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*John Quincy Adams Influence on Washington's Farewell Address: A Critical Examination*

*By Stephen Pierce*

In the last official letter to President Washington as Minister to the Netherlands in 1797, John Quincy Adams expressed his deepest thanks and reverence for the appointment that was bestowed upon him by the chief executive. As Washington finished his second and final term in office, Adams stated, "I shall always consider my personal obligations to you among the strongest motives to animate my industry and invigorate my exertions in the service of my country." After his praise to Washington, he went into his admiration of the president's 1796 Farewell Address. He hoped the American public would heed and retain the cautions that Washington laid out for the new fledgling nation: "That your warning voice may upon every great emergency recur to their remembrance with an influence equal to the occasion; that it may control the fury of domestic factions and check the encroachments of foreign influence; that it may cement with indissoluble force our national Union, and secure at once our dignity and our peace." Four months later that Washington's final written response thanked the Minister, "For the kind expressions which you have extended to me, and the approbation of those sentiments I took the liberty of submitting to my countrymen, in my late valedictory... the approbation of good and virtuous men is the most pleasing reward my mind is susceptible of, for any service it has been in my power to render my country." This exchange between the two men shows that there may have been a deeper connection and collaboration between them that many historians have overlooked.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Worthington Chauncey Ford., ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams*. 1796-1801. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1913. 2: 119-120. For primary source quotations I decided to keep the original text with no edits.

John Quincy Adams is seen by the American public today as a failed one-term president. When one starts to see his diplomatic work and his service in Congress, however, he becomes one of the most important figures in American history. The diplomatic historian Samuel Flagg Bemis was in 1944 the first historian to suggest that Adams' early writings influenced Washington's Farewell Address. He looked through some of Adams' early published writings and concluded that it was, "Conspicuous among the admonitions of the Farewell Address are: (1) to exalt patriotically the national words, America, American, Americans; (2) to beware of foreign intrigue; (3) to have no political connections with the foreign nations of distant Europe with their different set of primary interests." Bemis in 1949 showed how Adams' public writings might have helped shape the foreign policy aspects of the Farewell Address. This piece will go through Adams' early relationship with Washington, what his possible motives for writing the pieces, expose some of the holes in Bemis's theory, and make a side by side comparison of Adams' first public writings and Washington's Farewell Address. By assessing all the facts and readings of Adams early correspondence with Washington there is ample evidence that there was at a bare minimum indirect influence on the Farewell Address.<sup>2</sup>

The first time both men officially met each other was in 1789 while visiting his newly elected father as Vice President in New York City. A couple months after they initially crossed paths Adams welcomed the president to Newburyport, Massachusetts, where he was becoming a prominent lawyer, and introduced him with a powerful address that apparently impressed Washington. Bemis states that "Washington remembered the young law student and kept his eye on him thereafter." There is also some speculation that both men met each other before this event

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Flagg Bemis. "John Quincy Adams and George Washington." Massachusetts Historical Society, Oct. 1941-1944. JSTOR. 378. For clarification purposes John Quincy Adams will be referenced by his last name Adams and his father John Adams by his full name, John Adams.

occurred as Adams unquestionably knew about Washington since his father John Adams nominated him to be in the Continental Congress for commander of the Continental Army on June 15, 1775. The earliest encounter Washington had with Adams' mother, Abigail Adams was during the Siege of Boston. When she visited the Continental Army's encampment, she wrote to her husband, "I was struck with General Washington. You had prepared me to entertain a favorable opinion of him, but I thought the one half was not told me. Dignity with ease, and complacency, the Gentleman and Soldier look agreeably blended in him. Modesty marks every line and future of his face. Those lines of Dryden instantly occurred to me Mark his Majestick fabrick! He's a temple Sacred by birth, and built by hands divine His Souls the Deity that lodges there. Nor is the pile unworthy of the God." Even though John Adams was frequently away from home during the Revolution he had regular correspondence with his wife and according to Adams' historian James Traub, Abigail Adams would read her husband's correspondence to the children regularly near the fireplace, where the young Adams learned about the heroic deeds of General George Washington.<sup>3</sup>

John Quincy Adams was born on July 11, 1767, in Braintree, Massachusetts which is now Quincy. He was named for his mother's maternal grandfather, Colonel John Quincy after whom Quincy, Massachusetts, is named. Adams may not have had the direct interactions with Washington that his parents did but had a broad overview of the Revolution. As a child he witnessed the early domestic stages of the revolution from hearing the stories of how his father defending the British soldiers after the Boston Massacre and later witnessed the Battle of Bunker

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<sup>3</sup> Bemis. "Adams and Washington." 367; Abigail Adams to John Adams, July 16, 1775, [Adams Papers Digital Edition](http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-01-02-0162#sn=0). Massachusetts Historical Society: 54th Regiment. <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-01-02-0162#sn=0>; James Traub, *John Quincy Adams: Militant Spirit*. New York: Perseus Books Group, 2016. iBooks. 57

