108-11; Vergennes to Vauguyon, 27 Apr. 1782, quoted in Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 110.

[128] JA to William Gordon, 15 Apr. 1783 & *Boston Patriot*, 5 Jan. 1811, both quoted in Hutson, *John Adams and Diplomacy*, 110.

it seems that especially the Dutch merchants played an important part in the recognition. They initially blocked John's attempts of getting a loan. Only after an American victory was becoming more plausible and Britain had declared war on the Dutch Republic, were the Dutch merchants and bankers willing to negotiate a loan. They started to realize the commercial possibilities independent American colonies had to offer without the interference of the British. The same merchants published a series of petitions in 1782 seeking the recognition of American independence. It is then impossible to ignore the role of the Dutch merchants, and attribute the recognition of American independence solely to John's efforts.[129]

John writes of the tremendous effect the Dutch recognition of American independence had in Europe. Support for the American cause had become widespread among the European countries. The ministers of the European powers have become "complaisant and Sociable" towards the Americans in the Dutch Republic. But more importantly, as John repeatedly states, most European powers had come to consider the independence of America as "decided".[130]

1.4 – First lessons

John Adams was sent abroad at a time when the United States was waging a war for independence against Britain and was desperate for any international aid and recognition. He was initially sent to France to broker an alliance and maintain friendly relations. During his missions in France John became convinced that the French government wanted to influence American policy. In order to make the United States less dependent upon French aid, and simultaneously strengthen its international position, John travelled to the Dutch Republic. There he intended to procure a loan and convince the States-General to recognize American independence. But John believed he was still being

[129] Wayne te Brake suggested that American recognition "was hardly the result of a standard diplomatic process; it might better be seen as a profoundly subversive act – subversive of the traditional aristocratic policies of the Dutch Republic and of the narrow pattern of diplomacy that accompanied it". W. te Brake, 'Popular Politics in the Dutch Patriot Revolution', *Theory and Society* 14 (1985) 204-5.
[130] JA to Elbridge Gerry, 2 July 1782, PJA 13:146-47; JA to Edmund Jenings, 16 Sept. 1782, PJA 13:468-69; JA to Marquis de Lafayette, 29 Sept. 1782, PJA 13:500-1.

closely watched by spies and his attempts to become less dependent of France were constantly being sabotaged. John had ended all communications with the French government, but nevertheless remained watchful of its actions and intentions. It appeared that the French government was not as well-disposed with the United States as most Americans believed.

Despite French counteraction, John still had hope in the Dutch people for support. But John's initial hope and belief in the greatness of Dutch republicanism was quickly shattered as he learned that the republic had "sunk in ease". The Dutch people were more concerned with commerce than their own liberties and those of the American colonists. They had lost the spirit of patriotism that separated them from other Europeans. Again they were subjugated by a monarch, this time in the form of the Stadtholder supported by the British crown. Over the years the Dutch people had become entangled in a tradition of fearing and revering Britain. It seems that the Dutch people were no better than the rest of the corrupt and decadent people of Europe and that only Americans were destined to create a lasting republic.

What made matters worse was that the Dutch people were politically divided between supporters of the Stadtholderate and the so-called Patriots who strove for political reforms. John attributed the internal strive to the flawed political system of the Dutch Republic, which made it possible for tyranny to succeed and for political divisions to flourish. An ideally balance constitution and government, John believed, would have prevented such internal strife. He was convinced that a similar disaster could still be avoided in the United States by creating a balanced government. John sincerely believed in the pernicious effects of factionalism and he experienced first-hand how the struggle between the supporters of the Stadtholder and the Patriots was tearing up the country. John had frequently written home, warning Americans and Congress about the dangers of political divisions. He had already caught a glimpse of the possible dangers of divisions among Americans during his missions to France. The quarrels between Americans abroad – including between Adams and Franklin – were damaging the credibility and international reputation of the United States. John started to fear that disunity among Americans would expose the weaknesses of the American nation, and make it easier for foreign powers to interfere. It was perfectly clear to him that internal strife could bring

ruin to the United States as it did to the Dutch Republic. It became increasingly important for the United States to avoid factionalism and John believed a balanced constitution was the ideal solution. Indeed, the fear of factionalism would be one of the main driving forces behind the establishment of a new constitution in 1787.

Yet, the recognition of American independence, the breaking with tradition, and signs of a new political movement willing to reform the country gave John hope that the Dutch Republic could again achieve greatness. But that hope would soon fade when Prussian forces invaded the Dutch Republic in 1787. It seemed because the Dutch Republic had sunk in ease and was afflicted by factionalism that the way was paved for intervention by foreign powers.

Chapter 2: In between diplomats, 1782-1794

2.1 – The Dutch Patriot movement

Though John Adams would only be officially recalled in 1788, by the end of 1782 his mission was complete and he had already left the Dutch Republic. By that time emerging political discontent had culminated in the Dutch Patriot movement, which was dedicated to transferring power from the Stadtholder and the regents to the people. The debate over state reforms originated in the 1750s. Stadtholder William IV and his successor William V controlled most of the Dutch government. Because they were entitled to appoint commanders of the army and navy they could build a clientele system. In exchange for an appointment the officers remained loyal to the Stadtholders. What made matters worse was the on-going period of economic decline during the reign of both Stadtholders, mainly due to British maritime superiority and decades of international and internal conflict. In the 1750s this gave rise to a series of debates between supporters of the Stadtholder and their opponents concerning the decline of the Dutch Republic and the political reforms necessary to halt it. At this time the debates caused political tension, but nothing more.

In the 1770s, with the model of the American Revolution, Dutch intellectuals began to formulate radical new ideas on freedom and sovereignty of the people inspired by Enlightenment thinkers. The emerging idea that the Stadtholder and regents had too much sovereignty and the common people too little was gaining ground. Economic and political events were making matters worse. The outbreak of the war with Britain in late 1780 proved disastrous for the Dutch commerce, and the defeat was blamed on the Stadtholder. This was a perfect footing for the Patriot movement to emerge.[131]

In 1781 Joan Derk van der Capellen anonymously published a pamphlet entitled *Aan het Volk van Nederlaned* (translated: *To the People of the Netherlands*), which became the manifesto of the Patriot Revolution. Van der Capellen argued that the country

[131] S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme: Poltieke cultuur in Nederland (1766-1787)* (Amsterdam 1995), 140-151; Te Brake, 'The Dutch Republic and the Creation of the United States', 208-11.

belongs to the people and all source of authority derives from them. The political leaders merely represent the people. He also argued that too much power inevitably led to corruption and thus the people must always be distrustful and watchful of their leaders. The people must remain vigilant and prevent abuse of sovereignty.[132] It is important to note that Van der Capellen did not intend to instigate a political revolution; he merely opposed abuse of sovereignty, not the Stadtholderate itself. Nevertheless his pamphlet marked the commencement of revolutionary events.[133]

The patriots took Van der Capellen's ideas a step further and wanted to strip the Stadtholder of most of his power. The Stadtholder would no longer have the ability to appoint military officers and the executive and legislative power, both in the hands of the Stadtholder, would be separated. The legislative power of the States-General would exceed the executive power of the Stadtholder. The Stadtholder was to become a servant of the Dutch people once again.[134] The Stadtholderian party, on the other hand, wanted to preserve the status quo, arguing that the power of the Stadtholder was lawfully attained over the years.[135] The conflict escalated to the point that in 1786 Patriot civilian militias removed city governments in Utrecht and other major cities and took over control. At that time John Adams had decided to travel through the Dutch Republic with his wife Abigail and arrived in Utrecht in 1786. There he witnessed the inauguration of new magistrates who had been democratically elected according to a new municipal constitution. He later wrote to Thomas Jefferson: "We were present at Utrecht at the August Ceremony of Swearing in their new Magistrates. In no instance of ancient or modern History, have the People ever asserted more unequivocally their own inherent and unalienable sovereignty."[136] In the summer of 1787 the conflict between Patriots and the supporters of the Stadtholder had reached such intensity that the country was on the verge of civil war. Only with the aid of the Prussian king Frederick William II, the Stadtholder's brother-in-law, could the Patriot movement be halted.[137]

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[132] W.P. te Brake, *Revolutionary conflict in the Dutch Republic: The patriot crisis in Overijssel, 1780-1787* (Ann Arbor, Mich. 1977), 15-20, 29-38; Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 67-77, 82-85, 168-73; H.L. Zwitzer, *Aan het Volk van Nederland: Het patriottisch program uit 1781* (Amsterdam 1987), 6, 12-13, 91.
[133] Te Brake, *patriot crisis in Overijssel*, 61; Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 85-86.
[134] Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 154-157, 165.
[135] Brake, *Revolutionary conflict in the Dutch Republic*, 54-57; Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 201.
[136] JA to Jefferson, 11 Sept. 1786, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 10:348.
[137] Te Brake, *Revolutionary conflict in the Dutch Republic*, 72, 76, 82.

American responses

The internal strife in the Netherlands reached its peak at almost exactly the time when the Constitutional Convention was meeting in Philadelphia. In the debates of the Convention and the ratification debates the Dutch Republic was mentioned more often than any other state except Britain. In the eighteenth century people generally assumed that human behavior – in the past, present, and future – held to certain patterns, and that they could learn from historical events. Most American statesmen believed that the events of the Dutch Republic reflected what could happen in the United States. Especially the shortcomings of the Dutch state, which could explain the political chaos under the rule of the Stadtholder, were of interest to the Americans. American statesmen generally believed that the troubles of the Dutch Republic could become the troubles of the American republic. It is then no wonder that the events were anxiously observed in the United States. By studying the Dutch example the American founders hoped that the new American constitution could avoid the mistakes of the Dutch system.[138]

When the Prussian army invaded the Dutch Republic and restored the power of the Stadtholder, Americans voiced their dismay. To Thomas Jefferson, at the time the minister to France, the actions of the Stadtholder and Prussian king confirmed the tyrannical tendencies of monarchs. He concluded that European government are "government of kites over pidgeons". Jefferson believed that there was a huge difference between the New and the Old World. Comparing American and European governments would be "like a comparison of heaven and hell".[139] John Adams came to similar conclusions, believing that if Americans would succeed in their revolution, in contrast to the Dutch, it was because they were somehow better people than Europeans. This did not mean John Adams was unsympathetic to the Patriots' cause; to Jefferson he confessed that "I tremble and agonize for the suffering of Patriots in Holland". The invasion was "a most outrageous insult in the face of the whole World" and "the Friends of Liberty must be very unhappy". But behind the empathy was a feeling of superiority caused by considering the Dutch as a European people. In the end the banishment of liberty and

[138] Kaplan, 'The Founding Fathers and the Two Confederations', 41-43; Riker, 'Dutch and American Federalism', 495-97, 513-18; Schulte Nordholt, 'The Example of the Dutch Republic for American Federalism', 65-67, 75-77.
[139] Jefferson to John Rutledge, 6 Aug. 1787, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 11:701; Jefferson to Humphreys, 14 Aug. 1787, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 12:32.

freedom and the restoration of tyranny in the Dutch Republic were the fault of the Dutch people themselves; unlike the Americans, they were not suited for republicanism. In the Dutch Republic "no rational plan of a reformation of their Government has been concerted by the People or their Leader. It is a repetition of the Catastrophy of all ill constituted Republicks, and is a living Warning to our United States." His final verdict, in the spring of 1788, was harsh: "The Patriots in this country were little read in History, less in Government: knew little of the human heart and still less of the World. They have therefore been the Dupes of Foreign Politicks, and their own undigested systems."[140]

These words of Adams and Jefferson indicate that in these early years of American nationhood Americans showed a sense of separation from, and superiority to, European affairs that provided the underpinnings for the policy of neutrality and non-entanglement. They concluded from the Dutch example that civil strife invites foreign intervention; something they desperately sought to avoid.[141] The United States had learned an "important lesson, that no circumstances of morality, honour, interest, or engagement are sufficient to authorize a secure reliance on any nation, at all times, and in all positions. A moment of difficulty, or a moment of error may render for ever useless the most friendly dispositions in the king, in the major part of his ministers, and in the whole of his nation."[142] The conflict in the Dutch Republic had clearly revealed to the United States the dangers of factionalism and foreign influences.

2.2 – The creation of the American Constitution, 1787-89

By the 1780s the American press and personal correspondence were filled with warnings of ruin. By 1786 the many defects of the Articles of Confederation – such as the inability of Congress to raise taxes and regulate the nation's commerce – had become painfully

[140] JA to John Jay, 22 Sept. 1787, *Emerging Nation*, 3:588;
JA to John Jay, 23 Sept. 1787, *Emerging Nation*, 3:592-93; JA to John Jay, 9 Oct. 1787, *Emerging Nation*, 3:620-21; JA to Jefferson, 28 Oct. 1787, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 12:292; JA to Jefferson, 10 Nov. 1787, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 12:335; JA to John Jay, 30 Nov. 1787, *Emerging Nation*, 3:662-64; JA to Abigail Adams, Mar. 1788, quoted in Schulte Nordholt, *Dutch Republic and American Independence*, 276.
[141] Nicolaisen, 'John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and the Dutch Patriots', 107, 113-15.
[142] Jefferson to Jay, 3 Nov. 1787, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 12:310.

clear. Political leaders in all the states, even the later opponents of the Constitution, wanted to strengthen or amend the Articles of Confederation and make the United States a respectable nation. Yet the defects cannot account for the creation of an extraordinarily powerful and distant national government, which was virtually inconceivable a decade earlier.

