Liberty University

# The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend:

# George Washington and France

A Dissertation Submitted to

the Faculty of the School of History

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Art in History

by

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Lynchburg, Virginia

December 2022

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**Acknowledgments**

The work of this thesis is due in large to a great number of individuals whose sacrifices allowed me to write it. Firstly, I would like to thank my father Dr. Brent H. Meyers for his efforts as both an early reader and editor. I could not have undertaken or finished this journey with him. Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to my Thesis Director Dr. D. Jonathan White for his feedback and support throughout this process. Third, to my professors, Dr. Paul Yandle, Dr. H. Paul Thompson, and Dr. Samuel Smith whose efforts helped hone a love and passion for history within me, my sincerest thanks. Fourth, to the love of my life and the most beautiful woman I know, my wife Dr. Hannah S. Meyers, thank you for all the sacrifices, both big and small, and the support you provided to me as I worked on this thesis. Fifthly, I would like to thank my encourager and rock star of a mother, Susan Meyers for all her poignant words and sacrificial actions which got me through many tough moments. Sixthly, I would be remiss not to thank to my colleague and friend Jackson Branch whose feedback and approval throughout this process helped guide me through the chaos of writing a master's thesis. Seventh, to my brother Skyler and sister Leslie thank you for the countless ways your supported me both in words and deeds throughout this process. Lastly, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for without whom I would never have been able to write this thesis.

## Introduction

In March of 1781, George Washington wrote a private letter to William Fitzhugh in which he complained that the French fleet had failed to finish off the damaged British navy at Gardner's Bay.[1] "It is to be lamented, greatly lamented," Washington writes, "that the French commanders at Newport did not adopt the measure of sending the fleet and a detachment of their land force to the Chesapeake bay when I first proposed it to them."[2] Washington had sent orders to Admiral Comte d'Estaing (the French naval commander) the month prior concerning troop movements in an attempt to capture or defeat the army of the infamous traitor known as Brigadier General Benedict Arnold. Later, Washington would explain that while he was not optimistic about the success of the mission, the situation surrounding the operation made him feel like it warranted the risk.[3] The situation which justified this action came as the result of the severe damage a Nor'easter storm had done to the British naval support of Arnold's forces. Washington continued to detail that "had the expedition been undertaken at that time, nothing could have saved Arnold's Corps during the weakened state of the British ships from destruction."[4] Instead of promptly acting on Washington's orders, the French fleet (which had also been battered in the storm) delayed, and instead, a much smaller detachment was sent to Washington's requested location. By the time they arrived, the opportunity to capture or defeat

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[1] William Fitzhugh was a Virginia planter, legislator and delegate who was a friend and neighbor of George Washington. Fitzhugh also served together with George Washington on the Pohick Church vestry and was the last person Washington visited before his death in 1799. William Fitzhugh is often given the appending (of Chatham) to distinguish him from multiple generations of Williams in the Fitzhugh family tree.

[2] All quotes have been modernized with current spelling and grammar so as not to detract from the written content. George Washington, "From George Washington to William Fitzhugh, 25 March 1781," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-05197.

[3] George Washington, "From George Washington to Alexander McDougall, 31 March 1781," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-05260.

[4] George Washington, "From George Washington to William Fitzhugh, 25 March 1781," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-05197.

General Arnold and his forces had disappeared. Understandably, Washington was frustrated by the actions of his French allies which bordered on insubordination. Yet, even while complaining about this fiasco, Washington says: "But as there is no rectifying past errors…it is our true policy to stand well with friends on whom we so much depend."[5]

During the American Revolution, the thirteen British colonies in North America entered into an alliance with France, their mother nation's enemy, as part of their effort to liberate themselves. In so doing, they aligned themselves with a previously sworn enemy (having fought against them fifteen years prior as part of the Seven Years' War). The partnership of these two nations is commonly accepted as a purely pragmatic solution for both countries. France, after being persuaded, saw the conflict in North America as a way for them to enact revenge against their habitual adversary, as well as a chance to regain some of their lost territories, power, and prestige.[6] At the same time, the Continental Congress saw this alliance as a way to achieve the independence for which they had risked everything. However, these two allies differed from one another on almost every front. They were dissimilar in politics, social structure, culture, and even in religion.[7] Yet, the two nations aligned together against Great Britain in the pursuit of their own goals.

Even though pragmatically the alliance made sense, the announcement of the Franco-American alliance was still met with a very vast range of opinions. Samuel Curwin, a loyalist,

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[5] Ibid.