Hill at age eight. He later saw the Revolution through the eyes of a diplomat and set sail off to France with his father in 1778 to learn the diplomatic elements of war, at the age of eleven. John Quincy Adams stayed in France with his Father until 1779 in, the Netherlands from 1780 to 1782 where he studied at the famous Leiden University, as well as other highly regarded European institutions. He became fluent in the languages of many of the nations he spent time in and versed in the politics and culture of the regions, possibly more than any American of his age. He interacted with the most prominent figures of the Revolution like Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, John Paul Jones, Marquis de Lafayette, and his childhood hero, Thomas Jefferson.<sup>4</sup>

With his father's appointment as ambassador to Great Britain in 1785, John Quincy Adams at age seventeen made the decision go back home to the states to pursue his education at Harvard College, where he graduated second in his class in 1787 and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. While his father John Adams was creating peaceful diplomatic ties with European nations for the young American nation, Adams was a part of the ratification of the Constitution in Massachusetts. He was initially a staunch Anti-Federalist, but then slowly accepted the Constitution. He then started his law practice in 1790, working as an apprentice with prominent federalist Theophilus Parsons in Newburyport, Massachusetts and received admission to the bar. He moved to Boston in the summer of 1790 and set up his office in the Adams family's Court Street house, boarding with his mother's cousins, Dr. Thomas and Abigail Welsh.<sup>5</sup>

John Adams encouraged his son to go to Boston town meetings, where he sat on a committee to reform the local police. He played a critical role in the incorporation of the town of Quincy out of certain sections of Braintree. John Adams told his son that, "Whether those who

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 103

<sup>5</sup> Fred Kaplan. *John Quincy Adams: American Visionary*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2014 iBooks. 174

ought to be my Friends will be yours or not, I cant say.—Whether they are mine or not is at least problematical in some Instances— Yet I think you will find Friends in Boston.” Adams disdained his lawyering profession writing, “I have no fortune to expect from any part, and the profession is so much crowded, that I have no prospect of securing myself by it for several years after I begin.” He also was not a fan of local politics and failed to achieve police reform. His participation made him also think twice about having republican sympathies because he could not make speeches in the purely democratic New England Town Halls which affirmed his “abhorrence and contempt of simple democracy as a Government.”<sup>6</sup>

With their father now as Vice President of an emerging new nation, a new generation of male Adams family members, John Quincy Adams, Charles Adams, and Thomas Boylston Adams, started to get settled into their law professions. In the 1790’s all three resided in the biggest cities around the country, John Quincy in Boston, Charles in New York, and Thomas Boylston in Philadelphia. They exchanged letters that encouraged each other, which helped them with the depression they individually suffered with the stresses of practicing, studying law, and being in the shadow of their father. Vice President John Adams at this time also used his sons as intelligence on what was going on around the country.

Adams became interested in speaking about national affairs when in late January 1791, he traveled to Philadelphia to visit the entire family. This marked the first time most of the family was together since the Revolution began. He visited President Washington and watched debates in Congress. Here he saw the splintering of the country into factions. He wanted to be

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<sup>6</sup> John Adams to John Quincy Adams February 19, 1790 [APDE](http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-09-02-0010#sn=0), MHS, <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-09-02-0010#sn=0>; [The Diaries of John Quincy Adams](http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/php) January 10, 1788” [APDE](http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/php), MHS, <http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/php>; John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, February 1, 1792 [APDE](http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-09-02-0141#sn=0), MHS, <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-09-02-0141#sn=0>

involved in the political arena at the national level. Adams did not want to be in the shadow of his father's greatness, stating in the same 1792 journal, "In the walks of active life, I have done nothing." He also could not stand the attacks that the press was making against his father, calling him a monarchist who should be replaced as vice president in the next election. He wrote to his mother about, "the paltry malevolence of a few contemptible scribblers in our Newspapers." John Quincy wrote to his brother Thomas that "The National Gazette, seems to grow more and more virulent and abusive from day to day; but this is not surprising." The Adams family read the papers constantly and canceled some subscriptions like *The Independent Cornicle* or *Herald of Freedom* that was against the Administration.<sup>7</sup>

The first public piece he wrote, under the pseudonym "Publicola" or "friend of the people," was published in the *Colombian Centinel*, a Federalist newspaper, in 1791. It was a response to Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, which itself was a response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Adams took the side of Burke but did not want to burn any bridges. He wrote, "I wish to avoid every appearance of disrespect, either to the real parent of this production, or to the gentleman who has stood its sponsor in this country. Both these gentlemen are entitled to the gratitude of their countrymen." The essays were reprinted in London, Glasgow, Dublin and provoked a response in France. Most people believed John Adams was the author a Philadelphia magazine even claiming to have uncovered secret communications between John Adams and Edmund Burke. James Madison wrote to Jefferson that it "has an affinity in the stile as well as sentiments to the discourses on Davila." John Adams was the

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<sup>7</sup> David Waldstreicher., ed., *John Quincy Adams Diaries*. New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States, 2017. iBooks. 1:102; John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams Oct 17, 1790, [APDE](http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-09-02-0069#sn=0), MHS, <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-09-02-0069#sn=0>; *The Adams Papers Series II: Adams Family Correspondence Volume 9 January 1790- December 1793*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009. 23

author of Davila. Jefferson, concerned about the popularity of “Publicola,” he wrote back to Madison that, “You see there the swarms of the anti-publicolas. The disavowal by a Printer only does not appear to satisfy.” John Beckley, the First Clerk of the House of Representatives and staunch Jefferson ally, reported to Madison that “Publicola” was the work of John Quincy Adams. Madison was not shocked by this and wrote to Jefferson saying that “there is more of method also in the arguments, and much less of clumsiness and heaviness in the style, than characterize his (John Adams’s) writings,” he also believed that Adams might be the “editor of his father's doctrines.”<sup>8</sup>

