Chapter II

The Aim of Federalist Foreign Policy

The important question which remains to be answered is, what motives prompted the program which passed Congress? Also, what were the motives of those responsible for the abortive attempt to declare war against France? First of all, foreign policy will be considered. Next the goal of the Federalists' internal policy will be outlined.

Foreign policy centers about three points: first, the question of an alliance with England, desired by some Federalists as an end in itself; second, the project of Anglo-American cooperation in Francisco de Miranda's scheme for the liberation of South America; third, the acquisition of the Floridas and Louisiana. In 1798 all of these issues were intimately related. Naturally any practical steps toward any of these goals would be based upon an open war with France.

The geographic position of the United States and the disturbed status of European affairs assured a series of intrigues by various foreign powers. The weakening Spanish Empire was fair game for both British and French. This applied to Louisiana and the Floridas as well as to Mexico, Central and South America. In the United States various Americans were in the pay of one or another of the foreign ministers to the United States. George Rogers Clark was in the pay of France.\(^1\) Senator William Blount of Tennessee was expelled from the Senate on July 8, 1797 because of complicity with a plan of the British minister to the United States, Robert Liston, concerning the Louisiana territory.\(^2\) Ira


\(^2\)Liston to Grenville, Philadelphia, 25 Jan., 16 March, 10 May, 24 June, and

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Allen of Vermont was probably concerned with plans against Canada in cooperation with the French. Even as early as 1797 Aaron Burr was reported by the British to be involved in still another plan concerning the establishment of an independent republic in Canada.

In the Washington Manuscripts there is a letter from Andrew Ellicott, United States Commissioner at Natchez, Mississippi, declaring that Brig. Gen. James Wilkinson, ranking officer in the regular army after the death of Gen. Wayne, and others were in the pay of Spain in 1797. This news came as no surprise to Washington, who had warned Ellicott against both Wilkinson and the Spanish when, as President, he had dispatched Ellicott to start taking over the territory yielded by the Treaty of San Lorenzo of 1795 (Pinckney’s Treaty). Under this agreement Spain had started a conciliatory policy towards the United States. This policy reversed the attempts to intrigue with the United


4 Liston to Grenville, Philadelphia, 1 Nov., 1797, No. 48, Adams Transcripts (Library of Congress). For earlier activities also see Bemis, Samuel F., “Relations between the Vermont Separatists and Great Britain, 1789-1791,” American Historical Review, XXI, 547-60.

5 Vol. 285 (Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress). Also see Cox, I. J., biography of Wilkinson in DAB, XX, pp. 222-26 and Whitaker, Arthur P., Spanish American Frontier, 1783-1795 (Boston, 1927) and Weyl, Nathaniel, Treason, 119 ff. This document in the Washington papers is in the handwriting of Timothy Pickering, Secretary of State. Wilkinson had been connected with the Conway Cabal in the Revolution. As a Brigadier General, he was active in the West, was in the pay of Spain, and at the same time in communication with Hamilton in regard to invasion of Spanish territory.
States settlers in the West for disunion from the United States. But in Federalist circles the change of heart by the Spanish was hardly credited. The connection of Spain with France made the two countries but one in the eyes of the Secretary of State, Timothy Pickering. Believing that the Jeffersonians were loyal to France, it was easy for Pickering to feel that the intriguers in the West might be loyal to Spain. The actual attitude of many in the West was difficult to determine at this period. Arthur P. Whitaker has summed up the situation in the statement: "Neither unionism nor disunionism was deeply rooted in the West at the end of the century. Patriotism ebbed and flowed with almost every act of the federal government and every turn of international affairs." One is almost tempted to say that the West was loyal to the Mississippi River. Whoever controlled the Mississippi and the outlet at New Orleans could ultimately find great strength and support among those west of the Appalachians. Spain's granting of the right of deposit at New Orleans to the United States in the Treaty of 1795 helped to solidify Western adherence to the United States, but many cross-currents were still at work. With the increase of tension toward France, the extreme Federalists began to consider the conquest of Louisiana and the Floridas, and as Hamilton put it, "to squint at South America."

The development of this South American policy becomes the central theme of extreme Federalist aims in 1798.

By the summer of 1798 the crisis in foreign policy had been reached. After the ratification of Jay's Treaty, relations with England had improved. Among the cabinet members whom Adams had carried over from the Washington administration, Timothy Pickering was at the same time the most narrow, most opinionated, and the strongest. Like James McHenry, Secretary of War, and Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury, he was loyal to Hamilton. But whereas these other two members of the cabinet drew their opinions from Hamilton, Pickering made

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6 The Mississippi Question, 25.
up his own mind first. His point of view was that of a commercial man from Salem, Massachusetts.

Pickering had been embroiled in a virulent controversy with Adet, the French minister to the United States. Following Adet's recall, the Spanish Minister, the Chevalier d'Yrujo, and Pickering carried on an embittered correspondence. Pickering made no secret of his preference for England, and his distrust of Napoleon and Spain. He managed to put all of this on a personal basis as well as a policy one. Robert Liston, the British Minister, described him as "one of the most violent Anti-gallicans I have ever met."  