It was the excesses of democracy, the unanticipated consequences of the Revolution, that Americans feared were threatening the very essence of their experiment. The Revolution had greatly democratized the state legislatures by increasing the number of members and by broadening the electorates. Many ordinary men of more humble origins than the men that sat in the colonial assemblies were being elected as representatives. A greater number of representatives was replaced with new faces from year to year, disturbing the political stability.

The nature of the legislatures also changed. Whereas the colonial assemblies spent much of their time dealing with petty local grievances, the new legislatures dealt with economic and commercial affairs on a grander scale. Moreover, constituents were pressuring their representatives to legislate on behalf of their own interests – disinterestedness seemed absent. The increased and constantly shifting power created turbulent circumstances which alarmed the revolutionary leaders.[143]

No government could be just if parties and people promoting their private interests became judges in their own causes; interested majorities in legislatures were no better in this respect than interested minorities. The solution to this problem was sought in the creation of a national government that would be an impartial judge over all the competing interests in society. According to James Madison, dubbed the father of the Constitution, the new Constitution would create a "disinterested & dispassionate umpire in disputes between different passions & interests" in the various states. In fact, he hoped the new government might play the same super-political neutral role the British kin ideally had been supposed to play in the empire. Madison, and other Federalists, hoped that an expanded national sphere of operation would prevent the diverse and clashing

[143] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 13-20.

interests of the society from combining to create tyrannical majorities in the new national government.[144]

2.3 – The emergence of the Jeffersonian Republican Party

Although Americans were universally hostile to the idea of parties, in 1792 observers for the first time began to speak of parties in Congress. The opposition impulse by, among others, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison was primarily a reaction to the increasing influence of the treasury department over government decisions and to Alexander Hamilton's grand economic design. Hamilton's fiscal programs were based on the British model of a strong central bank and government encouragement of wealthy investors who would promote commerce and manufactures. Hamilton and his Federalist supporters believed that only the federal government could inspire confidence among people of wealth and thereby create the strong national economy needed to secure a republican form of government over an extended geographical area. All hostilities accumulated in the recent years would burst into partisan warfare.

The dangers of factionalism

Americans in general considered the forming of parties or factions as disruptive and subversive. Americans believed that society should be as much as possible an organic whole, characterized by harmony and like-mindedness. Parties and factions created unnatural conflicts and the disruptions they caused in the political order could lead to instability, anarchy, and tyranny.[145]

In defense of the federal constitution James Madison published one of his most famous essays, *Federalist* number 10, in which he argued that the new constitution would check the rise of factions. Madison describes factions as "a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the

[144] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 32-33.
[145] Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 257, 263-64.

permanent and aggregate interests of the community". Among the advantages of "a well constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction. The friend of popular governments never finds himself so much alarmed for their character and fate, as when he contemplates their propensity to this dangerous vice."[146]

Similarly, in his Farewell Address of 1796 George Washington emphasized the importance of maintaining an American union, arguing that the rise of political parties is detrimental to the health of the republic. Washington warned the American people "against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally. (…) It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one part against another; foments occasionally riot and insurrection." Factions are used by "cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men (…) to subvert the Power of the People and to usurp for themselves the reins of Government".[147]

These ideas had become widespread among all Americans, including members of the future Republican Party. Consequently, any American political leader of the 1790s engaged in factional politics was suspect and had to persuade others that his views did not endanger the American nation.[148] Why then did an opposition party emerge within such an environment?

Necessary faction

Republicans believed their party was necessary. Thomas Jefferson, by the middle of the 1790s the de facto leader of the Republican Party, begrudgingly acknowledged the necessity of opposing political factions. He stated that "in every free and deliberating society, there must, from the nature of man, be opposite parties, and violent dissensions and discords. (…) Perhaps this party division is necessary to induce each to watch and relate to the people the proceedings of the other."[149] Republicans would then "watch" the Federalists. They feared Federalists would concentrate too much power in the national government and would create a small elite of merchants and financiers.

[146] Madison, 'The Federalist No. 10', 43.
[147] Washington, 'Farewell Address', 73-74.
[148] Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 263-64.
[149] Jefferson to John Taylor, June 1798, quoted in M.P. Ryan, 'Party Formation in the United States Congress, 1789 to 1796: A Quantitative Analysis', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 28:4 (Oct. 1971), 523.

While the Federalists continued to see themselves as the legitimate administration that represented the whole people and the general well-being of the nation, the Republicans started to describe themselves as a separate faction and did so out of necessity. The Republicans of the 1790s coalesced around the broad issues of limiting federal power and expanding popular participation in politics. According to Madison the Republican Party represented the opposition of the people against the Federalist "court". Republicans believed "that mankind are capable of governing themselves" and hated "hereditary power as an insult to reason and an outrage to the rights of man".[150]

The Republican ideology, involving a deep hatred of overgrown central power and a fear of the political and financial mechanisms that sustained such power, had been inherited from the English radical Whig opposition tradition that had been sharpened and Americanized during the Revolution. In the 1790s this ideology was given heightened relevance by the – according to Republicans – monarchical politics of the Federalist administration. Republicans believed that the Federalists' system would re-create the kind of government that was overthrown in 1776. In Republicans' eyes Hamilton's program – including assuming the state debts from the Revolutionary war, establishing a standing army, and creating a national bank – appeared to be reminiscent of the corruption and enhancement of executive power at the expense of the people that Walpole and other ministers had done in Britain earlier in the century. Republicans believed that monarchism was once again threatening liberty, and their party was justified as a means of arousing the people into resistance.[151]

Jefferson warned President Washington that the treasury department "possessed already such an influence as to swallow up the whole Executive powers, and (…) even the future Presidents would not be able to make head against this department". He believed that the "ultimate object" of Hamilton's system was "to prepare the way for a change from the present republican form of government, to that of a monarchy, of which the English constitution is to be the model". If the great mass of the people did not rise up and support the Republican Party the American union itself might break apart. The fear that the "Monarchical Federalists" were using the new government "simply as a stepping

[150] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 161; Madison, 'A Candid State of Parties', 26 Sept. 1792, *Writings of James Madison* 6:118.
[151] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 152, 161-62, 172.

stone to monarchy" and "subverting step by step the principles of the Constitution" became the basis of Jefferson's thinking in the 1790s and the central theme of the emerging Republican Party. Hamilton's denial that there was a conspiracy to transform the United States into a monarchy had little effect. By the end of 1792 Jefferson and his fellow Republicans had become convinced that Hamilton and other Federalists were deep in corruption. [152]

While the confrontations of the 1790s certainly provided the atmosphere for the parties to form, the ideological frameworks around which the Federalist-Republican party system was formed existed prior to that period. The political battles of the period were manifestations of basic differences already present during the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

2.4 – The French Revolution in the United States

Most Europeans held to a widely accredited theory, which coalesced in the 1760s and persisted for years thereafter, that the climate of the New World was so unfavorable that forms of animals and human life would inevitably degenerate. The American wilderness corrupted its inhabitants. This belief that the New World was incapable of progress was also widespread among French philosophes, but the outbreak of the American Revolution changed their minds. A ruling dogma of the French enlightenment was the idea of progress: a faith in people's capacity to improve their political, economic, and intellectual conditions through reason. The American Revolution showed that Americans were virtuous and enlightened and that there was hope for them yet. The American struggle for liberty could even serve as a useful example to rejuvenate France's deteriorating political and economic condition.

But this belief in American progress only partially eclipsed the degeneration theory, and soon disappeared again. Once the French Revolution had taken on a life of its

[152] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 152-58; Jefferson's memoranda on conversations with Washington, *Papers of Jefferson*, 23:184-87; Jefferson to Washington, 23 May 1792, *Papers of Jefferson*, 23:535-40; Jefferson to Washington, 9 Sept. 1792, *Papers of Jefferson*, 24:351-59.

own, the example of the American Revolution was no longer needed. French intellectuals returned to the idea that the American environment created a set of influences which threaten to pervade and corrupt the entire civilized world. The French Revolutionary ideals seemed to be the answer to such corruption, in the New and the Old World.[153]

Outbreak of the French Revolution

By the time the French Revolution broke out Americans were building a new world. French revolutionaries were well under way of emulating their own revolution, which validated and nourished Americans' opinion of their own cause. The newly formed United States was still very fragile and welcomed every sanction of legitimacy it could get its hands on. Initially, American enthusiasm for the French Revolution was almost unanimous. The French Revolution and its ideals of freedom and democracy awakened sympathy among Americans and they felt a sense of kinship with French revolutionaries. Americans were thrilled to learn that in September 1792 the French armies had defeated Austrian and Prussian counter-revolutionary forces and France was declared a republic. France had become a sister republic, joining the United States in a common struggle against the forces of monarchism. In the United States elaborate celebrations were held throughout the nation in the winter of 1792-93.

However, in April 1793 Americans received more news from the other side of the Atlantic that would not be welcomed so joyously by everyone. King Louis XVI was publicly executed, France had declared war on England and the Netherlands – forcing all of Europe to arms –, and Frenchmen were rioting and being massacred. By June 1793 the Gironde government had fallen and Jacobin rule began under the leadership of Robespierre. The ensuing Reign of Terror shocked most Americans and dampened their earlier enthusiasm. These events would compel Americans to choose sides between the pro-English Federalists and the pro-French Republicans.[154]

The winter celebrations of 1792-93 were so exuberant that many Federalists became alarmed. Since the 1780s Federalists had become cautious about the growth of

[153] Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 304-6. Also see D. Echeverria, *Mirage in the West*: *History of the French Image of American Society to 1815* (Princeton 1957).
[154] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 32-33; Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 309-11, 354; C.D. Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution* (Baltimore 1897), 164-71; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 174-76.

popular power unleashed by the American Revolution. They believed that representative governments were easily undermined by an excess of democracy, and that stability of the new national government depended on the establishment of a certain distance from the direct voice of the people. The Constitution and the federal government were created in part to control such democratic tendencies. Government was safest in the hands of independent individuals, which usually meant people of wealth and social standing. The events in France further intensified Federalist fears: Federalists were horrified by the regicide and violence. Federalists became convinced that the radical egalitarian principles of the French Revolution were paving the way for popular anarchy in the United States and would eventually corrupt American society.[155] Hamilton declared that there was no "real resemblance" between the two revolutions and that their "difference is no less great than that between Liberty and Licentiousness".[156] Federalists favored an alliance with Britain as that nation that was most likely to promote commerce and investment in the United States. Also, the government of Britain stood as a strong model of constitutional order, as opposed to what they saw as the radicalism of the French Revolution.[157]

Republicans, on the other hand, considered the fate of the two revolutions as intertwined. They applauded the abolition of monarchy and the violence was considered a necessary evil for a much greater cause. Like French revolutionaries, Republicans meant to subvert the existing structure of authority and bring down the aristocrats in their own country. Even as many Americans became disenchanted with the course of the French Revolution and French restrictions on American commerce, the Republicans adamantly opposed abandoning their French ally and seeking closer ties with Britain. Republicans opposed any sort of alliance with the British, who they believed would always attempt to keep the United States in a kind of colonial dependence. Britain's monarchy and hierarchical society were fundamentally at odds with the republican principles of the America government. Furthermore, they feared that Britain's mercantile and commercial strength would restrict the economic growth of the United States. The distinctions between the Federalist and Republican Party over the French Revolution grew to such proportions that for at least the remainder of the decade it became impossible for

[155] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 176-77.
[156] Alexander Hamilton to "unknown", 18 May 1793, *Papers of Hamilton*, 16:475-76.
[157] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 176-77.

Americans to think of the French Revolution separate from their own cause: either as polar opposites or as twin revolutions.[158]

Proclamation of Neutrality

Despite the differences between the Federalists and the Republican Party concerning the French Revolution, both parties remained convinced that the United States should not involve itself in European affairs and had to remain neutral in the European wars. In 1793 the French government requested the United States to join in their war against Britain, which would have surely damaged American commerce. Joining the war would endanger the national structure and independence of the new, still fragile, American nation. On recommendation of both Hamilton and Jefferson President Washington issued a Proclamation of Neutrality on 22 April 1793, declaring the United States would remain neutral in the conflict between France and Britain.[159]

Yet, a mutual interest in neutrality did not solve the party divisions. Both parties supported the Proclamation for their own reasons and hoped to use it to their advantage. In an effort to repel waves of criticism on the President and win support for the proclamation, Hamilton wrote several newspaper essays under the name "Pacificus" in the summer of 1793. Hamilton defended the right of the United States to remain neutral and independent and defended the President's authority as the executive to declare neutrality. Jefferson became alarmed that neutrality would benefit the Federalists and improve relations with Britain, and urged Madison to respond to Hamilton's writings. As "Helvidius" Madison focused on the constitutional limits of the executive, comparing the executive power to that of royal prerogatives of the British government. Despite agreeing on neutrality, party division reared its ugly head. Both parties still begrudged each other any popularity.[160]

[158] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 177-81.
[159] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 32-33; Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 354-60; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 182.
[160] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 184-85.