For his second piece, Adams wrote under the pseudonym “Menander,” a fourth-century B.C. Greek writer of comedies, in the *Columbian Centinel* of December 19, 1792. The piece responded to John Hancock’s Attorney General James Sullivan, who halted a performance of a theater company that came into Boston, based on a state law created by the Puritans. Sullivan argued in the Boston *Independent Chronicle* under the heading “A Friend to Peace.” Adams, who loved the theater, replied that, “In a free government the minority never can be under an obligation to sacrifice their rights to the will of the majority, however, expressed. The constitution of this State is expressly paramount to the laws of the legislature, and every individual in the community has the same right with the legislature to put his own honest construction upon every clause contained in the constitution.” The Massachusetts legislature repealed the anti-theater law a year later in 1793. Giving one of the first arguments ever in American history for the modern-day version of the First Amendment, which Adams championed when he went to Congress. It was much in the spirit of George Washington’s quote

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<sup>8</sup> Ford., ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams*. 1913. 1:69; Traub, *Militant Spirit*. 159; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson June 23, 1791 Robert A. Rutland. et al., eds *The Papers of James Madison*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983. 14:36; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, July 10, 1791 Ibid., 44; Ford. *Writings of John Quincy Adams*. 1:66

in 1783, that if “freedom of Speech may be taken away—and, dumb & silent we may be led, like sheep, to the Slaughter.”<sup>9</sup>

When the Jacobins took charge in France around 1791, they tried to gain diplomatic recognition around the world. They picked Edmond Genet as minister to the U.S. to create relationships with the newly formed United States. Genet’s mission was to get 4.5 million dollars for the French to fight against the first Coalition in Europe. Genet was then to negotiate a new commercial treaty. From there he wanted the United States to allow privateers to outfit in American harbors that would also serve as safe havens. Finally, Genet was to launch aggressive military operations against Spanish Louisiana and British Canada. The French government knew that the Americans would be reluctant to grant the last request. The Washington Administration had begun to make advances to the French Minister, Jean Baptiste de Ternant, to enable him to aid refugees fleeing the Haitian Revolution. The Girondins, a sect of the Jacobins, tried to talk to Gouverneur Morris, U.S. minister to France before Genet landed in America. Morris, sympathetic to the monarchy, called them a “set of damn rascals.” Morris had dinner with Genet before he left France and was a bit worried about his mannerisms but did not see the appointment as something catastrophic. Edmond Genet landed in Charleston harbor on April 8, 1793, on the ship *Embuscade*. Genet rallied the inhabitants of Charleston. Many of them were descents of French Huguenots who played a huge role shaping the culture of Charleston. They were under British occupation during most of the Revolutionary War and despised them because they had family members who were deported to the West Indies. Genet had a crowd that was willing to listen, but he was on his tour from Charleston to Philadelphia and he was unfamiliar with both

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<sup>9</sup> Ford., ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams*. 1913. 1:127; Kaplan. *American Visionary*. iBooks. 191; "Founders Online: From George Washington to Officers of the Army, 15 March 1783." National Archives and Records Administration. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-10840>.

the American people and their government. He tended to assess what he saw in terms valid in the France of his day, where government was entirely subject to the popular will. Genet, who attempted to cause havoc across the country by recruiting privateers and forming militias, wanted to sit down with Washington to discuss the points he was trying to achieve.<sup>10</sup>

Fearing that the new fledgling American nation would be drawn into conflict by Genet's actions, Washington announced his Proclamation of Neutrality on April 22, 1793. Privateering was one of the big issues Washington had to tackle during his administration. During the Revolutionary War, the Americans heavily relied on the work of privateers. They were critical in gathering supplies, weapons, food, intelligence, and of course, seized ships. Because the Continental Navy was so weak, they, in many ways were incorporated in the navy. Some estimates put American privateers as being responsible for taking 16,000 British seamen as prisoners and capturing 3,386 British ships, with an estimated value of \$66 million. Washington probably respected these men's work during the war because, during the siege of Boston in 1775 when Washington was desperate for supplies, it was ultimately an American privateer ship that captured a British military supply vessel and delivered thousands of arms for use by the American army. However, he understood that at the end of the day these were war profiteers that had no other motive but to make money, which was not sustainable in the new American society. The American government as well did not the British to declare war on the young nation due to of a couple of rouge privateers sympathetic to the French. In the end this was important in regard for the merchants of the new nation to stay clear of this foreign temptation so that America's

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<sup>10</sup> Harry Ammon. *The Genet Mission*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973. 7-8; David S. Heidler, and Jeanne T. Heidler.; *Washington's Circle: The Creation of the President*. New York, NY: Random House, 2015. 273; Ibid. 21; Ibid 272

commercial interests would be secure, which Washington stressed in his Farewell Address three years later.<sup>11</sup>