The progress of the Napoleonic wars had resulted in deprivations on American shipping by both the British and the French. The XYZ affair terminated negotiations with France. Commercial intercourse was suspended, our treaty with her was annulled, and a limited naval warfare with that country began. A complete reorientation of American policy was possible, and of all Adams' advisers Pickering wished to make the most sweeping changes. A part of the plan which came to the forefront was that of allying immediately with England to bring about the independence of Latin America. In England, Rufus King, the American minister, held the same relationship to Hamilton as did the members of Adams' cabinet. A New Yorker himself, long a close friend as well as political ally of Hamilton, he became the channel for a three-way correspondence. The focal point of this correspondence was the South American revolutionary leader, Francisco de Miranda, who was seeking to promote independence of South America from Spain. Miranda corresponded with Hamilton by way of King, and with the American government, also by way

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of King. At the same time Miranda was in close touch with the British Prime Minister, Pitt, and the Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville.

Miranda, when in America in 1783 and 1784, had communicated with many of the leaders of the Revolution. Among those in whom he felt greatest confidence were Hamilton and Knox.11 Ever since that date he had sought to keep in touch with these two, as well as with others in the United States. So far as Hamilton is concerned, the letters written by Miranda in the 1780's to Hamilton seem to have been the only intercourse between the two until 1798.12

Miranda did communicate, however, with many of the Americans who represented their government in Europe at this time. John Trumbull, the artist whose reproduced pictures of the American Revolution now adorn many schoolrooms, had been appointed the fifth commissioner under the seventh article of Jay's Treaty and was serving in London.13 As early as January 15, 1797, he wrote to President Adams' Secretary of Treasury, Oliver Wolcott, that it would be possible for America to seize the Floridas, New Orleans and the French and Spanish West Indies. Further it would be possible to emancipate South America in cooperation with the British fleet.14 While there is no evidence to show that Trumbull was in communication with Miranda, this plan is so like the one formulated by him, as to make it likely that Miranda was the source of the idea.

Robert Goodloe Harper, the prominent Federalist representative from South Carolina, spoke of Latin American liberation in the House in the Spring of 1797, as has already been mentioned. He likewise sought to win his district to this program in a letter to his constituents dated May 25, 1797. There he stated: "... if driven into war, we can buy at a price cheap to ourselves the

12 Robertson, "Miranda," 252, 278.
full cooperation of the British navy. . . .” Further, such a rupture would enable the United States to acquire the Floridas and New Orleans, thus assuring the free navigation of the Mississippi.\textsuperscript{15} Mexico had been added to this on the floor of the House. This led the Republicans to pounce upon these statements as an admission that Federalist policy contemplated a British alliance against France and the conquest of Mexico.\textsuperscript{16}

As a matter of practical politics this question quieted down in 1797, but with increased tension with France revived strongly in 1798. On January 16 Miranda approached Pitt with an outline of his plan for the liberation of South America. This included a plan for an Anglo-American alliance. In the actual undertaking an American army would cooperate with a British fleet. At this part of the plan Pitt “exclaimed in a note of joyfulness and sincerity: We should much enjoy operating jointly with the United States in this enterprise.” \textsuperscript{17} At the close of this month and the first of February, Rufus King, American minister to London, had conversations with Miranda and with Grenville on the project.\textsuperscript{18} He learned that British countenance of the project would depend upon the attitude which Spain took in regard to France. Should she ally with France it would then be the policy of England to aid Miranda.

Apparently before intimation of this latest development had reached the United States, Hamilton, in a letter to McHenry, had outlined his ideas on the matter of South America. This letter was written in January, and contained the same plans for defense as those in the letter to Pickering just after the news of the XYZ dispatches was received. On the question of the policy to be followed toward England, he stated, “. . . it is believed to be best, in any event, to avoid alliance.” The mutual interest of the two countries would result in just as effective cooperation should a rupture occur. The proper procedure would be to have Rufus

\textsuperscript{15} Harper, \textit{Select Works}, 103-104.
\textsuperscript{16} Callender, \textit{History of America for 1796}, viii; also \textit{Sketches of the History of America for 1798}, 52-54.
\textsuperscript{17} Robertson, W. S., \textit{Life of Miranda} (Chapel Hill, 1929) I, 168.
\textsuperscript{18} King’s \textit{King}, III, 555-59.
King "sound out Pitt as to cooperation in case of open rupture, the furnishing us with naval force — the point'g the cooperation to the Floridas, Louisiana, & South American possessions of Spain, if rupture, as is probable, shall extend to her. To prevail on Britain to lodge in her Minister here ample authority for all these purposes; but all this without engagement or commitment in the first instance. All on this side of the Mississippi must be ours including both Floridas." 19 In his recommendations to the President, McHenry specified New Orleans as well, otherwise transmitting this part of the letter without change.

In all probability, before King's dispatches had reached America, Pickering sent Hamilton a detailed account of the XYZ dispatches. Pickering was most concerned about a British alliance, which he now considered both possible and desirable in the light of the dispatches. "What shall we say to the British Government? You hint at nothing. The opposition party have already insinuated that a treaty offensive and defensive has doubtless been already concluded with Great Britain — a friend of mine yesterday told me that he was asked if such a treaty had not arrived. The truth is, that not one syllable has been written to Mr. King or any one else upon the subject. I confess it to have been for some time my opinion that provisional or de...s should be sent to Mr. King — Mr. King in one of his latest letters desires to be particularly instructed. The dispatch boat may be directed to go from France to England with such instructions. . . ." 20 In writing this, Pickering was fairly certain to know the contents of Hamilton's earlier letter to McHenry, as his instructions to the cabinet were generally passed around. The explanation for his writing again on this point is most likely to be found in Pickering's hope that the situation created by the dispatches would cause Hamilton to change his mind.