Diplomatic crises and deteriorating relations

Though the Proclamation kept the United States out of the European war, future events would still involve the United States in European affairs. The arrival of Citizen Genet and the signing of Jay's Treaty would put friendships to the test, and simultaneously intensify party divisions. When the French representative Genet arrived in the United States in April 1793 he was greeted with warmth and enthusiasm. He was sent to the New World to spread the principles of the French Republic, including to the Spanish and British holdings, and to make the United States a neutral base for French military operations. Thus Genet was instructed to have the American government recognize their treaty obligations of 1778 in the broadest sense of the word by requesting exclusive rights to American ports – excluding British ships – and the opportunity to outfit French privateers in American ports. Weakening Spanish and British influence and strengthening the support for the French cause among the American people would greatly benefit France's international position. But Genet's requests were in violation of neutrality in international law. President Washington received Genet as Minister, thus recognizing the French Republic, but refused to accept his requests on the basis that it would endanger American neutrality. Genet responded by appealing directly to the American people to join the war, avoiding the official lines of communication. Washington was outraged and had no choice but to request Genet's recall.[161] Logically the French government became frustrated that the United States, whom it had supported during the war with Britain, was not coming to its aid. Furthermore, the Citizen Genet affair increased the tensions between the Federalists and Republicans. Federalists came to suspect that the Democratic-Republicans clubs organized to celebrate the French Revolution actually existed to stir up opposition against the Washington administration. Republicans, in response, considered such suspicions as part of the Federalists' plans to tighten their hold on the national government.

The Genet incident strained American relations with France at a time when relations with Britain were far from satisfactory. British troops still occupied forts in the Northwest and the British navy was seizing American ships bound for French ports.

[161] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 34; Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 311, 333-34, 347-53; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 185-87.

Federalists favored a pro-British policy because their commercial interests profited from trade with Britain. In 1794 they urged the President to settle the matter. Washington thus sent John Jay to London as a special envoy, where he negotiated a treaty securing withdrawal of British soldiers from western forts and a promise to pay damages for Britain's seizure of ships and cargoes in 1793 and 1794. Reflecting the weakness of the American international position, the treaty placed severe limitations on American trade with the West Indies and did not mention either the seizure of American ships in the future, or so-called impressment – the forcing of American sailors into British naval service. Jay also accepted the British view that naval stores and war material were contraband which could not be conveyed to enemy ports by neutral ships. Of course the Republicans opposed Jay's Treaty as too favorable to Britain. Support for Republican opposition became widespread because many Americans feared the idea of any dealings with Britain which might expose a disparity in power between them. A suspicion of a disparity in power was after all the reason they declared themselves independent. After long debate, however, the Senate ratified the treaty. Needless to say the ratification debate increased the tensions between the Federalists and Republicans. Moreover, ratification of the treaty angered France. France had hoped the United States would join in its war with Britain, but Jay's Treaty had prevented American involvement. France now believed the United States had abandoned its old ally in favor of Britain.[162]

[162] Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 375-76, 388-90, 410-15; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 198.

Chapter 3: John Quincy Adams, 1794-1797

John Quincy Adams, by John Singleton Copley, 1796

John Quincy Adams (1767 – 1848) matured during the American Revolution. He grew up believing in the ideals of the Revolution and the importance of independence. John Quincy spent much of his youth abroad alongside his father, John Adams, while he was on his diplomatic missions in Europe, including France and the Netherlands. During these years John Quincy grew close to his father and learned to idolize him. To John Quincy

his father was a hero and the most successful diplomat in Europe. While accompanying his father he met many diplomats and quickly learned the protocol of diplomacy. John Quincy would put this knowledge to good use during his own diplomatic missions, including one to the Netherlands.[163]After his diplomatic missions he would author the Monroe Doctrine as Secretary of State, modernize American economy as President, and oppose slavery as a member of Congress during the last 17 years of his life. Of his impressive public career, John Quincy became best known as a diplomat who shaped foreign policy in line with his commitment to American republican values.

John Adams was succeeded as minister to the Netherlands by William Short, who held the position from June to December 1792. Short reluctantly accepted his appointment as minister to the Netherlands and would rather have succeeded Thomas Jefferson as Minister to France. His residence was too short and his writings about his appointment were too limited to be of any importance to this thesis.[164] Short was succeeded by John Quincy Adams, who started his career in public service at the time when the French Revolution reached its peak. The French Revolution was to present American diplomacy with grave dangers and great opportunities. The dangers flowing from European upheaval and the Franco-American alliance consisted of French intrusions into American domestic politics, after the manner of French intervention in the neutral states of Europe. The international wars and disputes sparked by the Revolution put pressure on American neutrality and friendship at the very time when American national power was first taking shape.[165]

3.1 – Defending neutrality

The arrival of Citizen Genet stirred up party divisions and sparked up a public debate over neutrality. John Quincy was one of the writers who did most to marshal opinion

[163] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams,* 6-17; P.C. Nagel, *John Quincy Adams: a public life, a private life* (Cambridge, MA and London 1997), 8-33.
[164] Van Minnen, *Yankees onder de zeespiegel*, 25; G.G. Shackelford, *Jefferson's adoptive son: the life of William Short, 1759-1849* (University Press of Kentucky 1993), 93-94.
[165] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 30-31.

behind the President in this first crisis of foreign affairs. He was convinced that the French Revolutionary leaders were wrong in seeking to overthrow other governments in a war of propaganda and force. It would be a mistake of the American government to abandon neutrality and take sides with the Jacobins. Washington's Proclamation of Neutrality was not yet known in Boston when John Quincy wrote a letter to the *Columbian Centinel*, under the pseudonym "Marcellus", warning his countrymen against privateering under a belligerent flag. If they did so, Americans would be liable to punishment as pirates. After reading Washington's Proclamation "Marcellus" wrote two more letters, defending his President. John Quincy stated that:

> 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 peaceable and silent, though sorrowful spectators of the sanguinary scene. (…) Surely, there would be something singularly absurd and iniquitous, to see the United States support the French in a plan of oppressive administration over their colonies, as a reward for rescuing them from the oppression of Great Britain.[166]

These passages would later influence Washington's Farewell Address, which also emphasized the importance of the United States to remain neutral from European politics.

When Genet was recalled he did not return to France, but remained in the United States. There he continued to propagate the French cause and tried to convince the American people to join France as a neutral nation. John Quincy responded by writing as "Columbus" and branding Genet's attempts as insurrection. Again, his letters would influence Washington's Farewell Address. The following passage makes John Quincy's disposition undeniably clear:

> 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 pretense whatever, in the dissension of fellow-citizens, must

[166] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 35-36; JQA as "Marcellus", *WJQA* 1:135-46.

> be as inevitably fatal to the liberties of the States, as the admission of strangers to arbitrate upon the domestic differences of man and wife is destructive to 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.[167]

John Quincy would maintain his disposition on remaining neutral from European wars and politics throughout his life. His diplomatic mission to the Netherlands would strengthen his beliefs. A few days before he learned of his new diplomatic commission to The Hague he wrote his father that "it is of infinite importance that we should preserve peace, until war shall become our duty".[168]

3.2 – John Quincy Adams in the Batavian Republic

John Quincy's diplomatic mission to the Netherlands lasted from November 1794 to June 1797. He was selected because he had defended American neutrality in the newspapers, and also because he already had diplomatic experiences from accompanying his father on missions to France and the Netherlands. President Washington would not regret nominating John Quincy as minister to the Dutch Republic. Washington would later tell John Adams that John Quincy's letters from The Hague "disclose much important information and political insight" and that "things appear to me exactly as they do to your son". A year later Washington even stated that John Quincy "is the most valuable public character we have abroad, and that there remains no doubt in my mind that he will prove himself to be the ablest of all our diplomatic corps".[169]

John Quincy was surprised to be nominated and reluctantly agreed; he feared that he was not mature enough for such an important responsibility. But he soon learned that

[167] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 37; JQA as "Columbus", *WJQA* 1:148-76.
[168] JQA to JA, 26 May 1794, *WJQA* 1:189.
[169] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 63; JA to JQA, 26 Apr. 1795 & Washington to JA, 20 Aug. 1795, *WJQA* 1:408n1; Washington to JA, *WJQA* 2:125-6.

the American representative in the Netherlands had little more responsibility than to maintain friendly relations that had always existed with that Republic and to conduct for the government its longstanding financial business. Of the five diplomatic appointments of the United States abroad, that of the Netherlands was one of the least significant politically.[170]

However, the outbreak of the French Revolution and its spread across Europe suddenly made The Hague a place of extraordinary significance, particularly for an American diplomat. John Adams wrote his son that he "will see Europe at the most interesting period of its history".[171] In 1787 most Dutch Patriots went into exile in France and only a few years later the French Revolution broke out there, which embraced many of the same political ideas advocated by the Patriots. They enthusiastically supported the Revolution and hoped to liberate their own country from the tyranny of the Stadtholderate. By the time John Quincy Adams arrived in the Dutch Republic in November 1794 the French armies were already advancing north: they were occupying important Dutch cities and chasing away the Stadtholder and most of his followers. By the summer of 1795 the Batavian regime, which included the returned Patriots and had excluded the supporters of the Stadtholder from public life, proceeded to build a new political order. The institutions of the Dutch old regime were dismantled at a rapid pace, the liberties and freedom of citizens would be safe-guarded, and a broadly elected national assembly met in The Hague. The most important task facing this assembly would be to establish a constitution for the new state. [172]

Besides being merely a listening-post for European politics, the Netherlands suddenly became a perfect place to observe France's intentions to liberate peoples from their own governments and how the French treat their new allies. John Quincy's most

[170] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 38-39; Nagel, *John Quincy Adams*, 81-83; JQA to JA, 27 July 1794, *WJQA* 1:193-8; JQA to Charles Francis Adams, 26 March 1828.
[171] JA to JQA, 24 Aug. 1794.
[172] N.C.F. van Sas, *De metamorphose van Nederland: Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750-1900* (Amsterdam 2004), 277-92; S. Schama, *Patriotten en Bevrijders, 1780-1813* (Amsterdam 2005), 187-210; W.R.E. Velema, 'Revolutie, Republiek en Constitutie. De ideologische context van de eerste Nederlandse grondwet', in: N.C.F. van Sas and H. te Velde (eds.), *De eeuw van de Grondwet: Grondwet en politiek in Nederland, 1798-1917* (Deventer 1998), 20-46.

important work at The Hague would prove to be that of reporting the course of the French intervention.[173]

Evaluating the French intervention

Prior to his departure to the Netherlands John Quincy visited the archives of the Department of State and read the diplomatic correspondence of his father. As mentioned before John Quincy idolized his father and thought him the most capable diplomat in Europe. He undoubtedly believed every word John Adams wrote in his correspondence, including the reports that seem exaggerated and one-sided. The more John Quincy read, the more he admired the way his father had seen through France's "pernicious designs" and Vergennes' "insidious" foreign policy. Before setting foot in The Hague John Quincy had already become convinced of Vergennes' "contemptuous insolence, base malignity, and his perfidy to this Country'.[174] His conviction of France's self-interested character prior to his visit to the Netherlands, I believe, significantly influenced his perception of France's actions, as will later on become clear.