Those who were doing any mercenary work in general in the new American nation were either trying to seek glory or tried to get rich fast. The poorest and the richest in this new American society had debt that they owed or were owed to them, with many people including a small amount of founders like Robert Morris and James Wilson being put into debtors' prison. When the financial system was being set up the only people who could get pensions were the commissioned officers, and many of the soldiers who fought in the Revolution both in the militia and Continental Army did not receive any pensions until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This combination of hunger for glory, land, money, or just pure sympathy for the French caused many Americans to want to fight for them.<sup>12</sup>

In response to both the Neutrality Proclamation and the crisis of privateering, Adams wrote another piece for the *Columbian Centennial* under the pseudonym "Marcellus," the famous Roman warrior, whom he compared to Washington. "Marcellus I" was written on April 24, 1793, two days after Washington's Proclamation was issued. Adams must have had prior information about this from his father because he is one of the first citizens in the country to write about it. Alexander Hamilton did not write his first "Pacificus" defense until June 29, 1793. Adams may have had an informant in the president's circle that was not his father because there is no correspondence between the two before the proclamation. Adams' fervently, defended Washington's proclamation by stating that the discussion of neutrality between warring

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Thomin. "The "P" Is for Profit: Revolutionary War Privateers and the Slave Trade." [Journal of the American Revolution](https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/12/p-profit-revolutionary-war-privateers-slave-trade/). November 26, 2017. Accessed November 07, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> James E. Ferguson *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961. 115

European nation must be done “with decency, but with freedom and sincerity.” This of course was not the case within the cabinet as Jefferson and Hamilton disagreed about the president’s presentation of it along with the authority to make such a statement even though they agreed that neutrality during this critical time was paramount. Adams warned that the “buccaneering plan of piratical plunder” under the flag of another nation was a “violation of the laws of nature and nations.” He warned “those whose ideas of equality are so very subservient to their private interests, consult the treaties between the United States and the several powers now at war.” Adams wanted America to respect the previous treaty with the French under the King Louis, not with the new Jacobin government which he feared was unstable. He also warns the citizens who would embark on this endeavor that, “Every citizen would be legally responsible for all the property which he might seize with violence under a commission to which he could not be entitled, and if he should preserve himself from the punishment of piracy, he would be liable to make entire satisfaction for all the damage he might occasion, and to restore his ill-acquired plunder.”<sup>13</sup>

There might have also been a personal connection to the piece as well. Around this time Adams’ brother-in-law, William Stephens Smith, who served on Washington’s staff during the Revolution, was trying to get a job from Washington. Smith hoped to get a diplomatic appointment before he left for Great Britain with John Quincy’s sister, Abigail Adams Smith (also known as Nabby) in the Spring of 1788. They returned home in 1789, finding out that Smith had been appointed Marshall for the district of New York. The Adams family thought he was being punished because of Smith’s connection with them, he called his situation “mortifying.” He then had traveled to England in March 1792 to get money through

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<sup>13</sup> Morton J. Frisch, ed., *The Pacificus-Helvidius Debates of 1793-1794: Toward the Completion of the American Founding*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007. 3; Ford., ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams*. 1:136

“advantageous private contracts.” While in England, Smith visited Paris in the early stages of the French Revolution. Nabby wrote, “My friend has had an invitation from one of their Major-Generals and Marechals de Camp, to go over and fight for the French, but he declines—it is too uncertain a cause to volunteer in; but I have got so engaged in the cause of the French, that I have quite forgot myself.” John Adams stated that “C. Smith is here in good health. He is returned from France and England, almost a Revolutionist.” This might partly be the case of why Washington did not hire Smith to be a part of his diplomatic corps, but Smith also had a history of borrowing money. During the Revolution, Washington refused to give him an army commission because Smith borrowed money twice on the same security.<sup>14</sup>

Adams was probably anxious about the safety of his sister being pushed into conflict after his brother-in-law was offered a commission in the French army. Smith only declined because Nabby threatened to leave him if he accepted. However, it was again this hunger for fame and glory which was prevalent in the society. Smith, later on in his life attempted to aid the Venezuelan military commander Francisco de Miranda whom he met in France to overthrow Spanish rule of the country with privateers. So, it seems that Adams was not just defending Washington’s neutrality and the dangers of private interest but also giving warnings about the personal recklessness of individuals within his own family.<sup>15</sup>

Edmond Genet met with Washington and his cabinet on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1793. Genet was surprised by the calmness of Washington, which was a contrast to the people he had already witnessed in the streets of Philadelphia. He was also mad that the president had a bust of Louis

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<sup>14</sup> *Adams Family Correspondence*. 9:32; Abigail Adams Smith to Abigail Adams September 13, 1792 <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-09-02-0171#ADMS-04-09-02-0171-fn-0002>; John Adams to Abigail Adams February 27, 1793 <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-09-02-0237#sn=3>; John Richard Alden. *Stephen Sayre, American Revolutionary Adventurer*. Baton Rouge (La.): Louisiana State University Press, 1983. 14