Hamilton had not materially changed his outlook. Of the XYZ dispatches he stated, "I am delighted with their contents." On the British Alliance he repeated what he had stated to McHenry, with the additional warning, "Public opinion is not prepared for it — it would not fail to be represented as to the point to which our previous conduct was directed and in case of offers from France satisfactory to us the public faith might be embarrassed by the calls of the people for accommodation and peace." He was anxious, however, that limited cooperation should be arranged:

The desideratum is that Britain could be engaged to lodge with her Minister here powers commensurate with such arrangements as exigencies may require & the progress of opinion permit. I see no good objection on her part to this plan—it would be good policy in her to send to this country a dozen frigates to pursue the directions of this government.21

In accordance with this view, Pickering did not insist on a British alliance in his conference with Adams, with whom he must have failed in any event. On April 2, he wrote King, "... the President does not deem it expedient at this time to make any advances to Great Britain..." Some hope may have been left to King in a succeeding sentence: "In one word, being forced by France into the war, the United States and Great Britain will have a common interest to defeat the unjust and dangerous enterprise of the French Republic..." 22

King had first written to Pickering about Miranda's plans on February 7.23 Enclosed in this dispatch was a letter for Hamilton. King, moreover, anticipated that Pickering and Hamilton would consult on the project, as in a direct communication to Hamilton on May 12 and again on May 14 he declared that fuller details would be familiar to Hamilton through the dispatches to the

21 Hamilton to Pickering, March 27, 1798. Hamilton’s Works (Hamilton, ed.) VI, 278.
23 King to Pickering, Feb. 7, 1798. King’s King, II, 650.
Concerning the letter of February 7 from Miranda to Hamilton, Hamilton wrote:

Several years ago this man was in America much heated with the project of liberating South America from the Spanish Domination. I had frequent conversation with him on the subject and I presume expressed ideas favorable to the object and perhaps gave an opinion that it was one to which the United States would look with interest—He went then to England upon it—Hence his present letter. I shall not answer because I consider him as an intriguing adventurer.

This endorsement bears a rather Jesuitical aspect in that it could at best be applied with sincerity only to Miranda's project, not to the general idea of participating in the liberation of South America. The latter had been fully endorsed in the letter to McHenry. Further, in August, Hamilton wrote to King that he had been interested in the project from the start, and at the same time communicated his approval to Miranda. Commenting on Hamilton's interest in this entire project, Whitaker correctly states: "... there can be no question that Hamilton threw himself heart and soul into the plan of conquest in 1798 and 1799...; there was nothing chimerical about it." Continuing, he qualifies the aims of Hamilton somewhat more than may be necessary, stating, "Mexico and Peru lay doubtfully on the outer fringe of his designs. At the heart and center lay Florida and Louisiana."

Pickering had not given up hope that his desire for a British alliance would find favor. In June he wrote to Hamilton that he thought the position of America much more difficult without an alliance than with one. If England fell, he declared, this would mean America would be attacked at once. If she made peace, America, if at war with France, would likewise be made the object of assault. Then, unless we had a treaty of alliance, England

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24 Robertson, Life of Miranda, I, 176-77.
25 Robertson, Life of Miranda, I, 176-77.
26 Hamilton to King, Aug. 22, 1798; same date to Miranda, Hamilton’s Works (Hamilton, ed.) VI, 347-48.
27 Whitaker, Mississippi Question, 117.
would not re-enter the war to save us. A third possibility, that America might make peace with France, had completely dropped out of Pickering's calculations by this time. That the spirit of the country would look with disfavor upon such an alliance he deplored: "I think the animosities and hatred engendered in the American Revolution towards England exist yet, in some breasts [an obvious reference to Adams] in greater force than our interest or our safety admit; and these passions will keep us aloof till any cooperation may become impracticable. We cannot expect overtures from England. I very much suspect she is waiting to receive them from us. I wish you were in a situation not only 'to see all the cards,' but to play them. . . ." 28

British policy coincided almost exactly with that desired by Pickering. In 1796 instructions were sent to the British minister in Washington: "... you will consider yourself as distinctly authorized by His Majesty to assure the American Government that, if France should commence Hostilities against it, in consequence of the Jay's Treaty concluded with this Country, His Majesty will be ready to enter into such engagements with the United States as may appear best calculated to repel an aggression of this nature and to make common Cause against an Attack. . . ." 29 These instructions were renewed in 1798. It was emphasized that only a temporary alliance was wanted. At the same time new instructions were sent to Liston, the administration organ in London, The Anti-Jacobin Review, also publicly urged an alliance with the United States. 30

England also offered to establish a convoy system to protect American shipping on the high seas. 31 William Cobbett, spokes-

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30 Draft to Liston, Downing Street, London, June 8, 1798, No. 12, Mayo, Instructions to British Ministers, 155-60; also Anti-Jacobin Review, August, 1798, I, 245.
31 Draft to Liston, Downing Street, London, Jan. 27, 1797, Mayo, Instructions to British Ministers, 129.
man for the High-Federalists, correctly pointed out the benefits of convoys and advocated an alliance with England in his paper.\textsuperscript{32} Finally, to prevent misunderstandings naval signals were interchanged between the two countries,\textsuperscript{33} but that was as far as a detailed settlement went. The actual negotiation of an alliance was left for Liston to take up with the American government. Suggestion was made that Rufus King, American Minister to London, might be given detailed instructions. Meanwhile the British government suggested that the following points should be covered in preliminary conversations: \textsuperscript{34}

1. Florida and Louisiana might be conquered by the United States without British objection.
2. England would expect to acquire St. Domingo.
3. War should be conducted by collaborative action which should include:
   
   (a) The chief advantage to be derived from the United States by England would be the recruitment of seamen for British ships. At the moment His Majesty’s Naval establishment had a surplus of both officers and ships.
   
