

Washington's Farewell Address

The first president, George Washington served two terms as president. Then, in 1796, he announced that he would not be running for reelection. His farewell speech was quoted for many years after. The main components were that he wanted America to not become a divided nation by geographic factors (sectionalism); he insisted that there be no partisan divisions in the country, every citizen should be part of one nation and finally, he takes a stance regarding foreign policy. This is the first instance of American foreign policy as a new, independent nation.

Below are the last six paragraphs of his speech regarding foreign policy.

...Observe good faith and justice towards all Nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all....In the execution of such a plan, nothing is more essential, than that permanent, inveterate antipathies¹ against particular Nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded....The Nation, which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest....

Against the insidious wiles² of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow citizens,) the jealousy of a free people ought to be *constantly* awake; since history and experience prove, that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican Government....

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* connexion as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she 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 vicissitudes³ of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collision of her friendships or enemies.

Our detached and distant situation invited and enables us to pursue a different course....It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world....

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I...may even flatter myself, that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism....

Johnson, Michael P. *Reading the American Past*, vol. I: to 1877, p. 179-180 New York, Bedford St. Martins, 2005

¹ Chronic, habitual hostilities

² Sinister or dangerous tricks

³ Affairs