<sup>15</sup> *Adams Family Correspondence*. 9:33

XVI in the Presidential House. He went him with a precipitation of the president and the neutrality clause. He was also shocked when Jefferson, whom he saw as an ally, demanded that the Grange be returned to its rightful owners in Britain. Even though Washington gave out the proclamation, it so hard for him to enforce them because he had no Navy or Coast Guard. Washington and his cabinet were unanimous in wanting to recall Genet back to France. But when the Jacobins took back power in 1794 Genet was called back to France presumably to get the guillotine. The president gave Genet asylum and he would then reside in New York.<sup>16</sup>

Under the pseudonym of “Columbus,” John Quincy Adams showed that the President’s power to revoke an exequatur or dismiss a foreign minister was a necessary part of his executive functions under what he called the “National” Union. He branded Genet’s actions as incitement to insurrection. A writer under the name “Americanus” who responded to Adams in the *Independent Chronicle*. He quoted Adams’ 1793 Fourth of July speech, arguing that sovereignty rested solely in the people not the government. That all powers not expressed in the constitution and delegated to congress are unconstitutional. This person argued that Congress alone has the power to declare war, so only it has the power to declare peace. John Adams hinted that he showed parts of Columbus to the president or that the president read, “The President however, with the Unanimous concurrence of The Four Officers of State, has formed the Same Judgment with Columbus, and I hear no Members of Congress who profess to differ from them.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Editorial Note: The Recall of Edmond Charles Genet." Founders Online. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-26-02-0629-0001>.

<sup>17</sup> Ford, ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams*. 1: 148; John Adams to John Quincy Adams December 14, 1793, APDE, MHS, <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-09-02-0273#sn=0>.

John Quincy Adams pushed back, writing as “Barnevelt” after the Dutch revolutionary Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, stating that the people, by being part of society, have surrendered part of their sovereignty to the national government and part of that is surrendering some powers to the executive where he can dismiss and receive any foreign ministers. This was one of the first instances of American publicists upholding the doctrine of implied powers for purposes necessary to national life and existence. Adams argued that national power was essential to the existence of the Union.<sup>18</sup>

Bemis believes that Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, the ghostwriter of Washington’s Farewell Address, was either influenced by either Adams’ writings in the *Columbian Centennial* or by John Adams giving his son’s writings to Hamilton. By looking at the *Hamilton Papers* and the context of the relationship between the Adams family and Hamilton however it is hard to come to that conclusion. When Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson on August 13, 1791 confronted Hamilton about Adams’ “Publicola” and John Adams’ “Davila”, telling him to denounce what he thought was both John Adams’s works. He believed that these kinds of writings weakened the present government, creating fractioned tensions. Jefferson stated that “whoever by these writings disturbs the present order of things, is really blameable, however pure his intentns may be, & he was sure mr Adam’s were pure.” The recorder of the conversation stated that what Hamilton said was more formal for a private conversation possibly because Hamilton gave somewhat of a fake condemnation, and then left the room. If Hamilton truly endorsed what Adams said in “Publicola” he would have forcefully defended the pieces.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ford, ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams*. 1: 176

<sup>19</sup> Harold C. Syrett, and Jacob E. Cooke eds., *Papers of Alexander Hamilton August 1791- Dec 1791*, 1965 Columbia University Press 9:93

Bemis states in his article that John Adams gave Hamilton John Quincy Adams' papers. "It is quite possible, indeed likely, that the Vice-President showed his son's letters also to Hamilton." This is what Bemis believes gives the Farewell Address its very natural basis. This is possible, but Hamilton and Adams were not really in contact that often. In Hamilton's papers all of the contact between the two men was strictly on governmental business. Hamilton was only in the Treasury Department for a year between Adams' hire as minister within the Washington Administration. There was even massive distrust of Hamilton in the Adams family before John Adams election for the presidency in 1796. Abigail Adams warned John Adams' in 1794. "I have ever thought with respect to that Man, "beware of that spair Cassius—" this might be done consistant with prudence, and without the illiberal abuse in many respects so plentifully cast upon him." It is entirely possible though that Hamilton read on of Adams pieces in the newspapers as well.<sup>20</sup>

Adams hated Hamilton after 1796 due to his backstage maneuvering against his father, John Adams. In the election of 1796 Hamilton developed a complicated scheme to elect Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina, the Federalist candidate for vice president. Under the electoral system at the time, each presidential elector voted twice, with the candidate who received the most votes becoming president and the candidate who came in second becoming vice president. Hamilton convinced some southern electors to drop John Adams' name from their ballots, while still voting for Pinckney. Thus, Pinckney would receive more votes than John Adams and be elected president. When New Englanders learned of this plan, they dropped Pinckney from their ballots, ensuring that John Adams won the election. After Hamilton was shot in 1804, Adams

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<sup>20</sup> Bemis. "John Quincy Adams and George Washington." MHS, Oct. 1941. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/25080355](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25080355).; Abigail Adams to John Adams May 10, 1794. APDE, MHS, (Cassius was a Roman senator who led the instigator of the plot to kill Caesar) <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-10-02-0102#ADMS-04-10-02-0102-fn-0002>.

explained Hamilton's demise to his wife Louisa ten days after his death, was caused by "not sufficient control over his own passions, or sufficient elevation over the prejudices of the world to parry it. Had he omitted half line in his first answer which must be considered as inviting a challenge, see nothing on his part of the correspondence against which any reasonable objection can be raised." He added that Aaron Burr was no better.<sup>21</sup>