   (b) In return the United States would secure the service of a squadron of British ships. The number of ships in this would depend upon the extent of assistance supplied by the United States.
   
   (c) Alternately, England would consider lending or selling ships to the United States, together with lending the services of officers, it being assumed that the United States would lack trained personnel. Such sale or loan would likewise be dependent upon the supply of


\textsuperscript{33} Benj. Stoddert, Sect. of Navy, to Timothy Pickering, July 14, 1798, Misc. Letters, Dept. of State (National Archives); Pickering to Stoddert, July 23, 1798, Dept. of State, Domestic Letters, Vol. 11, 19 (National Archives); also in \textit{Pickering Manuscripts}, Vol. 9, 84 (Massachusetts Historical Society); Liston to Grenville, Boston, 27 Sept. 1798, No. 57, informs the Foreign Office that the signals transmitted were those of Vice Admiral Vandeput, \textit{Adams Transcripts}, 1796-1798 (Library of Congress).

\textsuperscript{34} Draft to Liston, Downing Street, June 8, 1798, No. 12, Mayo, \textit{Instructions to British Ministers}, 155 ff.
American seamen to man British naval vessels, as well as those operated by the United States.

Toward the end of July, 1798, Liston formally broached the proposal for an alliance to the Secretary of State. He found Pickering personally in favor of such an alliance, but deterred by the unreadiness of public opinion and the lack of instructions from the President.35 Next Liston proceeded north to Boston and saw Adams. Adams talked freely, and declared that personally he was for such an alliance; however, "'The people of this country (said Mr. Adams) are at present employed in deliberating upon that question; and it would perhaps not be wise to disturb their meditations; no doubt all will come out right by and by. . . .'" 36

Adams expressed willingness to receive and listen to whatever proposals the British might wish to make. He did not feel that detailed propositions should originate with the American government. Liston took all of this at face value, and indicated that he expected negotiations to be delayed because of the illness of Mrs. Adams and the general separation of government officers during the summer.

Actually, Adams seems to have tried to tell Liston that he was interested only in a temporary alliance in case of actual war with France. Liston quoted Adams as stating:

He has been careful to reject all idea of a permanent Treaty offensive and defensive, but he has represented it as the height of folly for a people on the eve of a war not to secure the assistance and defence that may be derived from another nation engaged in the same common cause. . . .37

Moreover, there was a basis for many differences between England and the United States even in the British proposals for

35 Liston to Grenville, New York, 31 August 1798, No. 52, Adams Transcripts (Library of Congress).
37 Liston to Grenville, Kingston (New Jersey), 7 Novr. 1798, Adams Transcripts (Library of Congress). This same view was expressed also by the Commercial Advertiser, the paper closest to the Administration. Jan. 21, 1799.
an alliance. Adams' policy of an independent American Navy led to difficulties. Instances of search and impressment even on American Naval vessels continued.\(^{38}\) While England offered to convoy American ships, she refused to consider waiving the right of search of American vessels in American convoy, even if an alliance were signed.\(^{39}\) It should be noted that Hamilton's policy of concentrating on the army, while making the navy secondary, minimized these difficulties. As it was, the rise of Adams' Navy ultimately created so many difficulties that the reaction of the British by 1800 was to hail the election of Jefferson as offering one advantage at least, the reduction in size of the U. S. Navy.\(^{40}\)

With the convening of Congress in December, Liston was forced to conclude that he had been too optimistic. He informed the foreign office that "The President of the United States seems to have been mistaken in his opinion, (expressed in the Conversation I had the Honor to hold with him last autumn) that the people of America were deliberating on the propriety of a connection with Great Britain, and would soon come to adopt favourable sentiments on that subject."\(^{41}\) Failure was due to the "bias to the public mind" produced by "the violent and artful declamation of the French Party," i.e. the Republicans, plus the failure of a positive policy by the Federalists.

Further, Liston became conscious of the fact that the divisions within the Federalists were stronger than he had previously acknowledged. "...those who enroll themselves under the banner of what is called the Federal Party are by no means unanimous in their wish for the adoption of engagements with England whether of a temporary or a permanent nature." Much of this, Liston went on, was due to the rising spirit of American nationalism, and the desire to be dependent on no nation, sentiments to

\(^{38}\) Liston to Grenville, Phila., 16 Jan., 1799 and 5 Feb., 1800, Adams Transcripts (Library of Congress); Pickering to King, Dec. 13, 1798 and Jan. 12, 1799, Department of State Instructions, 5/8 and 5/52 (National Archives).

\(^{39}\) Grenville to Liston, Downing Street, London, June 8, 1798, No. 12, Mayo, Instructions to British Ministers, 155 ff.


\(^{41}\) Liston to Grenville, Phila., 29 Jan., 1799, No. 4, Adams Transcripts (Library of Congress).
be specially found "... in the younger part of the Society." 42 Pickering, he reported, was greatly disappointed with the turn of events, but the administration continued to drive forward with measures of defense. As yet Liston was not conscious of how much the President shared the sentiments the British minister had attributed to the younger part of society.

While these negotiations with the British failed to produce an alliance, the correspondence with Miranda on the South American project continued. At one stage Miranda and his collaborators in the British Foreign Office drew up the preamble to a draft treaty for a triple alliance among "the United States, the King of Great Britain, and the Sovereign States of the Spanish People of America, to act against France." 43 Instructions were likewise drawn up and this material was taken by one of Miranda's followers to the United States.