In 1795 John Quincy observed that the Dutch people seemed to have lost their sense of patriotism. In 1781 "the spirit of liberty predominated" among the Dutch people. But in 1787 the Patriot movement was defeated and the re-established government successfully constrained patriotism and any desires for liberty. By 1795 the Dutch people were characterized by "lifeless imbecility, passive obedience and non-resistance". They were "indifferent to everything relating to theories of government" and were more interested in money and commerce. John Quincy feared that the Dutch people had "lost that energy of character which once so honourably distinguished them". Furthermore, they lacked a sense of unity – with Dutch politics strongly divided – which is necessary for the defence of an invaded country. The animosity of the Patriot party against the re-established government, and its constraints of liberties, had become so great since 1787 that they would rather submit to the invading French army than make peace with the

[173] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 40, 50-51, 58-9; Instructions for JQA, 29 July 1794, *WJQA* 1:198-201; JQA to Secretary of State, 2 Nov. 1794, *WJQA* 1:210; JQA to JA, 12 Feb. 1795, *WJQA* 1:278.
[174] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 40-41; JQA to JA, 16 July 1794, quoted in Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 40-41; JQA to JA, 14 Jan. 1797, *WJQA* 2:86.

present government. According to John Quincy such internal disunion paved the way for the Netherlands to become a playing field for stronger European powers.[175]

Nevertheless, at first sight the French intervention did not seem to have negative consequences for the Dutch people. When he first arrived in the Netherlands John Quincy observed that "the outward aspect of this country is not that of a nation invaded by a powerful and victorious army, (…) everything wears the appearance of peace and tranquillity". The transition from the *ancien regime* to the Batavian Republic was relatively peaceful as no disorders, massacres, or pillages took place. When the capital Amsterdam was captured in January 1795 a proclamation to the Batavian people was published, declaring that the French came as friends and allies and that they would respect the individuality and independence of the Batavian people. The Dutch people would be given the opportunity to exercise sovereignty in reforming and modifying their own government. John Quincy, like most Americans, could wish for nothing more and was hopeful that the French intervention would be favourable for the liberties of the Dutch people.[176]

Despite such a peaceful transition of sovereignty to the people, John Quincy soon enough became suspicious of French intentions. In a letter to the Secretary of State on 15 February 1795 John Quincy first voiced his suspicion. Though the proclamation that the Dutch people would be able to reform their own government, he states "it is the spring unseen which gives all the visible motion to the Revolution in this country" and not the Dutch people. In the wake of the invading French army democratic societies based on Jacobin model sprang up all over the Netherlands. Smalls groups of revolutionaries allied to France – the spring unseen – were working behind the scenes using such organizations as instruments of revolution to supplant the old regime with the new Batavian Republic, based on French models. The "spring unseen" thus "concerted secretly the mode of

[175] JQA to Secretary of State, 2 Nov. 1794, *WJQA* 1:212; JQA to Secretary of State, 7 Nov. 1794, *WJQA* 1:220; JQA to JA, 9 Nov. 1794, *WJQA* 1:224-7; JQA to Secretary of State, 2 Dec. 1794, *WJQA* 1:241-2; JQA to Secretary of State, 7 Apr. 1795, *WJQA* 1:320; JQA to Secretary of State, 1 May 1795, *WJQA* 1:338; JQA to Secretary of State, 25 June 1795, *WJQA* 1:368.

[176] JQA to Secretary of State, 2 Nov. 1794, *WJQA* 1:210; JQA to Secretary of State, 19 Jan. 1795, *WJQA* 1:261-2; JQA to Secretary of State, 22 Jan. 1795, *WJQA* 1:263-4; JQA to JA, 12 Feb. 1795, *WJQA* 1:276, 280-1. The exact wording of the proclamation is quoted in *WJQA* 1:287-8: "We appear in the midst of you as your friends and allies. We do not come to subdue you. The French nation will respect your independence. The Batavian people in the exercise of their *sovereignty* can alone change or modify the form of their government."

conducting the great political alterations" in the Batavian Republic. John Quincy finds it remarkable that "an administration resting its authority upon the foundation of universal suffrage consists of persons substantially chosen by a small revolutionary committee, and in whose appointment the people had not any agency other than that of acquiescence". It appeared to John Quincy that the French had conquered the Netherlands, referring to the Dutch cities as being "taken" and "in the power of the French Republic".

John Quincy's initial hope that the French would treat the Dutch people with benevolence had quickly changed into a fear that the French would incorporate the Dutch nation into their own. To John Quincy it had become undeniably clear that the French had arrived as conquerors. Such circumstances led him to compare the French intervention with the – detested – invasion of British-Prussian forces in 1787, which re-established the Stadtholder in the seat of government. According to John Quincy the character and patriotism of the Dutch people "has been broken by (…) submission to foreign armies, twice exhibited in the seven last years".[177] Before John Quincy arrived in the Netherlands he was already cautious of foreign powers influencing American politics. It seems that due to his experiences in the Netherlands he grew even more cautious as he observed first-hand how the French were influencing Dutch politics.

Under the guise of revolution, John Quincy argues, the French replaced the old institutions and constitutions with new ones based on French model.[178] But these changes did not cure the ailments that were troubling the old Dutch regime; "the same languor and imbecility which characterized the former government are equally discovered by the present". In fact, the French intervention worsened the situation. John Quincy claimed that "this Republic may be said to be irretrievably ruined". Even the people who initially so ardently received the French armies were becoming increasingly disappointed and dissatisfied with the new regime.[179] Toward the end of his diplomatic service in the Netherlands in 1797 John Quincy reported the net result for unhappy Dutchmen of France's revolutionizing of their country. Two years of so-called liberation had cost them nearly twenty per cent upon the whole capital of every individual in forced loans, the

[177] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 52; JQA to Secretary of State, 15 Feb. 1795, *WJQA* 1:285-91; JQA to Abigail Adams, 25 Apr. 1795, *WJQA* 1:331-2; JQA to Secretary of State, 24 June 1795, *WJQA* 1:363-7.
[178] JQA to Secretary of State, 25 Feb. 1795, *WJQA* 1:299; JQA to Secretary of State, 17 March 1795, *WJQA* 1:301-5; JQA to JA, 1 April 1795, *WJQA* 1:310 n2, 310-12.
[179] JQA to Secretary of State, 14 Apr. 1795, *WJQA* 1:329-31; JQA to JA, 27 June 1795, *WJQA* 1:376-7.

suspension of almost all their commerce, the loss of their colonies, and the general depreciation by one half of almost all their other property. The French saviors turned out to be conquerors.[180]

3.4 – The United States endangered

During these years of turmoil John Quincy tried to maintain his independence and neutrality from European culture and politics. He was anxious about how European culture would afflict Americans residing in Europe. Just before he left for the Netherlands, John Quincy declared that "[t]he distance between the two countries is so great and the communication of course so small, that it is hardly possible for an American to be long in Europe without losing in some measure his national character".[181] In Europe, especially in Paris, he came across Americans who he considered to have lost their way. For example, John Quincy disapproved of the decadent behaviour of William Temple Franklin, Benjamin Franklin's grandson and diplomatic secretary, and blamed it on the education and culture of Europe.[182] John Quincy believed that such affliction of Americans went so far that ideas of French interference in American politics were "inspired by Americans in Paris, who foster and encourage it with all possible industry". John Quincy insisted that most Americans in Europe have motives to favor the French cause. This favourable disposition towards France arose from the popularity of their struggle for liberty, French sympathies for Americans, and the amount of debt the French government owed American merchants and bankers. These incentives simulated Americans in Europe not only to wish France well, but also be sensible to contribute "to the furtherance of French views; and the conclusion of the whole matter is, that the whole weight and influence of such people in America are far from being friendly to the peace of the United States". Americans in Europe were thus indoctrinated to side with France

[180] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 52-3.
[181] JQA to JA, 27 July 1794, *WJQA* 1:196.
[182] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 19.

rather than American national interest and neutrality.[183] Furthermore, since the public opinion in the United States concerning European affairs was in considerable degree formed from the stories and letters of Americans in Europe, the rest of the American people living in the United States were also in danger of favoring the French cause. To John Quincy it was clear that "the greatest enemies of America in France are Americans themselves".[184]

The increasing political divisions in the United States were making matters worse. Not only were Americans in Europe losing their way, but at the same time Americans back home were increasingly siding with Republicans in support of the French Revolution and in opposition to the national government and Federalist policy. James Monroe's diplomatic mission to Paris provides a good example of how the Federalist-Republican divide was affecting American foreign policy and endangering the independence of the United States John Quincy so dearly wanted to maintain.

In May 1794 James Monroe was nominated as minister to France by President Washington. As a Virginia delegate Monroe opposed ratification of the Constitution in 1787, claiming that it gave too much power to the central government. In 1790 he was elected to the Senate, where he sided with the Jeffersonian opposition. Though Monroe was a partisan Republican, the spirit of factionalism did not appear quite as baneful to Washington in 1794 as it would two years later. Monroe would soon undermine the American government and the President's policy of neutrality.[185]

Monroe assumed, as he repeatedly told the French, that the interest of the United States is identical to that of the French republic. A shared interest of the sister republics was to humble British power. When Monroe arrived in Paris he already become convinced that Britain was inherently corrupt and stood on the point of collapse, which would be echoed in all his reports and reflected in all his acts. He made no secret of his sympathies for the "heroic valor" of the French forces in their war against Britain. He was rejoiced that "the fortune of France has risen to the utmost height of splendor, whilst that of her enemies has declined to the lowest state of depression. Her armies are every

[183] JQA to JA, 4 Apr. 1796, *WJQA* 1:481; JQA to JA, 24 June 1796, *WJQA* 1:505-6; JQA to JA, 18 March 1797, *WJQA* 2:142.
[184] JQA to JA, 7 June 1797, *WJQA* 2:177.
[185] Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 498.

where triumphant, whilst theirs are every where routed and broken." Monroe would even advocate attacking Britain, emphasizing that France would come to the aid of the United States.[186]

John Quincy Adams, on the other hand, argued that Britain was too powerful too attack, even for the combined armies of the United States and France. He reported that "the force of Great Britain is so far from being exhausted that her maritime power was never at any period so great as it is at present". His report of the number of battle ships and army size contradicted Monroe's reports and were closer to the truth – which would later be confirmed. It appears Monroe's wish to undermine British power had clouded his judgment. John Quincy's reports, Samuel Flagg Bemis argues, helped to correct the partisan impressions and advice of Monroe from Paris.[187]

Monroe would continue to advocate military action against Britain, and to the French he continually downplayed the fact that John Jay was in Britain to avoid the war. When the Jay Treaty was published, Monroe was so personally opposed to it that he believed the great Franco-American alliance was in ruins. From this point it would become clear that his loyalty to France was more important than his loyalty to his President. In a letter to James Madison he attacked Washington, stating that "most of the monarchs of the earth practice ingratitude in their transactions with other powers (…) but Mr. Washington has the merit of transcending, not the great men of the antient republicks, but the little monarchs of the present day in preaching it as a publick virtue." He assured French officials that after Jefferson would overthrow Washington in the upcoming presidential elections of 1796 everything will "be satisfactorily arranged".[188] Monroe would eventually be recalled for not defending American neutrality and Jay's Treaty.[189] John Quincy observed how political divisions, at home and abroad, and the French government's intention to influence American policy would bring ruin to the United States. This intensified his belief that the United States should preserve its unity and remain independent from Europe.

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[186] Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 500-2, 512; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 205.
[187] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 51; Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 502; JQA to JA, 12 Sept. 1795, *WJQA* 1:415.
[188] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 61; Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 512-13; Monroe to Madison, 1 Jan. 1797, *Papers of Madison* 16:443.
[189] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 61n30.

French intentions and the Dutch example

To John Quincy it was clear that involvement of the United States and Americans in European politics could only bring ruin. He desired to remain independent from European politics, even Dutch politics. John Quincy received multiple offers to join Patriot societies, but refused because he did not want to commit himself personally to Dutch politics. He grew increasingly suspicious of French influence in the Batavian Republic, believing that that the policy of the Patriot party and the Dutch government were dominated by France.[190] John Quincy was also committed to remaining neutral from European politics in general. He believed that "in all the governments of Europe new and old the people are considered as an instrument, not as the object, of political calculations". If the United States would engage themselves in European politics, the independence and liberties of the American people would be endangered.[191] The American policy of neutrality proved to be so advantageous to the United States, that John Quincy wished above all that the United States "may never have occasion for any political connection in Europe". Engaging in European politics would only inevitably drag the United States into wars and conflicts, bringing ruin to the country and its commerce.[192]

The Dutch case, which confirmed and intensified John Quincy's fears and desires, was the perfect example why Americans should remain neutral from European politics. In the Netherlands political disunion had provided the opportunity for foreign influences to intervene in Dutch politics, as became clear in 1787 and 1795. It seemed that the Dutch people lived in constant fear of foreign intervention and were "doomed to see their lot ascertained by the progress of events in which they have no participation". Since the French intervention in 1795 they dominated Dutch politics and policy, causing the Dutch nation to become wholly dependent upon French benevolence. The Dutch government was established "upon the basis of French protection; that alone continues its existence". The Dutch people "can have no avowed will different from that which may give

[190] JQA to JA, 21 Dec. 1794, *WJQA* 1:257; JQA to Abigail Adams, 25 Apr. 1795, *WJQA* 1:332; JQA to JA, 27 June 1795, *WJQA* 1:372.
[191] JQA to JA, 20 March 1796, *WJQA* 1:479; JQA to JA, 14 Jan. 1797, *WJQA* 2:88.
[192] JQA to Thomas Welsh, 26 Apr. 1795 & JQA to Abigail Adams, 16 May 1795, *WJQA* 1:339n1; JQA to JA, 22 May 1795, *WJQA* 1:360-2; JQA to Secretary of State, 4 Nov. 1796, *WJQA* 2:36-8.

satisfaction to the government of France".[193] Such a situation should be avoided at all costs in the United States.