Adams informed his wife on September 23, 1804 after Hamilton's funeral, "We have had in the course of the last week a celebration of an unusual kind here. It is called the installation of a Lodge eulogium upon General Hamilton delivered in the Chapel Church at Boston, by Mr. Otis. I did not go to hear it; for although far from being disposed at this time to contest the merits of Mr. Hamilton, neither the manner of his death, nor his base treatment of more than one of my connections, would permit me to join in any outward demonstration of regret which I could not feel at heart. Otis, as you will readily believe, acquitted himself very well of his performance."<sup>22</sup>

Washington wanted a second editor involved in his farewell address, so he instructed Hamilton to reach out to former Chief Supreme Court Justice John Jay, who was just elected governor of New York, to serve as oversight for the occasionally stubborn Hamilton. "Having no other wish than to promote the true and permanent interests of this country," Washington wrote, "I am anxious, always, to compare the opinions of those who in whom I confide with one another; and these again (without being bound by them) with my own, that I may extract all the good I can." He expressed confidence "in the abilities, and purity of Mr. Jay's views as well as his experience." At the president's request, two authors of the Federalist Papers were reunited on the southern tip of Manhattan to work on Madison's first draft of the address. Like many people,

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<sup>21</sup> *Writings of John Quincy Adams*. 3:42

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 43

Jay hoped that Washington would serve as President for a third term. He wrote to Washington in April 1796, urging him not to “leave the work unfinished,” but rather to “remain with us at least while the storm lasts, and until you can retire like the sun in a calm unclouded evening.”

Washington responded that he was worn out from “the trouble and perplexities” of his office and from “the weight of years which have passed upon me.” Jay wrote that Washington’s, “administration raised the nation out of confusion into order; out of degradation and distress into reputation and prosperity; it found us withering; it left us flourishing.”<sup>23</sup>

Hamilton and Jay met in secret at Jay’s governor’s mansion at the southern end of Bowling Green. Hamilton read his draft aloud (avoiding Washington’s first draft entirely) and then the two men scrutinized it, “deliberately to discuss and consider, paragraph by paragraph,” until they agreed on the contents and wording. Jay suggested that they consult with others, but Hamilton brushed this idea aside, who believed the input of too many elder statesmen was liable to ruin an inspired idea.<sup>24</sup>

John Jay the last editor of the Farewell Address and had a long relationship with John Adams. Jay first met John Quincy Adams in France on August 10, 1783 as a fifteen-year-old. Adams wrote in his diary, “I accompanied my Father to Passy, to see Dr. Franklin whom I knew already, and Mr. Jay, the American Minister at Madrid, whom I had never seen before; they were at breakfast and had a great deal of Company.” Historian Phyllis Lee Levin writes that, “John Quincy appreciated and respected John Jay, an esteemed family friend, his father’s close colleague and a valued mentor. While others found him at times a stubborn, prickly, cold, formal, and somewhat taciturn public figure, John Quincy thought him wholly congenial.” In

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<sup>23</sup> Walter Stahr. *John Jay: Founding Father*. New York: Diversion Books, 2017. 120

<sup>24</sup> John Avlon. *Washington's Farewell: The Founding Father's Warning to Future Generations*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2017. iBook 161

September of 1783 Adams also met Jay's nephew and private secretary Peter Jay Munro. Munro was the only other young man in the world whose experience of life so closely approximated to Adams'. The two learned and worldly diplomatic aides often met at Franklin's home and got into heated intellectual debts.<sup>25</sup>

In 1794, Washington tasked John Jay to make a treaty with the British and establish steady relations with them after the war. As the newly-appointed minister to Holland, Adams who was at Rotterdam, received orders from Secretary of State Timothy Pickering that got to England to oversee the formal ratification of the Jay Treaty. As a result of the treaty the British abandoned six of the forts in the Great Lakes region, paid reparations to American merchants, and increased access to the valuable trading ports of the West Indies. Combined with Thomas Pinckney's treaty with Spain, which opened up the Mississippi River for trade, these were powerful incentives for the principles of neutrality and increased foreign trade instead of involvement in foreign wars.

Adams stated to Jay on December 2, 1794 in the process of the peace negotiations, "The desire of Peace among all the friends and supporters of the Government in this Country is animated to the highest degree, by the prevailing opinion of an irresistible necessity. The task of essentially contributing to reconcile opposing interests, to preserve Dignity from Humiliation and to harmonize discordant circumstances, is in the public opinion once more assigned to the same person, who in that opinion has recently performed it with so much ability." The domestic debates over the Jay Treaty raged and turned violent in America. Hamilton weighed in in July of 1795, writing public essays under the signature of Horatius, arguing for the treaty's ratification

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<sup>25</sup> David Waldstreicher., ed., *John Quincy Adams Diaries*. New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States, 2017. iBooks. 1:16; Levin, Phyllis Lee. *The Remarkable Education of John Quincy Adams*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. iBook 404; Traub, *Militant Spirit*. 94

using similar language to Adams'. "If you consult your true interest Your Motto cannot fail to be "Peace and Trade with all Nations; beyond our present engagements, political connection with none."<sup>26</sup> These words sound very similar to Washington's final Farewell, where he used the sentence "Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all."<sup>27</sup>