Less definite proposals also continued to be considered. When, on August 21, Pickering received full dispatches and plans from Miranda and King, he forwarded the letters addressed to Hamilton, and on the following day wrote Hamilton as follows: "Not to miss the mail, I wrote you one line today, and inclosed a letter from, I suppose, General Miranda. If its contents give rise to any questions which it will be prudent for you to ask, and for me to answer by the mail, it may be done; otherwise the information may be suspended till we meet." 44 By this time, both through letters to the cabinet and through conference with them, Hamilton was trying to bring Adams around to a favorable view of the South American project. His letters indicate that he now thought the government was nearing a decision. On August 22 he wrote: "Are we ready for this undertaking? Not quite. But we ripen fast, and it may, I think, be rapidly brought to maturity, if an efficient negotiation for the purpose is at once set on foot upon this ground. Great Britain cannot alone insure the accomplishment of the object. I have some time since advised certain

42 Ibid.
43 Robertson, Life of Miranda, I, 171.
44 Same to same, August 21, 1798. Hamilton's Works (Hamilton, ed.) VI, 343.
preliminary steps to prepare the way consistently with national character and justice. I was told they would be pursued, but I am not informed whether they have been or not.”

In view of Pickering’s expressed views, his failure to write officially to King about the South American project was due to the inability of the cabinet to interest Adams, not to any misgivings of his own. In 1809 Adams stated that he received many suggestions that he should broach the question of an alliance to Liston, the British Minister, and that Liston “in modest and delicate terms” intimated that such an approach would meet with a favorable reception. He and Liston never got so far as to discuss the Latin American plan. Adams wrote to Pickering asking his advice on the overtures from Miranda, but there is no written record of a reply. Among the papers which Adams did receive were:

(1) the full draft of the proposal for independence of Latin America signed by Miranda and his associates. This included the project for a triple alliance to include (a) the new independent Latin American State which should be created, (b) Great Britain, and (c) the United States.

(2) From McHenry, Adams received, early in 1798, advice on foreign policy which corresponded closely with Hamilton’s recommendations that had been sent to members of the cabinet. These were:

(a) Recommendation for reliance upon British convoys.

(b) The proposal that ten naval vessels be borrowed from England.

(c) The proposal that, when war might be declared against France, England and the United States should cooperate in a joint series of moves against Florida, Louisiana, and South America.

(d) Recommendation that the British minister be asked to request authority from his government to enter upon immediate agree-

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45 Hamilton to King, Aug. 22, 1798. King’s King, II, 660.
46 King to Pickering, Oct. 20, 1798. King’s King, II, 453.
47 Boston Patriot, May 19 and May 24, 1809; Quincy, May 10, 1809.
48 Adams to Pickering, Quincy, Oct. 3, 1798; Adams’ Works, VIII, 600.
ments with the United States covering these points in the event of war with France, but that no immediate alliance should be signed.\textsuperscript{49}

The effect of this scheme upon Adams will be considered in a later chapter. It was certainly apparent to him by the time Liston took the unusual step of going to Massachusetts to see him, that there was a strange concurrence of opinion, even as to detail, among the ideas of Liston, the views of his cabinet, the recommendations of his minister to England, and the policy advocated by Hamilton in the press.

Hamilton, of course, was even more a part of the planning than Adams might yet conjecture. At the same time that he wrote to King, Hamilton also wrote to Miranda on August 22, 1798. This letter indicates that Hamilton had definite interest in the part he might personally play in the military command. He declared: "The sentiments I entertain with regard to the object have been long since in your knowledge, but I could personally have no participation in it, unless patronized by the government of this country. It was my wish that matters had been ripened for a cooperation in the course of this fall on the part of this country."

"But this can scarcely now be the case. The winter, however, may mature the project, and an effectual cooperation by the United States may take place. In this case, I shall be happy in my official station, to be an instrument of so good a work."\textsuperscript{50} It should be noted at this point that Hamilton was the senior field general, and that he always had strong military ambitions.

In a letter to King in October, Hamilton again showed anxiety over the progress being made toward securing the President's endorsement: "Mr. R. delivered me your letter of the 31st of July. The opinion in that and other of your letters concerning a very important point, has been acted upon by me from the very moment that it became unequivocal that we must have a rupture


\textsuperscript{50} Hamilton to Miranda, Aug. 22, 1798. Hamilton's \textit{Works} (Hamilton, ed.) VI, 361.
with France. In some things my efforts succeeded, in others they were disappointed: — in others I have had promises of conformity to lay the foundations of future proceedings; the performance and effect of which promises are not certainly known to me. The effect, indeed, cannot yet be known.”  

A nicer example of a letter from one conspirator to another could hardly be imagined.

One result of the desire to start the expedition to Latin America was to make Hamilton increasingly anxious for a direct rupture with France. In January, 1799, he wrote to Harrison Gray Otis that he would be glad to see a law passed by Congress which should provide that if no negotiation with France were set on foot by August 1, or any in progress had terminated unsuccessfully by then, war should be declared. This law should provide that in such circumstances the President should be given the power to employ the land and naval forces “as shall appear to him most effectual for annoying the enemy, and for preventing and frustrating hostile designs of France, either directly or indirectly through any of her allies.”

Moreover, as France might seize Florida and Louisiana, the most effective way of checking her would be to anticipate such action through seizing these territories first. In addition, “If universal empire is still to be the pursuit of France, what can tend to defeat the purpose better than to detach South America from Spain, which is only the channel through which the riches of Mexico and Peru are conveyed to France? The executive ought to be put in a situation to embrace favorable conjunctures for effecting that separation. ’Tis to be regretted that the preparation of an adequate military force does not advance more rapidly.”