The Federalists were primed to be suspicious of anything France did. Federalists, and other Americans, became convinced that French revolutionaries had infiltrated the United States through Democratic-Republican or Jacobin societies. In his sixth annual State of the Union in 1794 President Washington declared that in an effort to defeat the Federalist policy "certain self-created societies assumed the tone of condemnation".[194] Many Americans became convinced that French revolutionaries and their Jacobin Clubs "aimed, in the very beginning, at overturning the whole world". They "formed the design of bringing other nations to fraternize with them in their infernal principles and conduct" and "to subvert and overturn our holy religion and our free and excellent government". The United States and France had become "a contest of liberty against despotism; (…) of civilized society against the destroyers of all social order". These fears and suspicions persisted until at least the end of the century.[195]

John Quincy Adams fed Federalist fears with reports from the Batavian Republic. He reported that France was working to undermine the Federalists by trying to bring about a "decisive rupture between us and Britain, and a consequent triumph of French party, French principles, and French influence in the United States". After all, revolutionary France was setting up puppet regimes all over Europe, including the Netherlands.[196] John Quincy feared that a similar situation of disunion and foreign influences in the Netherlands could afflict the United States if Americans would engage themselves in European politics. He noted that Americans could achieve "national greatness, if the union is preserved; but that if it is broken, we shall soon divide into a parcel of petty tribes at perpetual war with one another, swayed by rival European

[193] JQA to JA, 4 May 1795, *WJQA* 1:343; JQA to JA, 12 Sept. 1795, *WJQA* 1:415; JQA to Secretary of State, 4 Nov. 1796, *WJQA* 2:35.
[194] George Washington, 'Sixth Annual State of the Union Address, 19 Nov. 1794', *Annals of Congress* (Washington, D.C. 1855), 4:787-91.
[195] David Osgood, *A Discourse, Delivered February 19, 1795, The Day Set Apart by the President for a General Thanksgiving Through the United States* (Boston 1795), 11-19; John Robinson, *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religious and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies* (Edinburgh 1797), 374-75, 486; Jedidiah Morse, *A Sermon, Exhibiting the Present Dangers, and Consequent Duties of the Citizens of the United States of America. Delivered at Charlestown, April 25, 1799. The Day of the National Fast* (Charlestown, MA 1799), 10-23.
[196] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 239; JQA to JA, 4 April 1796, *WJQA* 1:481.

powers".[197] John Quincy was especially fearful and suspicious of the French Directory, which did not favor the American union and whose policy seemed to be "to make *use* of the United States, as they are now making use of these [Dutch] Provinces".[198] From the French conduct towards other neutral powers "we may learn what course of policy *we* may expect from them". John Quincy provides examples that in the past the French government has sought to entangle neutral powers in their wars, such as Sweden, Denmark, and the old Dutch Republic, or conquer them for plunder and spoils, such as Italian city-states and the Batavian Republic. Like with other neutral states France tried to involve the United States in their European wars.[199]

In 1794 relations between the United States and Britain were deteriorating and war seemed likely, but Jay's Treaty prevented the outbreak of war. A frustrated France hoped the United States would join them in their war with Britain, and tried its best to obstruct the treaty. France attempted to prevent ratification of the treaty by publically attacking President Washington's credibility and position of power and by trying to influence American public opinion to support the French cause. John Quincy warned that France was trying to break political and commercial ties between the United States and Britain, leaving the United States isolated and increase the incentive to join France in its wars.[200] He became convinced that France now desired "the destruction of our government and civil war in the United States". France intended to win American support by force. According to John Quincy the French Directory was wholly convinced that "the people of the United Sates had but a feeble attachment to their government and will not support them in a contest with that of France".[201] John Quincy's suspicions of France went so far that he believed the French would try to derive support from Southern states, creating a North-South division among the American people. France would then proceed, he believed, to form a "southern republic": a union of Southern states France "would take under her protection and mould to her will" in order to serve as a balance against the Northern states. According to John Quincy such plans of influencing American policy

[197] JQA to JA, 20 May 1797, *WJQA* 2:168-9; JQA to Charles Adams, 9 June 1796, *WJQA* 1:493-4.
[198] JQA to JA, 21 July 1796, *WJQA* 2:7-11; JQA to JA, 14 Jan. 1797, *WJQA* 2:87; JQA to JA, 22 May 1795, *WJQA* 1:356-8; JQA to JA, 12 Sept. 1795, *WJQA* 1:412.
[199] JQA to Secretary of State, 21 Aug. 1796, *WJQA* 2:29.
[200] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 58-61; JQA to Joseph Pitcairn, 31 Jan. 1797, *WJQA* 2:94; JQA to JA, 23 Feb. 1797, *WJQA* 2:127-32.
[201] JQA to JA, 3 Feb. 1797, *WJQA* 2:103.

and creating a southern republic must have been formed as early as the time Genet was sent as a French representative.[202] For John Quincy it was clear that France has "seriously resumed the plan of revolutionizing *the whole world*". The United States should then do everything in its power to remain neutral from France, "or submit to the dictates of the Directory".[203] John Quincy's experiences of French policy in the Netherlands and his suspicions of French intentions further intensified his wish to remain independent from foreign influences.

3.4 – In the footsteps of John Adams

During his diplomatic mission to the Netherlands John Adams observed that the once great Dutch Republic had replaced its quest for independence and patriotism with a desire for money and commerce. Yet, when the Dutch Patriot movement started to gain momentum after 1781 John gladly welcomed such acts of patriotism and John Quincy would later describe this period as when the spirit of liberty predominated among the Dutch people. Both Adamses were distraught when foreign armies were called upon to intervene and break the Patriot movement in 1787. In 1795, John Quincy observed, the Dutch people were again "lifeless and passive" and again unable to repel foreign influences.

Both John and John Quincy attributed the possibility of foreign powers to intervene to the lack of unity among the Dutch people. A unity among the people is necessary to defend against foreign influences. Yet the Dutch people were caught up in political divisions – extensively discussed by both Adamses – which paved the way for the Netherlands to become the playing field for stronger European powers. In 1787 the Dutch people were unable to consolidate their differences and foreign powers were able to intervene. By 1795 the animosity of the Patriots against the re-established

[202] JQA to JA, 3 Apr. 1797, *WJQA* 2:155-6; JQA to JA, 2 July 1797, *WJQA* 2:184; JQA to JA, 31 Aug. 1795, *WJQA* 1:405-6.
[203] JQA to JA, 13 Aug. 1796, *WJQA* 2:25; JQA to Secretary of State, 1 Feb. 1797, *WJQA* 2:99-100; JQA to Rufus King, 9 Feb. 1797, *WJQA* 2:112; JQA to Secretary of the Treasury, 26 March 1797, *WJQA* 2:147.

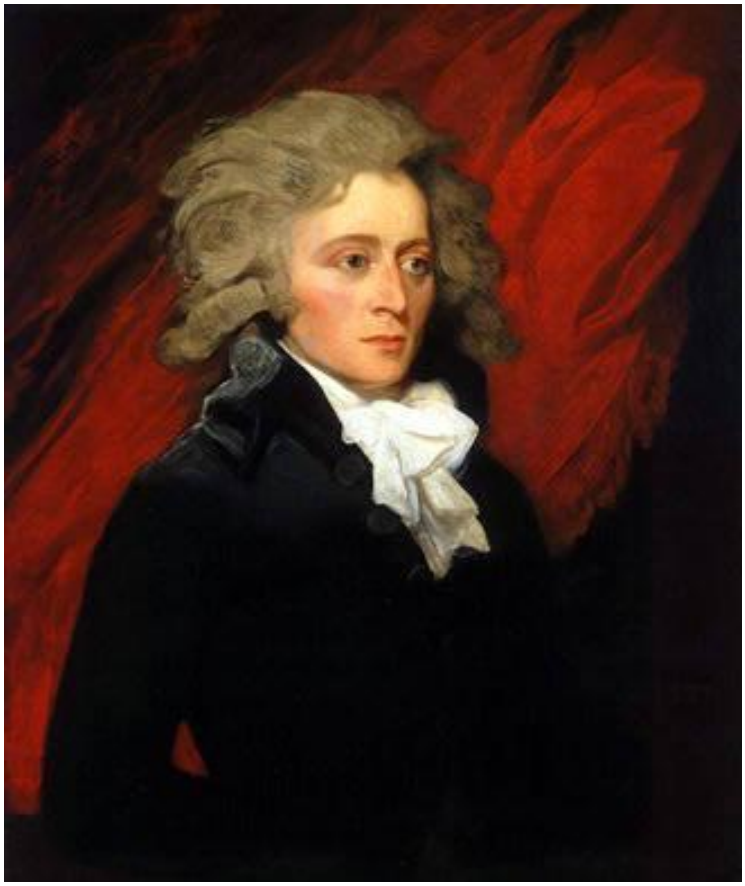
Stadtholderate and the political divisions had become so great since 1787 that they would rather submit to the invading French army than make peace with the present government.

During John Quincy's diplomatic mission political divisions in the United States were intensifying. He feared that a similar situation of disunion and foreign influences as in the Netherlands could afflict the United States. Disunity would divide the nation into warring factions each swayed by rival European powers. Like his father, John Quincy had become especially suspicious of the French government and remained cautious of its every move. Father and son both feared the desire of France to influence Dutch politics and especially American national and foreign policy. John Quincy argued that the French government was controlling Dutch politics and feared the United States could follow the same fate. Only when the American unity is preserved can foreign intervention be avoided and can the United States achieve greatness.

Though John Quincy attached great importance to preserving the friendship of France, he was also cautious of France's expectation that the United States should be eternally grateful and would welcome French influence in American politics. John Quincy argued that the United States does not depend upon France for its liberty and independence, arguing that "if the French propose to themselves an influence in America by the assumption of a supercilious tone of negotiation, or by disregarding their stipulations, they will fail of success and lose much of the influence which they actually possess". Like his father before him, he did not believe that the United States should be grateful to French aid. Instead the American government should cultivate a friendship with honor and dignity, and expect a similar return.[204] John Quincy experienced himself what his father had written about in his diaries and letters.

[204] JQA to Joseph Pitcairn, 13 Nov. 1796, *WJQA* 2:41; JQA to Joseph Pitcairn, 9 March 1797, *WJQA* 2:141; JQA to Joseph Pitcairn, 31 March 1797, *WJQA* 2:152.

Chapter 4: William Vans Murray, 1797-1801



William Vans Murray, by Mather Brown, 1787

Like John Quincy Adams, William Vans Murray (1760 – 1803) matured during the period of the American Revolution and became greatly interested in politics, diplomacy, and the science of government. After the war with Britain ended Murray moved to London in April 1784 to study law, where he became acquainted with John and John Quincy Adams. During three years abroad he became increasingly interested in politics and diplomacy and in 1787 he published his *Political Sketches*, a collection of six essays

defending the American experiment in response to French critics.[205] For Murray the American Revolution served as a beacon of hope to the world and he considered the American political experiment as a test case for ideas about the distribution of power and the nature of government. Initially the new state governments of the United States were praised by French intellectuals, but in time some of them came to doubt that the American experiments could succeed. It held their attention nevertheless, and they started to publically criticize the experiments. Americans imbued with a sense of nationalism stemming from their revolutionary achievement, in turn, sought to refute the criticisms. Like John Adams's *A Defence of the Constitutions* and Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Murray's *Political Sketches* was such a reaction to French critics. Murray's *Political Sketches* was inscribed to John Adams, of whom Murray was always a devoted admirer and whose influence was evident throughout the work. Murray and John Adams were politically attuned to each other and shared many political beliefs, such as criticisms of popular government and supporting a strong executive.[206]

In the fifth essay of *Political Sketches* Murray discusses the dangers of the European balance of power, which he calls "a system of hostile jealousy". Treaties between European monarchs were "the most shameful bargains between disconcerted ambition and lawless force" and caused European nations to become entangled in inextricable relations. Had the treaties been formed with better intentions and under better circumstance "Europe would have been infinitely more enlightened and better cultivated than at present". The American government, on the other hand, knew better than to become entangled with other nations and wished to retain its neutrality. Because of this policy the United States was geographically and politically removed from the European system of "hostile jealousy".[207] During his diplomatic mission Murray would work out plans to manipulate the balance of power to benefit the United States, keeping it safe from any involvement with European affairs and its corruption.

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[205] DeConde, 'Political Sketches', 623-6; JQA, William Vans Murray, *Annual Report*, 347-8. Originally published in *The Portfolio* of 7 January 1804; C. Sulivane, 'A Sketch of William Vans Murray', *Southern History Association* 5 (March 1901), 152-54.
[206] DeConde, 'Political Sketches', 627-9, 634. Bernard Bailyn states that "Murray was a political disciple of John Adams", *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (New York 1967), 372 n50.
[207] WVM, *Political Sketches*, 68-81.