Jay also talked about Hamilton's authorship after his death by Arron Burr. "Is it to be presumed from these Facts, that General Hamilton was the real, and the President only the reputed author of that address? Altho' they countenance such a Presumption, yet I think its Foundation will be found too slight and shallow, to resist that strong and full stream of counter Evidence, which flows from the conduct and character of that Great Man. A character not blown up into transient Splendor by the Breath of Adulation, but being composed of his great and memorable Deeds, stands, and will forever stand, a glorious monument of human Excellence"<sup>28</sup>

From the relationship and more in-depth correspondence between Adams and John Jay, there is more solid evidence that Jay would have been more influenced by Adams' rather than Hamilton. John Adams when he was an older man believed John Jay was the actual author of Washington's Farewell Address.<sup>29</sup>

When Washington asked Hamilton to comment on a draft farewell address, Hamilton, with typical energy, both commented on Washington's draft and prepared his own new draft. In September, just before providing the address to the printer, Washington sent a copy to Jay for his comments. Jay was troubled by the suggestion that United States should never expect favors

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<sup>26</sup> "Founders Online: Horatius No. II, [July 1795]." National Archives and Records Administration. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-19-02-0002#ARHN-01-19-02-0002-fn-0010>.

<sup>27</sup> John Quincy Adams to John Jay courtesy of Robb K. Haberman associate editor for *The John Jay Papers*, forthcoming sixth volume of the *The Selected Papers of John Jay, 1794–1800* in 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. John Jay to Richard Peters, March 29, 1811

<sup>29</sup> Joseph J Ellis. *First Family: Abigail and John*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. iBooks 499

from other nations; he suggested Washington say simply that such favors could not be counted upon. By the time Washington received this letter, however the address was already in the newspapers.<sup>30</sup>

Washington's Farewell Address started the final phase of the presidential election campaign of 1796. In New York and a few other places, however, the campaign was effectively over. New York law at this time provided for elections in the spring of a legislature, which would in the fall select the presidential electors. The New York election in the spring of 1796 was to some extent a referendum on Jay's Treaty. Since by this time most New Yorkers approved of the treaty, they voted Federalist. Judge Lowell of Massachusetts congratulated Jay that "your state elections have been closed so favorably to order," that is, with such a substantial Federalist majority. Jay responded in similar key: "It is happy for the United States that so great a part of the people are able to discern their true interests." He added that in his view the United States would be safer "when a greater proportion of our people become well-informed. Schools, colleges and churches are in my opinion absolutely essential to governments like ours."<sup>31</sup>

Here are some side by side comparisons of John Quincy Adams' early public writing that were explained in the beginning of this piece and final draft of 1796 Washington's Farewell Address. There is no doubt that Washington or one of his editors took in both the language and substance that Adams conveyed into the final Farewell Address.

**American Neutrality-** "The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without anything more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity towards other nations." – **George Washington's 1796 Farewell Address**

**American Neutrality-** "The natural state of all nations, with respect to one another, is a state of peace — *damus petimusque vicissim* ("We give and take in return"). It is what we have a

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<sup>30</sup> Avlon. *Washington's Farewell*. iBooks 143

<sup>31</sup> Walter Stahr. *John Jay: Founding Father*. New York: Diversion Books, 2017. iBooks 145

right to expect from them, and for the same reason it is our duty to observe it towards them. –  
**John Quincy Adams, Marcellus II**

**Entangling European Conflicts-** “Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice?” – **George Washington’s 1796 Farewell Address**

**Entangling European Conflicts-** “but 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.” - **John Quincy Adams, Marcellus II**

**Foreign Influence-** “Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government.”- **George Washington’s 1796 Farewell Address**

**Foreign Influence-** “that of all the dangers which encompass the liberties of a republican State, the intrusion of a foreign influence into the administration of their affairs, is the most alarming, and Requires the opposition of the severest caution.” **John Quincy Adams, Columbus II**

When President Washington appointed the young Adams in 1794 to be U.S. minister to Holland, Adams was shocked. When he went to see his father in Quincy he stated in his diary, “I found that my nomination had been as unexpected to him as to myself.” His father was more enthusiastic about his appointment than he was: “I wish I could have been consulted before it was irrevocably made. I rather wish it had not been made at all.”<sup>32</sup> Despite his hesitation at being separated from his family and sent halfway across the world for a then-undisclosed purpose. Adams day before his 28th birthday, was in Philadelphia being introduced to President Washington. Adams was invited to dine with the president, and he paid his respects to Martha Washington, delivering her a letter from his mother.

