

HW: Primary Source: Washington's Farewell Address

Read the document introduction and excerpts from [Washington's Farewell Address](#), and respond in complete sentences to the Study Questions:

1. Is there anything in the Farewell Address that strikes you as contrary to the spirit of the Declaration of Independence?

In his farewell address, Washington asserted that the United States must be free from all foreign influences. He worried that the United States citizens or Congressmen might be controlled by other foreign nations they favored and would put America at risk of being involved in European conflicts. So, he considered that it was the best foreign policy for the United States to maintain the balance between European nations and avoid intervening in European affairs. However, the Enlightenment ideals used in the Declaration of Independence were influenced by French philosophers. Furthermore, during the Revolutionary War, the Union was heavily supported by French forces and supplies. It was very contradictory that Washington, who fought against Great Britain with the help of France, emphasized that the United States should be free from foreign influence.

2. What dangers did Washington see in America forming an attachment to a foreign nation?

Washington saw that forming an attachment to a foreign nation would create the potential danger of America favoring certain countries, which would involve America in conflicts where no real interest exists. Washington claimed that a passionate attachment to one foreign nation for another produces a variety of evils. He said that emotions such as sympathy for the favorite nation could facilitate an imaginary common interest, although there is nothing America could actually benefit from. Furthermore, Washington worried that the corrupted and deluded citizens who would devote themselves to their favorite foreign nation would betray or sacrifice the interests of America. On the other hand, he also feared that certain foreign countries might try to control the actions of the United States through interventions in elections or by convincing Congressmen. As a result, Washington thought the best way was to keep equal attachments with all foreign nations as much as possible.

3. What advantages accrue to the United States due to its geographic isolation from Europe?

The advantage of the United States due to its geographic isolation from Europe is that they have significantly less tangled interests or sources of conflicts with the European nations. Since the European nations were geographically close and entangled with each other substantially in terms of their history, commerce, and politics, they constantly had to make foreign alliances for their benefit. However, since the United States was geographically isolated in a different continent from Europe, it had significantly fewer sources of conflict with all European nations, which meant it just had to focus on its own affairs compared to the European countries.

4. Washington proposed that the United States pursue commercial agreements with foreign nations but avoid “political” agreements. Why do you think he made that distinction? In practice, is it possible to distinguish clearly between commercial agreements and political agreements? I think Washington made that distinction because he knew that the United States had to engage in international trade to develop its industries but did not want the United States to be involved in foreign political conflicts. However, in practice, it is impossible to distinguish clearly between commercial agreements and political agreements. It is because politics are always influenced by the economy and vice versa. For example, the main cause of the Revolutionary War was the unacceptable taxation of the colonists by Great Britain. Even though the Revolutionary War resulted from a severe political conflict between the Americans and the British, it included economic reasons. Since most international political conflicts contain economic reasons, it is impossible to distinguish clearly between commercial and political agreements.

5. Are there any indications in this address that Washington believed the United States was exceptional, a “[city upon a hill](#)”?

In the very first part of his farewell address, Washington starts telling Americans to have good faith and justice for all nations. Then, he asserts that the United States would be a free, enlightened, and splendid nation that gives humanity a magnanimous and excessively novel example of people being guided by justice and benevolence. This statement implies the concept of American Exceptionalism, which is a notion that the United States is separate from any other nation-states and unique. It is very similar to what John Winthrop said to his colonists during his speech “city upon a hill” in 1630. John Winthrop also claimed that the colonists should work hard and prioritize the interests of the whole over self-interest. Furthermore, he claimed that the Massachusetts Bay Colony would be a great model of a Christian society that inspires Christians worldwide. So, the first introduction of Washington’s farewell address indicates that he believed the United States was exceptional, similar to John Winthrop’s ideas.