As late as the spring of 1799, after the new peace mission to France was announced by Adams, but had not yet sailed,


I cannot agree with John C. Miller’s statement in his Crisis in Freedom, 151-52 and 155, that Hamilton was reluctant for there to be war with France. The statement quoted above and the weight of Hamilton’s other letters leaves no room for doubt, in my mind.

Hamilton was still hopeful of success. Correspondence continued between him and King and Miranda. Hamilton himself, when the command of the army was divided, was given command over the troops in the North and the West. Those in the West were directly commanded by General Wilkinson. This placed him in a strategic position in case of operations against Florida and Louisiana. Furthermore he had Wilkinson visit him, and went over the entire situation of the Spanish at New Orleans with Wilkinson. Gradually, though, it became increasingly apparent that there would be no war, with the result that the matter dropped from sight. The frustration of his hopes caused Hamilton to suffer a severe depression of spirits. A letter to William Smith in 1800 contains the following pessimistic passage: “... You see I am in a humor to laugh. What can we do better in this best of all possible worlds? Should you even be shut up in the seven towers [Smith was going to Constantinople], or get the plague, if you are a true philosopher you will consider this only a laughing matter.”

To go forward a bit in the story in order to clarify Pickering’s view as to peace, it becomes evident that his rage and despair over the prospect of peace with France were equal to Hamilton’s. When the President determined on a new peace mission to France, Pickering sent a series of bitter and resentful letters to William Vans Murray, our emissary to the Hague, concerning this policy. Murray was unfortunate enough to be the channel of communication between the United States and France. Pickering’s first letter informed Murray that the President’s decision for a third mission had the unanimous opposition of the cabinet and came as a complete surprise. The next letter rebuked Murray sharply.

53 McHenry to Hamilton, Feb. 4, 1799. Hamilton’s Works (Hamilton, ed.) V, 199; and Hamilton to Wilkinson, Feb. 12, 1799, Ibid., 211. When Washington did not take the field the command was divided between Gen. Pinckney and Hamilton, with Pinckney taking the Southern part of the forces.

54 Whitaker, Mississippi Question, 125.

55 Hamilton to Smith, March 11, 1800. Hamilton’s Works (Hamilton, ed.) VI, 432. Also see Henry Lee to Hamilton, March 5, 1800, Ibid., 430. He states, “It gives me pain to find you so despondent ... Be then more like yourself, and resist to victory all your foes.”

In the correspondence between Murray and Pichon, who was making the overtures on behalf of France, Murray had expressed his "'perfect respect and high esteem'" for Talleyrand. Pickering wanted to know what was meant by using this language toward a "shameless villain." "'Esteem' is the sentiment of affection and friendship for moral worth: the profession of it you have constantly and abundantly lavished on me: and I hoped that I was not wholly unworthy of it: But what value am I to place on it when I see that with the like facility it is addressed to one of the most false, hypocritical, and corrupt villains of whom France has produced a bountiful crop." As to the letter which Pichon sent, it is full of "Impudent lies . . . [which] would have justified you in dashing the letter in Citizen Pichon's face." 57

For the motives which prompted the High-Federalists in their desire for war with France, another letter of Pickering's is of extreme importance. It shows that the idea of neutrality had been abandoned by this group, as was already pointed out in connection with an earlier letter from Pickering to Hamilton. Seeing advantages to be derived from entering the war on the side of Great Britain, and believing that it was necessary to get into the war on one side or the other, they were determined that it should be on the side of the nation which could advance the interest of commerce. Of the results to be anticipated from the new mission, Pickering wrote:

An actual treaty with the French Republic will probably bring us into a war with the combined powers; or if open war be not declared, our commerce will be harrassed and deeply injured, and from the Russian ports (on which we depend for sail cloth and hemp) be probably excluded. In the mean time, the intercourse with France will be renewed, and we shall be cursed with a revolutionary minister to intrigue with the numerous enemies of our government, until it be overturned. These are some of the evils with which this mission is pregnant. When it was intimated to the President, 57 that the negotiation with the French Republic, this time, might lead to war with

57 Same to same, Oct. 4, 1799. Ibid., 600.
Great Britain, would you believe it possible that he should answer, ‘Great Britain could not hurt us!’ \(^{58}\)

For another expression of the reasons for the desire for war, there is an excellent statement in the letters of George Cabot. Cabot was the head of the Junto, and a man not given to pursuing chimeras. On July 2, when there was reason to think that war might be declared before Congress adjourned, he wrote, “... It is true that we shall do little more at first than provide for our own defense, but we are capable of greater efforts after we are fully engaged, & a variety of considerations unite to render our association in the war extremely favorable to G. B.; we are at least sufficient for a make weight where the scales are so nearly even. ... But I am fully persuaded that G. B. in concert with U. S. can command the ocean in opposition to all Europe, Russia alone excepted, and if the war should continue several years, these nations would enjoy exclusively the commerce of all Americas & Africa & the best part of Asia & Europe — the colonies of France and the Nations subject to her power would soon listen to the pleas of necessity & would voluntarily receive the commercial ships of those who alone would supply their wants.” \(^{59}\) After the close of the session Cabot wrote deeply regretting that there had been no declaration of war. \(^{60}\)

Also at this time, Hamilton’s friend Christopher Gore, like John Trumbull one of the United States commissioners in London, sent to Hamilton a long pamphlet which he hoped might be printed and distributed, although it never was. This lengthy document, 142 manuscript pages in length, urges an immediate war against France. The argument is advanced that the continuation of peace permits the opposition to defend France and continually to attack the Federalist party. An immediate war would put a stop to this. Also instead of defense with nothing coming in, there would be offense against both French and Spanish possessions. The immediate result would be an easy victory for the United States.