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<sup>32</sup> The Diaries of John Quincy Adams January 10, 1788 Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, June 10, 1794 [http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/php/doc?id=jqad20\\_2](http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/php/doc?id=jqad20_2)

Abigail wanted to acknowledge “the honor done him by the unsolicited appointment conferred upon him by the President.” She continued, “I hope from his Prudence honour integrity & fidelity that he will never discredit the Character so honorably conferred upon him. painful as the circumstance of a Separation from him will be to me Madam I derive a satisfaction from the hope of his becoming eminently useful to his Country whether destined to publick, or to Private Life.” A week after receiving Abigail’s letter from John Quincy’s hand, Martha responded, “The prudence, good sence and high estimation in which he stands, leaves you nothing to apprehend on his account from the want of these traits in his character;—whilst abilities, exerted in the road in which he is now placed, affords him the fairest prospect rendering eminent services to his country; and of being, in time, among the fore most in her councils.— This I know is the opinion of my Husband, from whom I have imbibed the idea.”<sup>33</sup>

Washington may have felt confident in Adams’ diplomatic abilities, but the young Adams was less sure. As he waited for Alexander Hamilton to return to Philadelphia to deliver instructions relevant to his mission, Adams wrote to his father, expressing doubt about his unfolding career: “I have abandoned the profession upon which I have hitherto depended, for a future subsistence . . . At this critical moment, when all the materials for a valuable reputation at the bar were collected, and had just began to operate favorably for me, I have stopped short in my career; forsaken the path which would have led me to independence and security in private life; and stepped into a totally different direction.” Adams ended his letter by telling his father that he was determined to return home and to private life in no more than three years, if Washington had not already recalled him by then. John Adams replied urging patience and

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<sup>33</sup> Abigail Adams to Martha Washington June 20, 1794 APDE, MHS, <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/view?id=ADMS-04-10-02-0130>; Martha Washington to Abigail Adams July 19, 1794 APDE, MHS, <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/view?&id=ADMS-04-10-02-0136>

flexibility. "As every Thing is uncertain and Scænes are constantly changing I would not advise you to fix any unalterable Resolutions except in favour of Virtue and integrity and an unchangeable Love to your Country."<sup>34</sup>

In 1796 Adams learned that his father had been elected to succeed Washington. He wrote to his mother, assuring her that he would never solicit an office from his father. He discussed the devotion he felt to his country and his plans for a private life back in Massachusetts. John Adams was so touched by the letter that he shared it with Washington. Washington communicated his reflections on the private letter to John Adams: "if my wishes would be of any avail, they shd go to you in a strong hope, that you will not withhold merited promotion from Mr Jno. Adams because he is your son." Washington declared it his "decided opinion" that John Quincy was "the most valuable public character we have abroad," a man who would "prove himself to be the ablest, of all our diplomatic Corps." When George Washington died on December 14, 1799, John Quincy received many letters offering condolences from his family, closest friends, and foreign dignitaries. Poignantly, his father, though overworked in the office of president, sent him a short note on February 28, 1800, acknowledging that John Quincy was mourning the loss of his "great Patron." Just over a year later, John Quincy welcomed his first son, George Washington Adams.<sup>35</sup>

It would be very appropriate to see that John Quincy Adams had a hand in influencing the Farewell because his later presidential rival, Andrew Jackson, who represented Tennessee in

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<sup>34</sup> John Quincy Adams to John Adams July 27, 1794 APDE, MHS <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/view?&id=ADMS-04-10-02-0136>; John Adams to John Quincy Adams August 24, 1794 APDE, MHS, <http://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/view?id=ADMS-04-10-02-0142>

<sup>35</sup> "Founders Online: From George Washington to John Adams, February 20, 1797." National Archives and Records Administration. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-00316>.

congress at the time criticized the address. Jackson had so much contempt for Hamilton as well, Jackson gave Burr good hospitality in May of 1805 giving him cannon fire salutes. When in the House of Representatives, “Jackson opposed an effort to issue a farewell address praising outgoing President George Washington, in part due to his disdain for Hamilton’s financial policies. Referring to Washington, he once observed the Executive of the Union” had “been grasping after power, and in many instances, Exercised powers, that he was not Constitutionally invested with.” The type of strong central government favored by Hamilton was “calculated to raise around the administration a moneyed aristocracy dangerous to the liberties of the country.” When John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay took the presidency away from him 1824 with their “corrupt bargain” was seen by Jacksonians according to historian Robert V. Remini, “steal the government in order to reassert Hamiltonian doctrines.” Washington as he was coming up with the ideas possibly respected Adams’ sense of impartiality and nuance Bemis states that, “No British proclivities marked John Quincy Adams neutrality as they did that of Alexander Hamilton. Adams was peaceful, silent, and sorrowful spectator, partial neither to France nor to England.”<sup>36</sup>

David R. Hoth, an editor for the Washington Papers, states that there is a lost draft of the Farewell Address, the evidence is that there are extensive marginal notations from the correspondence between Hamilton and Washington that do not correspond with the surviving final document. Hoth speculates that the handwriting should all be Hamilton’s if that was the only draft. So, if archivists find the other “lost draft” then there is potentially more proof of more hands were involved in the writing of the address. While it is difficult to define conclusively who

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<sup>36</sup> Douglas Ambrose and Robert W. T. Martin. *The Many Faces of Alexander Hamilton: The Life and Legacy of America's Most Elusive Founding Father*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 31-32; Samuel Flagg Bemis. *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy*. Norwalk, CT: Easton Press, 1987. 36

influenced the farewell it is evident that both Washington and Adams supported neutrality and a strong federal government.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "A Documentary Dilemma: Editing the Farewell Address." The Washington Papers.  
<http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documentary-dilemma-editing-farewell-address/>.

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