[6] For more information on this revenge theory see, Edward S. Corwin, "The French Objective in the American Revolution," *American Historical Review* 21, no 1. (October 1915): 33-61; Ramon E. Abaraca, "Classical Diplomacy and Bourbon 'Revanche' Strategy 1763-1770," *Review of Politics* 32, no. 3 (July 1970): 313-337; William C. Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969); and James Pritchard, "French Strategy and the American Revolution: A Reappraisal," *Naval War College Review* 47, no. 4 (Autumn 1994): 83-108.

[7] William C. Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 2.

wrote that the act of this alliance for America was "to renounce her authority; have set her power at defiance; reduced her commerce; defeated her armies; sunk her national credit, nay, insulted her coasts."[8] While Henry Livingston, a patriot, wrote that "America is at last saved by almost a miracle."[9] Even with this dichotomy of opinions "the alliance caused no appreciable defection to the British, and no anti-Catholic or anti-French articles appeared in the press."[10] Prior to the start of the American Revolution, many colonists would have vehemently opposed and defected to the British side. Yet, somehow two years of war caused a forgetting and forgiving of all the turmoil and bloodshed that France had brought upon them a mere fifteen years earlier. Great Britain was now their enemy, and France was their friend.

It is this newfound "friendship" with France that George Washington referred to in his private letter to William Fitzhugh, epitomizing the aberration of this alliance.[11] Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, had previously fought against the French during the Seven Years' War. He had suffered defeat at the hands of the French at Fort Necessity, been accused by the French of assassinating Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville, had a journal published and ridiculed throughout France, and seen his commander, Major General Edward Braddock, killed in action. Washington, more than most in the Colonies, had a reason to hate the French, yet he was able to overcome his personal animosity to fight alongside the French. This begs the question of what happened or how was it possible for Washington to go from an enemy

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[8] George Atkinson Ward, ed., *Journal and Letters of the Late Samuel Curwen, Judge of Admiralty, Etc., an American Refugee in England, from 1775 to 1784, Comprising Remarks on the Prominent Men and Measures of That Period. to Which Are Added, Biographical Notices of Many American* (Boston, MA: C.S. Francis, 1842), 176.

[9] William Livingston, "1759-1783," New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed May 1, 2022. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/d98819f0-fde2-0133-0462-00505686a51c.

[10] Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance, 15.*

[11] George Washington, "From George Washington to William Fitzhugh, 25 March 1781," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-05197.

of the French to an ally with the French in the span of fifteen years. And not just an ally, but one who was willing to stand alongside of his recent enemy when mistakes were made. The most common conclusion to this is some form of pragmatism – he needed them, therefore he stood with them. Assuming the validity of this oversimplified conclusion, even within the context of a private letter, this presumption falls short of an explanation for what led Washington to that point.

Washington's newly found friendship with France stems from an amalgamation of three different causes. The first cause is one of pragmatism – that the army under Washington was severely lacking in supplies, ammunition, and naval power, and an alliance with France would help to supply these things. The colonial army was notoriously underequipped and constantly on the verge of falling apart. A congressional report written in 2010, presents that the total cost of the American Revolution was approximately 101 million US dollars.[12] As the war raged on and the debt continued to mount, George Washington was given increasingly diminishing returns on his continuous requests for aid. Compounding this was Washington strategic decision to winter his troops at Valley Forge where approximately 2,000 of them would perish. For example, in the winter prior to the announcement of the Franco-American alliance, Washington wrote in a circular letter:

> In a most particular manner, I flatter myself the care and attention of the States will be directed to the supply of shoes—stockings and blankets, as their expenditure from the common operations and accidents of war is far greater than that of any other articles.[13]

[12] Congressional Research Service, *Costs of Major US Wars*, by Steven Daggett, RS-22926 (June 29, 2010), 4.

[13] George Washington, "Circular to the States, 29 December 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0037.

Washington's troops were so undersupplied that there were not even enough shoes, stockings (socks), and blankets for his men in the middle of a Pennsylvania winter. As the situation in the winter worsened, news would reach Washington of the alliance. As many fellow historians would later argue, pragmatically this would mean that there would be more aid, more money, more resources, and even a navy for him which would eventually aid him in leading the Continental Army to victory at Yorktown. It is understandable, and even commendable, for Washington to graciously accept France's alliance, even with all the negative history between the two of them.