After completing his education in Britain in 1787, Murray returned to the United States and began his career in public service. From 1787 to 1791 Murray served in the Maryland general assembly, and from 1791 to 1797 he was elected and twice re-elected to Congress. Murray served three consecutive terms in the House of Representatives, during which he earned the reputation of being an able statesman and devoted Federalist. Though he rose to a position of prominence in the Federalist Party, he never quite counted as a Federalist insider. Elkins and McKitrick attribute this to the close and long-standing connection he had with the Adamses, who were more moderate than – and clashed with – the more eminent Federalists such as Alexander Hamilton. During the presidential elections of 1796 he was a leading campaigner for John Adams against Thomas Jefferson. Murray's merit had caught President Washington's eye and as one of the last acts of his administration he appointed Murray as Minister to the Batavian Republic to succeed John Quincy Adams in 1797.[208]

4.1 – William Vans Murray in the Batavian Republic

A month before Murray's appointment Vice President John Adams requested Secretary of State Timothy Pickering to "test Murray's allegiance" before he could enter public service. At a meeting with Pickering, Murray was shown old diplomatic files from the war with Britain which testified the "ill will" of France towards the United States. Murray was outraged by France's actions – as his diary entry of that day professes – and had passed the test. Knowledge of France's "ill will" from the past had undoubtedly made Murray cautious of France's future actions.[209] Additionally, he was personally and politically acquainted to John and John Quincy Adams, who had grown suspicious of France as well. Murray regularly corresponded with them and was warned by John Quincy – and likely by John Adams as well – to be on his guard when dealing with the

[208] A. DeConde, 'The Role of William Vans Murray in the Peace Negotiations between France and the United States, 1800', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 15:2 (Feb. 1952), 185; DeConde, 'Political Sketches', 626; Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 676; JQA, William Vans Murray, *Annual Report*, 347-9; Sulivane, 'A Sketch', 154-5.
[209] WVM, Diary, 21 Jan. & 25 Feb. 1797, quoted in Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 47.

French.[210] It appears that even before Murray had set foot on Dutch soil he had already learned to be cautious of French intentions.

Murray was also cautioned about Americans residing in France. A few days before his departure, Murray was informed by the Dutch minister in the United States that his predecessor, John Quincy Adams, had become unpopular. Not because of any misconduct, but because the American Jacobins had pinned a pro-British label on him. Though the Dutch minister informed Murray that the Batavian regime did not consider him either British or French, Murray suspected that he would undoubtedly suffer the same fate.[211] Murray soon learned he was right to be cautious. He noted that Americans in France wrote home that the French Directory was well disposed of Americans and the United States. Murray warned about the dangerous effects such reports could have, stressing that "every captain fishes up a budget of this sort of trash which in five months we see circulated as recent intelligence from Europe throughout the Union. These are in their origin small things, but in their effect upon the hopes and expectations of the newspaper readers and common people are very important."[212] Murray knew better than to trust such reports.

A touch of war fever

Murray arrived in The Hague at a very critical period. The signing of the Jay Treaty had angered the French, who considered the treaty a step toward an alliance with their English enemy and as a violation of the Franco-American Treaty of 1778. France and the United States were seizing each other's ships and were on the verge of declared war. Murray's instructions from the Secretary of State emphasized that his position at The Hague provided him with the best opportunity to obtain information on the views and designs of European rulers, especially those of France. Additionally, Murray's "principal duty" was to maintain the harmony and useful connections between the United States and the Batavian Republic. The American government feared that France's influence in the Batavian government would drag the Batavian Republic into its conflicts against the

[210] When WVM was appointed as minister to the Netherlands, the first letter JQA sent him warned that the "terrible French Republic" is not showing its "true character". JQA to WVM, 7 July 1797, *WJQA* 2:186-87.
[211] WVM, Diary, 3 Mar. 1797, quoted in Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 47; Sulivane, 'A Sketch', 154-5.
[212] WVM to JQA, 1 Oct. 1797, *Annual Report*, 361-3; WVM to JQA, 20 July 1798, *Annual Report*, 438.

United States, damaging American-Dutch political and especially economic relations. Remaining neutral and avoiding conflict seemed to best serve American national interest. Neutrality from European affairs would maintain harmony with both the French and Batavian Republic and leave American commerce undamaged.[213]

But Federalists, including Murray, were beginning to see no alternative to war should France completely close down the channels of diplomacy and continue to interfere with American policy. Murray's first few letters from The Hague to John Quincy Adams mainly stressed his growing suspicions of France and its attempts to divide the American union. According to Murray France was trying to convince the American people of its love of the United States – for instance through Americans in Europe writing home and Frenchmen in the United States propagating the French cause – but in the meantime counted upon the party difference "as the lever by which the Union is to be overthrown". Murray believed that the French would not "give up their experiment of dividing and revolutionising America, unless something occurred among their war affairs in Europe that would raise our importance in their eyes and make our trade and neutrality essential to their colonies". Murray intended to halt the spread of revolutionary France's ideals and save the United States from ruin at the hands of France. During the fall of 1797 until the spring of 1798 Murray caught something Hill appropriately calls "a touch of war fever". In his correspondence Murray discussed plans to shift the European balance of power to the advantage of the United States. With a fear of an upcoming rupture with France in the back of his mind, Murray was "convinced we must do more than defend ourselves. We must inflict pains and horrors, if we would be hereafter at peace and save our excellent constitutions from the pestilence of the spoiler and poisoner" (i.e. France).[214] It was the only way, Murray believed, France could be stopped in its tracks.

Another part of his plan was to strengthen the bonds with Britain. Murray believed that "cooperation without alliance"' with Britain could aid the United States in the seemingly inevitable conflict with France. Such cooperation against a common enemy

[213] DeConde, 'Peace Negotiations', 186; DeConde, 'Political Sketches', 626; Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 67; JQA, William Vans Murray, *Annual Report*, 349; Secretary of State to WVM, Instructions, 6 Apr. 1797, *Annual Report*, 352-3.
[214] Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 67-70; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 240-41; WVM to JQA, 1 Oct. 1797, *Annual Report*, 361-6; WVM to JQA, 4 Nov. 1797, *Annual Report*, 366-70; WVM to JQA, 3 Feb. 1798, *Annual Report*, 377.

would "work out our safety cheaply and with great conformity to the public feelings in the United States". Murray, like many Americans, wanted to avoid any political attachments and alliances, so the cooperation would be limited to military aid. But when serious talks of cooperation occurred President John Adams feared that it would "tie his hands", something he sought to avoid.[215] Having second thoughts, Murray agreed with the President but more importantly also noted an even bigger disadvantage of cooperation with Britain. Murray argued that in an open war with France, and consequently the Batavian Republic, Britain would seize the opportunity to take over French and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean. This would disproportionately aggrandize British power, which was the opposite of Murray's intention. Though France would grow weaker, another great European power would grow even stronger. In order for the European balance of power to work to the advantage of the United States, weaker European powers must grow stronger at the cost of the stronger powers and form a more equal balance of power. For this purpose Murray came up with another plan, which he referred to as his "projet". Murray stuck to the plan of having other European powers seize the Dutch and French colonies in the Caribbean, but this time by weaker European power, such as Sweden or Denmark. Murray noted that "the avoidance of the evil to the U.S., which might arise from too great an aggrandisement of Great-Britain, would be the transfer of the colonies to other powers". These lesser European powers would not threaten the safety and security of the United States, even with Caribbean colonies under their control.[216]

Though Murray's plans were not adopted and quickly abandoned on advice of John Quincy Adams, they show that Murray was primarily concerned with American national interest and saving the United States from the corruption of Europe. If the United States could not remain neutral from European affairs, Murray intended to use the balance of power in its favor. Weakening France, while not strengthening other European powers too much in the process, would halt the spread of the French Directory's ideals and keep the United States save.

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[215] Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 67; WVM to JQA, 4 Nov. 1797, *Annual Report*, 366-70.
[216] Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 70-5; WVM to Secretary of State, 16 Dec. 1797, quoted in Hill p. 73; WVM to JQA, 15 Jan. 1798, *Annual Report*, 370-1; WVM to JQA, 3 Feb. 1798, *Annual Report*, 377; WVM to JQA, 12 Mar. 1798, *Annual Report*, 383-4; WVM to JQA, 3 Apr. 1798, *Annual Report*, 391-2.

French influence in the Batavian Republic

Murray started to increasingly distrust the French Directory and believed that the Batavian Republic had little chance of escaping French influence. This becomes evident in Murray's discussion of a *coup d'etat* and the subsequent adoption of a new constitution. On 22 January 1798 Murray witnessed a coup in the Dutch National Assembly, writing to John Quincy Adams that "a revolution took place this day here in which the moderates are overturned and many of them now confined under military guard". The Dutch Radicals had unseated the Moderate regime and established a provisional government more in line with the French disposition at the time. For Murray the radicals were undoubtedly backed by the Directory in Paris. In a letter to John Quincy Adams Murray describes that last October a "French gentleman" was sent to the Batavian Republic "to explore this country, its parties, and the causes why the constitution issued in August failed". The French Directory "wished to know how power could be better concentrated for her use, the shortest method of doing this, and the probable degree of opposition, if attempted". Murray believed that since October the Directory was planning the coup, and in the meantime additional French troops were sent to The Hague. It was clear to Murray that the new Radical regime was an instrument of France. While the Moderates preferred that the individual provinces should retain some of their power and favored a better balance between the executive and legislative powers, the Radicals desired a powerful unitary regime in which the legislature would play a major role. For the French Directory the Radicals' desire to create a more centralized government would make it easier for Paris to control The Hague and force its will upon Dutch politics. The coup then strengthened the French hold on the Batavian government.[217]

The way a new constitution was adopted also confirmed Murray's fear that the French Directory was attempting to dominate Dutch politics. For instance, Murray found it disturbing that the Franco-Batavian solidarity was to be written into the constitution, finalizing the French Directory's influence over Dutch politics. What concerned Murray even more was that the constitution was generated and adopted by a select few who were

[217] Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 60, 76-7; WVM to JQA, 22 Jan. 1798, *Annual Report*, 371-2; WVM to JQA, 25 Jan. 1798, *Annual Report*, 372-4; WVM to JQA, 3 Feb. 1798, *Annual Report*, 374-5; WVM to JQA, 18 May 1798, *Annual Report*, 408; WVM, Diary, 22, 23 & 25 Jan. 1798, quoted in Hill p. 76-7, 79-80. The failed constitution of August 1797 is discussed in Murray' letter to JQA of 23 August 1797, *Annual Report*, 359-61.

"of the spirit of 22d January", yet announcing it to be the act of the sovereign people. Murray was distraught about the way this constitution was adopted, stating that "it is necessary to congratulate upon such occasions, as it would be if a lady were known by all the world to have been ravished and the marriage ceremony performed to save life and reputation on both sides".[218] The Dutch people were being oppressed and deceived into an economic and political alliance with France.[219]

Yet, the new regime of Radicals was becoming increasingly unpopular: the old provincial estates blocked voting themselves into oblivion; the relatively debt-free provinces objected to sharing the economic burden; and the people publicly demonstrated against the purging of the Moderates from the regime. But Murray's hope that a restoration of the Moderates would free the Batavian Republic from French influence was idle. A counter-coup of the Moderates in June had overthrown the Radicals, but only with the explicit permission of Paris. To Murray it seemed impossible for the Batavian people to escape French influence.[220]

John Quincy Adams and William Vans Murray in the historiography of the Batavian Republic

As something of a side-note, it seems that the correspondences of John Quincy Adams and William Vans Murray could contribute to an ongoing debate over foreign influences in the Batavian Republic. At the turn of the twentieth century Colenbrander argued that the Batavian Republic was nothing more than a client state of France with very limited freedom. After all, the Batavian Republic owed its existence to the French army invading the Dutch Republic. A part of the French army stayed behind, as well as a French political envoy that remained at the heart of Batavian politics. The French presence, combined with the demand of a compensation fee for their aid, was evidence enough that the liberation was actually an occupation.[221]

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[218] Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 78-9; WVM to JQA, 19 Mar. 1798, *Annual Report*, 390; WVM to JQA, 27 Apr. 1798, *Annual Report*, 401; WVM to JQA, 18 May 1798, *Annual Report*, 408.
[219] WVM to JQA, 1 May 1798, *Annual Report*, 404; WVM to JQA, 14 May 1798, *Annual Report*, 405.
[220] Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 80; WVM to JQA, 12 June 1798, *Annual Report*, 418.
[221] H.T. Colenbrander, *De Bataafsche Republiek* (Amsterdam 1908). Historians who agree with this view are E.H. Kossmann, *De lage landen 1780-1980. Twee eeuwen Nederland en Belgie* (2 vols.; Amsterdam 1978) and P. de Rooy, *Republiek van Rivaliteiten* (Amsterdam 2002). The latter called the Batavian Republic "only independent in appearance". Rooy, *Republiek van Rivaliteiten*, 19.

