Farewell Address (1796) - George Washington

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence, . . . the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican Government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it. . . .

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

If we remain one people under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall Counsel. . . .

’Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent Alliances, with any portion of the foreign world. So far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it, for let me not be understood as capable of patronising infidelity to existing engagements.

Reading Comprehension Question

In this passage, George Washington’s stated position on existing American treaties with European nations is that they should be:

a. immediately nullified.

b. honored.

c. equal and balanced with every country.

d. made only with nonbelligerent nations.

Questions

1. In keeping with the concerns expressed in this passage, foreign policy actions of the Washington and Adams administrations:

a. were bound by treaty with France and prevented diplomatic relations with England.

b. were widely accepted by both parties.

c. maintained official neutrality and avoided being drawn into war.

d. tended to side with England, putting the United States on the verge of war.

2. Washington’s concerns are supported by the fact that during his term as President:

a. secret agreements were being made to draw the United States into war.

b. the United States’ alliance with France was being exploited by Edmond Genet.

c. the XYZ Affair threatened the neutrality of the United States.

d. Britain and France were engaging in impressments of American sailors.

3. Which of the following events exhibits an adherence to Washington’s message?

a. the dissolution of the Franco-American alliance

b. a self-imposed embargo of foreign trade

c. negotiation of a treaty with Spain

d. dismissal of Ambassador Genet

Document-Based Multiple-Choice Questions

Battle Cry of the War Hawks (1811)

Felix Grundy

What, Mr. Speaker, are we now called on to decide? It is, whether we will resist by force the attempt, made by [the British] Government, to subject our maritime rights to the arbitrary and capricious rule of her will; for my part I am not prepared to say that this country shall submit to have her commerce interdicted or regulated, by any foreign nation. Sir, I prefer war to submission.

Over and above these unjust pretensions of the British Government, for many years past they have been in the practice of impressing our seamen, from merchant vessels; this unjust and lawless invasion of personal liberty, calls loudly for the interposition of this Government. . . .

This war, if carried on successfully, will have its advantages. We shall drive the British from our Continent—they will no longer have an opportunity of intriguing with our Indian neighbors, and setting on the ruthless savage to tomahawk our women and children. . . . When Louisiana shall be fully peopled, the Northern States will lose their power; they will be at the discretion of others; they can be depressed at pleasure, and then this Union might be endangered—I therefore feel anxious not only to add the Floridas to the South, but the Canadas to the North of this empire.

Reading Comprehension Question

Felix Grundy believes that the Indian threat:

a. is the gravest concern at the moment.

b. will subside if Canada is acquired.

c. is prevalent in Florida.

d. was spurred on by the British.

Questions

1. Congress’s decision on the issue described in the excerpt resulted in:

a. an alliance with France.

b. acquisition of territory to the north and south.

c. declaration of war against Great Britain.

d. neutrality in the conflict between Britain and France.

2. A successful outcome from the decision made by this Congress was:

a. the elimination of Spain from North America.

b. the elimination of both British impressments and Indian hostilities.

c. the acquisition of Florida.

d. the removal of Indians from southeastern states.

3. The strongest opposition to the demands of the War Hawks came from:

a. Federalists, who had strong trade ties to Britain.

b. western representatives who feared Indian battles in their states.

c. Jeffersonians, who did not want to be dragged into a foreign conflict.

d. states’ rights advocates who believed that the burden of war did not reflect states’ interests equally.