The second causality is a bit more intriguing – the excellent rapport of certain French officers in the American Army, specifically Lafayette and Duportail. While there were plenty of foreigners who signed up to fight for the American cause during the revolution (many of which came seeking fame and glory), Lafayette and Duportail served with honor and excelled in their positions. Of Lafayette, Washington would write,

> I am satisfied that you can have no views to answer by throwing out false colors, and that you possess a mind too exalted to condescend to dirty arts and low intrigues to acquire a reputation… My dear Marquis, if you will give me your company in Virginia, we will laugh at our past difficulties and the folly of others; where I will endeavor, by every civility in my power, to shew you how much and how sincerely, I am, your affectionate and obedient servant.[14]

The renown of Lafayette, in particular in the United States, even to this day, speaks volumes for the impact that his service had on the nation and its future, first commander-in-chief. Duportail, while lesser known than Lafayette, was the chief engineer of the Continental Army. He is famous for leading the construction of the siege works at Yorktown as well as helping to

[14] George Washington, "From George Washington to Major General Lafayette, 31 December 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0075.

convince Washington to take a more defensive approach to armed conflict with the British.[15] He would also be captured during the American Revolution in Charleston in May of 1780 but exchanged for British officers six months later. The actions of both of these men were influential in Washington's eventual victory and alliance with France.

The third and final reason is an ideological one. Washington's willingness to risk everything in leading the Continental Army comes from a deep belief in the ideas of the enlightenment, the revolution, and his own personal, societal betterment. Thomas Paine and John Locke were instrumental in the founding of the United States. It was their beliefs about rights, liberty, and self-governance that were influential to Washington and many of his contemporaries.[16] One of John Locke's ideals with which Washington's actions aligned is his belief about the authority of the legislators:

> The power of the legislative, being derived from the people by a positive voluntary grant and institution, can be no other than what that positive grant conveyed, which being only to make laws, and not to make legislators, the legislative can have no power to transfer their authority of making laws, and place it in other hands.[17]

The government's power to make laws stems from the people who have to follow them, and the government cannot give away the power to someone else. Great Britain had allowed the Colonies to essentially live autonomously with negligible government oversight. However, when the thirteen colonies perceived this to be slowly eroding, they increasingly began to push back. Washington, along with others, willing risked his life, livelihood, and posterity in alignment to

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[15] Norman Desmarais, *Washington's Engineer: Louis Duportail and the Creation of an Army Corps*. (Guilford, CT: Prometheus Books, 2021), 174.

[16] George Washington, "From George Washington to The States, 8 June 1783," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11404.

[17] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning the True Original Extent and End of Civil Government*. (Queen Street: Edes and Gill, 1773), 76.

this belief. These principles help shape his actions and ultimately led him to rethink and reconcile his antagonism towards France.

Since the death of George Washington in 1799, historians have attempted to build, destroy, and subjugate his mythos to fit their various agendas and perspectives by scrutinizing his life and actions through various political, personal, social, and spiritual lenses, all in an attempt to commemorate, condemn, or corroborate his life and actions. This wide range of opinions and arguments have saturated the historiographical landscape and marketplace for over the past two centuries. Yet, even with all this information and content available, there are still perspectives and concepts to be further explored and discussed, such as the underlying question of this thesis: how was it possible for George Washington to go from enemy with the French to ally with the French in the span of fifteen years?

The first biography of George Washington was written by Mason Lock Weems (or as he was commonly referred to as Parson Weems) in February of 1800, entitled *The Life of George Washington*. In this anecdotal, romanticist work, there are many unfounded and inventive stories concerning the life of Washington, including the story of the cherry tree and the prophetic dream of his mother. However, in the midst of all this deification, Weems discusses aspects of Washington's military service in the French and Indian War (the defense of Fort Necessity and the death of General Braddock) but fails to mention, with any detail, the later alliance with France during the American Revolution.[18] This omission furthers Weems' opinion that

[18] The terms "French and Indian War" and "Seven Years War" will be used interchangeably in this paper since the global conflict is known as the Seven Years War, while the part of it that took place in North America are known as the French and Indian War. M. L. Weems, *The Life of George Washington with Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honorable to Himself, and Exemplary to His Young Countrymen* (Philadelphia: Joseph Allen, 1833), 37-45.

Washington was an "example of *perfectibility* and *true greatness*" rather than a man with deficiencies or one who struggled with aligning himself with his recent foe.[19]

Weems' romanticist perspective was soon replaced by that of United States Supreme Court Justice John Marshall. Marshall wrote a five-volume biography also titled *The Life of George Washington* (1803-1807) which brought with it a Federalist, political perspective along with a reliable foundation based upon Washington's personal and U.S. government papers. Marshall's Federalist work discusses Washington's proposed offensive action during the French and Indian War and how its rejection led to his inability "to cover the frontier from the French and the Indians, who were spreading death and desolation in every quarter."[20] This book also mentioned the positive reception of Congress to the treaty with France, but gives no mention as to Washington's stance on the matter.[21] It assumes that Washington was in agreement with Congress but provides no support for that supposition. The book also details the frustration Washington had with Count D'Estaing without offering any reasons or answers, which furthers the necessity of answering the underlying thesis question.