This view was challenged after the Second World War by, among others, Pieter Geyl. He, and those who agree with him, do not deny the French influence, but rather emphasize that the Dutch revolutionaries had a large degree of autonomy. They stress the importance of internal debates and the freedom of movement enjoyed by the Dutch until at least 1800. The French may have set some conditions, but the Dutch were free in shaping their new political order.[222]

However, studying the correspondence of John Quincy Adams and William Vans Murray indicates that the Batavian people were quite restricted in their movement and liberties. Both diplomats argue that the political decisions of the Batavian Republic were controlled or at least approved of by the French Directory. In the early years of the Batavian Republic John Quincy argues that is was the "spring unseen" – a small group of revolutionaries allied to France – that orchestrated the replacement of the old regime with the new regime based on a French model. John Quincy concluded that the French had come as conquerors instead of liberators, like Colenbrander argued. Under the control of France the Dutch people were worse off. Later, Murray similarly argued that the Batavian government was controlled by the French Directory, confirming John Quincy's view. Especially the coups, counter-coups, and constitutions were the work of the French. Murray believed that the Dutch people were being deceived and oppressed into an economic and political alliance with France. It seemed impossible for the Dutch to escape French influence.

The views of John Quincy and Murray could then provide a fresh perspective on the historiography of the Batavian Republic. Their views seem to support Colenbrander's thesis that the Batavian Republic was controlled by the French Directory, and challenge the more accepted thesis of Geyl and others that the Dutch were free in shaping their new political order.

[222] P. Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse stam* (3 vols.; Amsterdam en Antwerp 1948-59) 3:7; Schama, *Patriotten en bevrijders*, 176-181. The works of L. de Gou on the establishment of Batavian constitutions followed the same line of reasoning, including *Het plan van constitutie van 1796* (The Hague 1975), *Het ontwerp van constitutie van 1797* (3 vols.; The Hague 1983-1985), *De staatsregeling van 1798* (2 vols.; The Hague 1988-1990), and *De staatsregeling van 1801* (The Hague 1995).

Beacons of hope against spreading corruption

Murray was unhappy about the political situation in Europe to say the least. He argued that the people of Europe were being deluded with promises of liberty and sovereignty. Such promises were merely "intended by the philosophers of Europe as a means of rooting out royalty from the heart of man, for they first dub the people as the sovereign and call him so while they trample him in the mud of misery and contempt". In Europe liberty "is not the right of doing what is proper, but whatever those in power please – the old despotism new dramatized". Murray considered, like many Americans, the United States as one of the last remaining beacons of hope against the corruption and evil of Europe. The liberties and freedom of the American people should be protected against European intrusion at all costs.[223]

The French Directory was the prime example of the corruption of Europe. By mid-1798 Murray had acquired a profound distrust of revolutionary France. He had rejoiced over the first upheavals, but was soon horrified by the revolutionaries uprooting institutions, indulging in bloodshed, and conquering nations in name of liberty and fraternity. The French Directory used fear as a tool to command its subjects, which "the horror of Robespierre's reign settled as the foundation of the republican power of France". Similar to many Federalists, Murray started to lean toward the stereotype that all revolutionaries were natural disorganizers and used the term "Jacobin" without differentiation to describe loosely any group or individual proposing radical change. Murray's experiences at The Hague confirmed his belief that wherever French revolutionaries or their ideals appeared in strength, nations lost their internal political stability and their international independence. He was "convinced that all the affiliated and conquered countries groan under a military despotism and that France and her demagogues are the cause of this". The French Directory's "system established in the affiliated countries is so little plausible in practise (…) it can not last. It is too much opposed to common sense, to the natural feelings, which pervade the mass, though not the philosophers". Murray believed that by using war and intrigue Revolutionary France would not rest until all monarchies became republics, and all republics were cast in the

[223] WVM to JQA, 12 Mar. 1798, *Annual Report*, 383-6; WVM to JQA, 19 Mar. 1798, *Annual Report*, 390-91.

French mold. Like John Quincy before him, Murray believed the French were returning to their plan to revolutionize the world.[224]

For Murray there was no hope for the sovereignty and liberties of the European people, save perhaps of the Dutch. In his final years as a diplomat Murray stated that "indeed on the point of relative civilization I doubt if, Holland excepted, there be any nation in Europe as civilized as our country".[225] But as long as the Batavian Republic was under influence of the French Directory there was little hope for the Dutch civilization. Murray believed that only the support of Britain, and the exiled supporters of the Stadtholderate, could bring salvation to the Dutch people. The Dutch supporters of the Stadtholderate and British partisans should rally to the new moderate regime and help it to throw off French patronage. Both parties should abandon their desire to revive the position of the Stadtholder and come to grips with reality. The Dutch royalists "have lost their gilded yacht, they are in the water, and ought to be happy if they can save themselves in the long boat". Their primary mission should be to loosen the Batavian Republic from French influence and restore its independence. An independent Batavian Republic free from the French Directory's hold would stand as a bulwark against the spread of revolutionary France's destructive ideals. More importantly, the safety of the United States from European corruption could then be guaranteed.

Murray's plans were again quickly rejected by John Quincy, who stated that the Dutch were too passive to shed any blood for their independence. Though Murray had hoped the Batavian Republic would again be independent, he had also observed that the Dutch showed little resistance to the French encroachment in their affairs. Like John and John Quincy Adams had observed before, the Dutch seemed to lack a spirit of patriotism. During the coup the Dutch people allowed their "mock sovereignty" to be dragged to the scaffold without resistance, and with only 1500 French troops in the capital. The Dutch "are as cautious as if a French grenadier had his bayonet at their bosoms". With the coup

[224] Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 89; WVM to Secretary of State, 18 Mar. 1798, *Annual Report*, 387; WVM to JQA, 27 Apr. 1798, *Annual Report*, 402-3; WVM to JQA, 8 June 1798, *Annual Report*, 416-7; WVM to JQA, 18 Jan. 1799, *Annual Report*, 510.
[225] WVM to JQA, 24 Jan. 1801, *Annual Report*, 677. In earlier years Murray also showed admiration for the Dutch people as a last hope in a corrupted Europe, for instance stating that "they are indeed the very best people on earth" in his letter to JQA of 27 Apr. 1798, *Annual Report*, 401-2.

the French Directory took another step towards completely controlling the Batavian government. [226]

John Quincy Adams also argued that the British would not abandon the Prince of Orange, who seemed to be the only sovereign on continental Europe willing to ally with Britain. Despite the plan's dismissal, it showed Murray's desire to halt or at least slow down the spread of revolutionary France's ideals across Europe, and especially to the United States, by freeing the Batavian Republic from French influence. Again Murray intended to use the balance of power to the advantage of the United States. A weaker France and an independent Batavian Republic – willing to trade with the United States – would benefit American national interest.[227]

4.2 – On the verge of war

During Murray's diplomatic mission the division at home between Federalists and Republicans reached its peak and France was becoming increasingly hostile towards the United States. Federalists feared for their position of power and were becoming increasingly suspicious of Republican and French activities and intentions. The reports of Murray, and previous reports from John and John Quincy, undoubtedly fueled those suspicions.

In 1776 Americans revolutionaries were dedicated to creating a republic which would secure their liberty and inalienable human rights. The United States would be an asylum for the oppressed and persecuted of all nations. But in the 1790s the ideas about citizenship would change. After the signing of the Jay Treaty Franco-American relations were increasingly deteriorating. After John Adams's presidential victory, France abandoned its earlier efforts to divide Americans politically and decided to confront the United States directly. France started to seize American ships and a war with the United States seemed inevitable. What made matters worse was the steady growth of the pro-

[226] WVM, Diary, 22, 23 & 25 Jan. 1798, quoted in Hill p. 79-80.
[227] Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 101-2; WVM to JQA, 12 June 1798, *Annual Report*, 419; WVM to JQA, 6 July 1798, *Annual Report*, 428; WVM to JQA, 24 July 1798, *Annual Report*, 440

French Republican Party. The many immigrants that entered the United States year after year generally supported the Republicans, which continuously increased the number of followers of the Republican Party. The belief that the United States would soon be involved in a war with France and the growth of Republican opposition, which supported revolutionary France's ideas, had the Federalists on edge. Many Federalists became convinced that the survival of the federal government required restrictions and controls on immigrants. Federalists dealt with this threat by restricting naturalization of immigrants and the rights of aliens.

In 1790 Congress had passed a naturalization act requiring only two years of residency, but in light of the French Revolution the time of residency was increased to five years and immigrants had to show proof of their devotion to the American Constitution. The impending war with France, and fear of a French invasion, struck fear in the hearts of the Federalists and any optimism in welcoming foreign immigrants was gone. In 1798 a new naturalization act was adopted, extending the required time of residency to 14 years and forbade any subjects of a nation at war with the United States to become an American citizen. Expelling aliens and halting immigrants were part of the Federalists' plans to save the American Republic from the scourge of Jacobinism.

Unfortunately, the Federalists' policies meant challenging the revolutionary idea that the United States was an asylum of liberty for the oppressed of the world. These seemingly counter-revolutionary ideas met with great resistance by the American people. When a British naval victory of the French in October 1798 essentially destroyed the possibility of a French invasion of either England or the United States, the threat of a French invasion was gone and the Federalists lost much of the rationale for their program. The controversial acts would irreversibly damage the credibility of the Federalists and seriously endangered Federalist prospects for the upcoming presidential election in 1800. Yet, however disastrous this act turned out to be for the Federalists' reputation, at the time it appeared to be necessary for the protection of the country.[228]

It seems likely that the experiences and reports of the three diplomats fueled Federalists' fears of Republicans and French revolutionaries, and influenced American

[228] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 247-50, 260-63, 271-2. For a more detailed description of the changing ideas of citizenship see R.M. Smith, 'Constructing American National Identity: Strategies of the Federalists', in: D. Ben-Atar and B.B. Oberg (eds.), *Federalists Reconsidered* (1998), pp. 19-40.

immigration policy in the 1790s. By the time the acts were passed John Adams had become President, and John Quincy and Murray were on diplomatic missions in Europe in respectively Prussia and the Batavian Republic. John had already become suspicious of French intentions during his diplomatic missions and during his Presidency he was constantly reminded by John Quincy and Murray of the dangers France presented. Their reports were full of warnings that France intended to revolutionize the world and influence American policy. Even after he moved to Prussia, John Quincy would warn his father and other Federalists that France intended to drag the United States into war.[229]

Peace negotiations

In 1798 President John Adams hoped to settle the dispute with France and sent three American envoys to Paris, but they were unsuccessful in their efforts. France declared that American neutrality was no longer possible, and that all nations must aid France or be treated as enemies. The United States and France formally halted all treaty obligations and trade, and openly attacked each other's ships. Undeclared war on the high seas broke out between the United States and France, the so called Quasi-War (1798-1800), which could have become a major conflict at any moment. The Batavian government also wished to avoid a Franco-American conflict, fearing it would be dragged into a war. But even though no Dutch faction actively wanted war with the United States, Dutch neutrality could not be counted on as long as French influence prevailed. If France should insist, the Batavian Republic would comply. The new regime was as well-disposed with the United States as they dared to be.[230]

By the summer of 1798 France's internal financial and political situation was worsening. The French Directory, like the American and Batavian governments, intended to resolve the conflict. The French diplomat Pichon was sent to The Hague to assure Murray and the American government that France had good intentions. Pichon told Murray "that the eyes of his government were opened, that they saw the full importance of putting an end to the dispute". But even after numerous assurances of Pichon that

[229] Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 96; JQA to JA, 31 Jan. 1798, *WJQA* 2:247-52; JQA to JA, 25 Feb. 1798, *WJQA* 2:263-64.
[230] Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 78-9; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 239-41, 245; WVM to JQA, 3 Apr. 1798, *Annual Report*, 391; WVM to JQA, 2 Aug. 1798, *Annual Report*, 446; WVM to JQA, 3 Aug. 1798, *Annual Report*, 447; WVM to Secretary of State, 18 & 23 Aug. 1798, *Annual Report*, 457-8.

France had good intentions, Murray remained skeptical. He was still cautious of French intentions, stressing that France wishes "merely to divide and bewilder, and to relax our energy". All past performances undoubtedly justified watchful pessimism. Nevertheless, Murray was sent to France along with other delegates for another attempt to settle the disputes between France and the United States in 1800. Primarily in consequence of the talks between Pichon and Murray, President Adams felt assured that the French were indeed prepared to negotiate in good terms. This time the negotiations were successful and a treaty was signed in September of the same year, ending the Quasi-War and relieving the tensions between France and the United States.[231]

After a brief return to The Hague, Murray was recalled in December 1801 by the newly elected President Thomas Jefferson. To the new administration it was obvious that the Batavian Republic was controlled by France; Murray's reports were overflown with distrust of the French Directory and its influence in the Batavian government.[232]

4.3 – The last in line

William Vans Murray was the last diplomat before the diplomatic mission in the Netherlands was discontinued in 1801. Like John and John Quincy before him, Murray grew suspicious of French intentions. Murray started his diplomatic mission at a time when tensions between the United States and France were running high and the political divisions at home were intensifying, which reinforced each other. Murray was thus

[231] Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 609, 617-19, 668; Hill, *Federalist Diplomat*, 122-28; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 272-73; Talleyrand (French Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1797) to Pichon, 28 Aug. 1798, *Works of John Adams*, 9:262.