\(^{58}\) Same to same, Oct. 25, 1799. \(Ibid.,\) 610.

\(^{59}\) Cabot to King, July 2, 1798. \(King's King,\) II, 354.

\(^{60}\) Same to Wolcott, Oct. 25, 1798. \(Gibbs, Wolcott,\) II, 109.
over 10,000 troops would be needed for the operation. The South Americans would be liberated from tyranny. A united America would be able to stand against future European invasion. A profitable trade would be opened up for American shipping and manufactures. To the South we would have peaceful and friendly allies. All of this demanded an immediate declaration of war against France and the courageous waging of an offensive war.\textsuperscript{61}

In determining the aims of the Federalist program, the expressed views of the leaders are of greatest importance. The views of their followers are of next significance, and those expressed in the press are also of some import. What might be charged by the opposition is not nearly so significant as statements in the press of the party. At this point, the close of 1798 and first part of 1799, the general trend of the Federalist press was to charge that the opposition was disloyal and plotted revolution. Such statements ran through comments of all factions of the Federalist press. The \textit{Gazette of the United States} ran a comment which was copied by Noah Webster’s \textit{Commercial Advertiser}, pointing to the fate of Naples and calling for a policy “... where there is the smallest reason to suspect a collusion with the enemy, or a strong disposition to favor him, instantly to cashier the guilty person.

“... Purge your country, but especially all its Public Offices, \textbf{BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, OF DOMESTIC TRAITORS.”} \textsuperscript{62} Lest it be augued that such statements might apply only to public officials, Webster’s paper warned that because of French influence “... the United States are ripening fast for a revolution — as important as that which Rome suffered in the days of Julius Caesar.” \textsuperscript{63} In general, Webster’s position was more moderate than the position taken by the \textit{Gazette of the United States} and Porcupine’s \textit{Gazette}. Webster endorsed only a temporary British alliance and supported Adams when he renewed negotiations with the French.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Commercial Advertiser}, June 4, 1799.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Commercial Advertiser}, March 19, 1800; also see comments for Jan. 21, 1799; April 26, 1800.
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Commercial Advertiser}, March 7 and March 8, 1799.
The Gazette of the United States and Porcupine advocated suppression of the opposition, war with France, and a British alliance. All this was too much for Webster, and after announcement of the third mission to France in 1799, a marked split developed among the Federalist papers.

Another excellent statement of the thought of this wing of the Federalist party is that which appeared in March, 1799, in a statement by John Ward Fenno, editor of the Gazette of the United States. These statements were later elaborated in a pamphlet in 1800 designed to favor the election of Pinckney over Adams by setting forth the failures of the latter and the proper policy which should be followed:

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65 Porcupine's Gazette, May 17, 1797; Jan. 25, April 3, April 10, July 13, July 20, Sept. 7, Nov. 10 and Dec. 3, 1798; Jan. 29, 1799. Gazette of the United States, July 17, 1799; July 18, 1799; July 10, 1799, etc.

66 Commercial Advertiser, March 15 and 16, 1799.


68 It is well to mention here that in the summer of 1798 the yellow fever did great damage among newspaper editors. Among those who died was John Fenno, whereupon his son assumed the editorship of the paper. Fenno, Jr., was very indiscreet, and his paper, along with Porcupine, broke with Adams upon the appointment of the new mission. As soon as he assumed the editorship he joined Porcupine in advocating an offensive and defensive alliance with England, and became strongly pro-English. However, his attitude is in harmony with the private letters of the High-Federalists, and the position is taken here that although regarded as going too far in making statements of Federalist policy to the public, the views set forth by him throw some light on points of policy on which there is insufficient elaboration in the correspondence. An example of this may be taken from a statement of Pickering. Only Porcupine and Fenno, of all the press, criticized the new mission.

Pickering writes, “Without saying any more, I beg leave to refer you to the enclosed column of a newspaper. Who was the author I know not. The irony is severe: but it did no more than express the strong feelings of the men whom you respect and esteem, so far as it regarded a mission to France.” Pickering to Murray, July 10, 1799. Ford, “Murray,” loc. cit., 573. Pickering was referring to Fenno’s “A View of the United States of America,” which appeared on March 4, 1799 and on which Cobbett commented on March 9, 1799. This view of American policy was strongly endorsed by the British Anti-Jacobin Review, II, 563-76. Liston enclosed the pamphlet of 1800 to Grenville with the comment that these had been published “not . . . without the advice and consent of some of the leading Federalists in New York. . . .” Liston to Grenville, Philadelphia, 16 Aug., 1800, No. 34, Adams Transcripts (Library of Congress).
The measure which most pressingly demands adoption, is a declaration of war against France, and her dependencies, Spain and Holland...

The conquest of the remaining possessions of France, Spain and Holland in the West Indies, might be effected by this country, with very little expense or inconvenience. The naval force already extant is fully adequate, and the regular troops lately embodied, though its intervention would have atcheived [sic] the conquest without difficulty. This country possesses such advantages for carrying on expeditions against the West India Islands, as must render her cooperation in the cause very acceptable. In short, the contingent we could bring into the coalition would be such as to entitle us to assume the rank of a first rate power, and to make stipulations, the fulfillment of which could not fail to fix us in a state of prosperity and to extend to our empire and renown. To instance, for our quota of 25,000 troops (which should act separately and independently) and a stipulated quantum of military stores, etc. Great Britain should guarantee to us the island of Cuba, or which would be more convenient to our commerce, that of Porto Rico. Either of these possessions would amply remunerate us for the most expensive exerions which the conquest of them could require. In the East, we might establish ourselves in the possession of Batavia or the Mauritius, and thus to secure a footing in the Indian Ocean, highly essential to us, but now depending on the most precarious tenure.