Murray regularly reported on his talks with Pichon: WVM to JQA, 18 May 1798, *Annual Report*, 407; WVM to JQA, 3 July 1798, *Annual Report*, 426-7; WVM to JQA, 2 Aug. 1798, *Annual Report*, 444-5; WVM to Secretary of State, 7 Aug. 1798, *Annual Report*, 451-2; WVM to JQA, 10 Aug. 1798, *Annual Report*, 452-3; WVM to Secretary of State, 18 Aug. 1798, *Annual Report*, 457-8; WVM to Secretary of State, 1 Sept. 1798, *Annual Report*, 463-4; WVM to JQA, 6 Sept. 1798, *Annual Report*, 466; WVM to JA, 7 Oct. 1798, *Works of John Adams*, 8:688-91; WVM to JQA, 9 Oct. 1798, *Annual Report*, 480.

Murray suspicions of French intentions concerning negotiations can be found in letters to JA of 17 & 22 July and 3 Aug. 1798, and to Timothy Pickering of 10 Aug. 1798.

[232] Elkins & McKitrick, *Age of Federalism*, 676; WVM to JQA, 27 Sept. 1800, *Annual Report*, 653-4; WVM to JQA, 18 Nov. 1800, *Annual Report*, 661-2.

instructed to keep an eye on France. Before he left for the Netherlands Murray had already become suspicious of French intentions, and his experiences in the Batavian Republic were confirming his suspicions. The processes behind coups, constitutions, and counter-coups convinced Murray that the French Directory was not to be trusted and that the Batavian regime was under French control. Consequently, the new regime was as well-disposed with the United States as they dared to be. Though Murray believed the Dutch were different from other, corrupted European people, he had little hope for them as long as the Batavian Republic was under influence of the French Directory. There was little hope that the Dutch people would again be independent, since the Dutch showed little resistance to the French encroachment in their affairs. Like John and John Quincy had observed before, the Dutch seemed to lack a spirit of patriotism.

Murray joined John and John Quincy in their belief that the United States should remain independent from European politics. In order to preserve the American unity and avoid foreign influences, the American government should not become entangled in European affairs. In his *Political Sketches* Murray already expressed his aversion to the European system of politics and "hostile jealousy". To Murray the United States was one of the last beacons of hope against European corruption. He also joined his predecessors in their fear that France intended to influence American policy. After all, French revolutionaries planned to revolutionize the world and were already setting their plans into motion in Europe. Initially Murray hoped to avoid any hostility with France, or any other European power, and maintain American neutrality.

But Murray was beginning to see no alternative to war should France close down the channels of diplomacy and continue to interfere with American policy. While his predecessors continuously believed that the United States would be safe from conflict and corruption as long as it remained neutral, Murray saw no other choice but to "inflict pains and horrors" on France. Murray would work out plans to manipulate the balance of power to the advantage of the United States. He planned to weaken France, while not strengthening other European powers too much in the process, and halt the spread of the French Directory's ideals across Europe and the Atlantic. Murray's hope of an independent and neutral Batavian Republic was in part fueled by the intention that it would serve as a bulwark against French revolutionary ideas. Even when the French

government did it best to convince the American government of its intention to make peace, Murray still remained cautious of their intentions. He believed that France merely intended to deceive and to catch the United States off guard. The liberties and freedom of the American people should be protected at all costs.

The subject of factionalism and political divisions is not as prominent in Murray's correspondence as it was in the writings of his predecessors. Back home the divisions between Federalists and Republicans were reaching its peak, which could not have been far from his mind. To be sure, Murray discusses the political divisions surrounding the coups, counter-coups, and the debates over the new constitutions. But he concluded that it was the work of the French, and the Dutch people were hardly involved. He was more interested in the influence the French Directory was exerting on Dutch politics, and how French patronage could be thrown off. Murray believed that a strong Dutch unity could free the Batavian Republic from French influence. Only when the supporters of the Stadtholderate and British partisans gave up their hope of restoring the power of the Stadtholder and rally behind the regime of the Moderates, could the Dutch people be saved. Though Murray does not extensively discuss factionalism, he does conclude that a strong unity among the people was necessary to preserve its liberties and independence.

Discussion & Conclusion

This paper investigated what lessons the United States could learn from the Netherlands at the end of the eighteenth century and to what extent the Netherlands could serve as an example for the new American nation. In order to do so, this paper focused on the correspondence, both official and private, and personal documents such as diaries of the three diplomats stationed in the Netherlands from 1780 to 1801: John Adams, John Quincy Adams, and William Vans Murray.

Diplomats were an important and relatively reliable source of information for the American government. They regularly reported on European affairs that were of importance to the United States and could affect American national and foreign policy. One of the American diplomatic missions was established in the Netherlands. The Dutch Republic was an important center of European diplomacy as well as an international credit market. Many eighteenth-century Americans, including the three diplomats, believed that the Dutch Republic was useful as an ally as well as an example for state-building.

All three diplomats stationed in the Netherlands were established and respected statesmen and received important votes of confidence from their peers and political superiors. Additionally, the situation in the Netherlands was becoming increasingly important to the United States and all three diplomats were stationed there during critical periods of American state-building and foreign affairs. Their diplomatic reports, and any words of caution or praise, would then not be taken lightly. Investigating the official and private correspondence of these three diplomats provides an insight into what preoccupied the minds of eighteenth-century Americans. Through the eyes of American diplomats in the Netherlands this paper has attempted to uncover how eighteenth-century Americans viewed Europe and what they could learn from the events in the Netherlands.

Despite the apparent importance of the Netherlands to the United State during the final decades of the eighteenth century, not much has been written on how the Netherlands could serve as an example to the United States. Moreover, previous studies of Dutch-American relations in the eighteenth century tend to ignore or overlook the

diplomatic relations between 1780 and 1801. They primarily focus on economic and trade relations or on diplomatic relations up to the Dutch recognition of American independence in 1782. Yet, the political developments in Europe and the Netherlands were becoming increasingly important because they could affect American politics as well. Thus, the diplomatic relations between the United States and the Netherlands were also becoming increasingly important. This paper attempts to provide an overview and a more complete picture of Dutch-American diplomatic relations in the final decades of the eighteenth century, focusing on what the Netherlands meant to eighteenth-century Americans and the newly formed United States.

John Adams was the first American diplomat sent to the Netherlands. During his missions in France he came to believe that the French government intended to influence American policy. Even after he left for the Netherlands, John believed, his mission was being sabotaged. But despite French counteraction John was still hopeful the Dutch Republic would come to the aid of the United States. That hope was quickly shattered after a few months in the Netherlands. He observed that the republic had sunk in ease and was more interested in commerce than in liberty and the American cause. The Dutch people were politically divided and were ruled by the tyranny of the Stadtholder and the British crown. John experienced how factionalism and subjugations to foreign influences had brought ruin to the Dutch Republic. He feared that a similar situation could occur in the United States. A balanced constitution and government would have saved the Dutch Republic, and could still save the United States. Though the recognition of American independence, the breaking of the tradition of revering Britain, and the signs of a new political movement striving for reforms had given John a brief hope that the Dutch Republic could still be saved, foreign intervention in 1787 quickly shattered that hope. It seemed that because the Dutch Republic had sunk in ease and afflicted by factionalism the way was paved for foreign intervention at the hands of England and Prussia.

John Quincy Adams would follow in the footsteps of John Adams, addressing mainly the same subjects as his father did before him. In 1795 John Quincy had observed that the Dutch people were lifeless and passive, similar to his father's observation that the Dutch Republic had sunk in ease. In both 1781 and 1795 the Dutch people were unable to

consolidate their differences which provided the opportunity for foreign powers to intervene. The Dutch people lacked a sense of unity among them necessary to defend against foreign influences. Prior to his departure to the Netherlands John Quincy had become convinced of the ill will of the French by reading old diplomatic files, including John Adams's diplomatic correspondence from France and the Netherlands. Similar to his father, even before he had set foot in the Netherlands and observed the establishment of the Batavian Republic John Quincy had learned to be suspicious of French intentions. During John Quincy's diplomatic mission political divisions in the United States were intensifying. John Quincy feared that a similar situation of disunion and foreign influences as in the Netherlands could afflict the United States. He especially feared that France would influence American policy, as he observed how the French were controlling Dutch politics. John Quincy had become convinced that the French had conquered the Dutch Republic and intended to revolutionize the world, including the United States. He believed that only by preserving the American unity, and thus avoiding factionalism, could foreign intervention be avoided. Like his father, John Quincy intended to preserve the friendship with France, but remained cautious of being eternally grateful to France and welcoming French influence in American politics. John and John Quincy shared the same beliefs and fears when it comes to factionalism and American policy, and it seems that John Quicny experienced himself what his father had written and warned about in his diplomatic correspondence.

William Vans Murray was the last diplomat before the diplomatic station in the Netherlands was discontinued in 1801. He began his diplomatic mission at a time when tensions between the United States and France were running high and the political divisions at home were intensifying, which reinforced each other. Similar to John and John Quincy, Murray had become cautious of French intentions and during his mission in the Netherlands he grew even more suspicious. Murray observed how coups, counter-coups, and constitutions were orchestrated by the French Directory. Murray had little hope that the Batavian Republic could be saved from French influence, as he observed how the Dutch people lacked a sense of patriotism and showed little resistance to French encroachment in their affairs.

Even more so than John and John Quincy, Murray believed that the United States should be protected against the corruption of Europe and especially France. After all, French revolutionaries intended to revolutionize the world and influence American policy. Initially Murray hoped the United States would avoid any hostility with France and maintain its neutrality. But he was beginning to see no alternative to war should France continue to interfere with American policy. Murray set up plans to inflict pains and horrors on France in order to keep American independence intact. He also hoped the Batavian people would cast off French patronage and serve as a bulwark against France's revolutionary ideals. Murray became convinced that France merely intended to deceive and control the American people like it was doing to the Dutch people. The liberties and freedom of the American people should be protected at all costs.

The subject of factionalism has received less attention in Murray's writings than in the correspondence of his predecessors. Yet, back home the divisions between Federalists and Republicans were reaching its peak, which could not have been far from his mind. What he did emphasize was that a sense of unity is required to maintain independence. For instance, he believed that only when the supporters of the Stadtholderate rallied behind the moderate Patriot regime, and thus created unity among the Dutch people, could the Batavian Republic be set free from French influence. Murray believed the same applied to the United States; only a strong American unity could preserve the independence of the United States.

In 1780 John Adams first observed how the Dutch Republic had sunk in ease and in 1795 John Quincy Adams observed that the Dutch people were again lifeless and passive. They were more interested in commerce than in their liberties and they were politically divided. They lacked a sense of patriotism and a sense of unity which the diplomats believed were necessary to repel foreign influences and remain independent. John Quincy and Murray observed how under the guise of liberators the French had taken over control of Dutch politics. Only when the Dutch people became united, Murray believed, could they cast off French patronage and once again be independent.

The three diplomats quickly came to believe that the United States should remain independent from European affairs and should avoid any political entanglement with

Europe. Their experiences in the Netherlands would confirm and intensify such desires. Factionalism had brought ruin to the Netherlands and paved the way for foreign powers to influence, and control, national and foreign policy. As political divisions were intensifying back home, the diplomats increasingly feared what they observed in the Netherlands could also afflict the United States.

They had become especially suspicious of France. Even before they had set foot in the Netherlands, all three diplomats had in one way or another learned to be cautious of French actions and intentions. Their experiences in the Netherlands further increased their suspicions. John Adams believed the French government was sabotaging his mission and kept a watchful eye on French actions. But his main concern would be Britain and its interference with Dutch affairs. It was not until the outbreak of the French Revolution that made events in France of greater interest and intensified the political divisions in the United States. Federalists, including John Quincy Adams and William Vans Murray, became increasingly suspicious of the French revolutionaries and believed they intended to revolutionize the world. John Quincy continuously warned that France intended to influence American policy like it was controlling Dutch politics. Murray went so far as to set up plans to inflict pains and horrors on France in order to protect the United States and preserve its independence. While the political divisions at home were worsening and it became increasingly clear that France intended to influence American politics, it became even more important to avoid political entanglement and keep the United States, one of the last beacons of hope in the world, from the corruptions of Europe and especially France. Throughout the period between 1780 and 1801 the three diplomats warned that a similar situation of factionalism and foreign intervention, especially at the hands of France, as in the Netherlands could also afflict the United States, which they sought to avoid at all costs.

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