It is in vain to disguise the truth that America is essentially and naturally a commercial nation; and that from her location on the map of the world she must ever remain so. It ought therefore to be the undeviating care of the Government, whether it be Federal or Jacobinical, or true Columbian, to secure on the most advantageous footing possible, our commercial intercourse with foreign nations. To procure admission to our flag, in ports whence it is now excluded; to obtain it by right where it now rests on the ground of sufferance; and to establish it on a regular and permanent footing; in those cases where it is at present precarious and temporary; is not merely the province of the Government, but a duty, and obligation which its subjects have a right to hold it to.

We have a right to expect and the Government ought to exact it from Spain, the opening of those of her ports in South America the most convenient for refitting our whalers on that coast. For the want
of this privilege our people are subjected to needless deprivation and hardships, during voyages of two years duration.

From Portugal through the intervention of Great Britain, it could not be difficult to exact for some adequate compensation which we could offer, the same privileges in Brazil, a station the most convenient to the whaling ground.

Pepper, Spices, Cottons of various kinds, and above all Sugar and Coffee, are, what-ever negro-philanthropists [sic] may assert, undoubtedly, necessaries of life.

This summarizes the views of the Federalist shipping interests with their expanding trade which now included the spice trade of the East Indies. The article then proceeds on the same tune that Hamilton and the Junto played in trying to dissuade Adams from the mission. The Bourbons would be restored in a brief time, would ally with England, and make America suffer for not having joined the coalition.69

So far as the actual tactical policy of the Federalists is concerned, the best description of the method by which the policy was supposed to advance is given by Fisher Ames: “Wage war and call it self defense; forbear to call it war, on the contrary, let it be said that we deprecate war, and will desist from our arms as soon as her acts shall be repealed, &c., &c., grounding all we do on the necessity of self preservation &c. . . . tell the citizens of danger & bring them to war gradually.”

“My long letter amounts to this, we must make haste to wage war, or we shall be lost. . . . My faith is that we are born to high destinies. . . .” Ames also favored an alliance with England.70

What change in American policy would have come from following the program of the High-Federalists in 1798? Charles Francis Adams, in his biography of John Adams,71 has correctly pointed out that the Hamiltonian policy meant the abandonment of the

71 Adams’ Works, I, 524-25.
neutrality and nonintervention policy advocated by Washington. It meant involvement in foreign adventure. At least a temporary alliance with England would have followed a declaration of war against France, and involvement in South America would probably have made this a more lasting one. Hamilton himself wrote to King that in regard to South America, he hoped the United States would furnish the entire land force. “The command in this case would very naturally fall upon me; and I hope that I should disappoint no favorable anticipations. The independency of the separate territory under a moderate government, with the joint guarantees of the co-operating powers, stipulating equal privileges in commerce, would be the sum of the results to be accomplished.” This means nothing more nor less than the permanent involvement of the United States in the alliance system of Europe, and that before the national character of the country had itself been formed. What was projected was a complete change in the position that the United States had held since independence. One cannot but feel that the aim of Hamilton was to change the role of the United States in foreign policy, and as will next appear, there were just as specific aims to remould the domestic character of the country.

In the next century the German liberals were overwhelmed in moulding the character of the rising German state by the policies pursued by Bismarck after 1862. Liberalism in the Germanic states was defeated, and a military character given to the new state. In the United States of 1798, there were many domestic forces in the direction of expansion of popular government. But the situation was fluid. What changes could be wrought in a period of military adventure? These Hamilton sought to experiment with.

The desire for war was, then, quite general on the part of the commercial group who sought to expand their commerce. This does not mean, as is usually stated, that the Federalist program was exhausted, but that there was a widening gap between the

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73 Kohn, Hans, The Idea of Nationalism (New York, 1944), 357.
commercial and agrarian groups of the party on account of the extremes to which the High-Federalists desired to carry their program. The agrarian elements of the party could see no profit in an adventure looking toward empire. They were Federalists so long as the party promised stability in government and finance. But when it proposed a policy of war, of large military expenditures, of higher taxes, this was quite another matter. Taxes were going up under the Adams administration. The direct tax, levied under Adams, has already been discussed. In the last year under Washington, 1796, tax receipts of the Federal government came to $8,377,530. Four years later for 1800, they came to $10,848,749. These figures do not appear too impressive today, but at the time they indicated a sharp rise in government spending. This badly upset the agrarian Federalists.

On the other hand, the commercial elements were winning their place in the carrying trade of the world because of the Napoleonic Wars. They were experiencing benefits from the extreme Federalist policy. Already American tonnage in foreign trade had risen from 124,000 gross tons in 1789 to approximately 500,000 gross tons by 1798 and still further by 1800. This made American tonnage in foreign trade in 1800 equal to England’s tonnage as of the year 1794; although only 50 per cent of the British foreign tonnage in 1800. American ships were engaged in the European and South American trade and considerable numbers went even to the Orient. This expansion of shipping also meant an extensive expansion of the shipbuilding industry. With such expansion, why not an American Empire, perhaps comparable to and allied with the British Empire? This was the dream. Could it become reality?

74 Historical Statistics of the United States, 298, Series P 89-98.
75 Ibid., 306, Series P 132-33.
77 Ibid., 178-87.