Aaron Bancroft (father of renown American historian George Bancroft) soon offered his perspective on George Washington in his 1808 book which was once again titled *The Life of George Washington*. Bancroft, a Harvard graduate, a Congregationalist pastor, and a Massachusetts' minuteman, wrote his book as a "common man's" biography of George Washington.[22] His book was an attempt to compress and simplify the narrative of Washington

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[19] Ibid, 6.

[20] John Marshall, *The Life of George Washington*, ed. Robert K. Faulkner and Paul Carrese (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000), 21.

[21] Ibid, 142-3.

[22] Aaron Bancroft, *The Life of George Washington: Commander and Chief of the American Army through the Revolutionary War and the First President of the United States* (Boston: Philips & Sampson, 1848), iii.

into one that was easily understood and "obtained by all classes of American people."[23] It was not written to undermine or detract from superior works like Marshall's but to "display the principal character" of Washington for general consumption.[24] This biography continued to build upon the mythos of Washington for romanticist historians by once again elevating his character and emphasizing how he united "the talents of the soldier with the qualifications of the statesman, and pursu[ed], unmoved by difficulties, the noblest end by the purest means."[25] Yet, in the midst of all this praise of Washington's character, Bancroft details how there is an incorrect supposition that Washington had assassinated Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville. Bancroft understood that there were those who had heard and read about this supposed assassination and detailed how due to the hastiness of the surrender articles (which implied the murder) and the foreignness of the French language to Washington, Washington signed a document which inferred that he assassinated Jumonville (a fact that Washington would later reject, after he learned of his *faux pas*).[26] Bancroft also details the growing apprehension Washington had with the upcoming French alliance stating that "he became extremely anxious to know the force on which he might absolutely depend."[27] While he does not go into any further detail, Bancroft illustrates the necessity for an answer to this central question.

The next major perspective comes from Jared Sparks' book *The Life of George Washington* (1839) and falls historiographically somewhere in between those of Weems and Marshall. Sparks' work was the culmination of thirteen years of research and work in editing and

[23] Ibid, iii.

[24] Ibid, iii.

[25] Ibid, 218.

[26] Ibid, 18.

[27] Ibid, 204.

organizing of *The Writings of George Washington* into twelve volumes. His work, however, received a lot of criticism from the historic community for Spark's poor treatment of Washington's manuscripts that he deemed to be of little value or detrimental to the reputation of the leaders of the American Revolution. Sparks does detail how, after his capitulation at Fort Necessity, Washington had been guaranteed that he and his men would be allowed to leave unmolested. This promise was broken the next day, as they were raided on their journey by over one hundred Native Americans (an event which caused the irreparable division between Washington and one of his subordinate officers, Captain Mackay).[28] In this book, Sparks does present a sensible answer to this underlying thesis question: Washington chose to ally himself with France since it related to his own self-interest.[29] However, he does little to elaborate on this oversimplified, pragmatic conclusion.

Woodrow Wilson's, *George Washington: A Life* (1896), is another perspective of note near the end of the nineteenth century. This book, by the future president of the United States, begins to examine Washington through the progressive historical lens of his time, focusing on his personal, public, and military worlds. While Wilson's book briefly mentions the early conflicts with the French and the later alliance, it does however detail and commend Washington's neutrality towards France during the French Revolution, a stance that Wilson, himself would later imitate in his presidency.[30] In relation to this central thesis question, Wilson's focus on the later neutrality of the United States, under the then President Washington, is consistent with the consensus opinion that Washington's actions were done out of necessity and not out of personal growth or change.

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[28] Jared Sparks, *The Life of George Washington* (Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, 1839), 53-4.

[29] Ibid, 291.

[30] Woodrow Wilson, *George Washington: A Life* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896), 230.

After the events of World War I, a non-American perspective of Washington was written by George McKinnon Wrong, entitled: *Washington and His Comrades in Arms: A Chronicle of the War of Independence* (1921). Wrong, another progressive historian, claimed that Washington was unable to overcome his prejudices towards France, for he was distrustful of France due to a perceived motivation that their assistance was out of a desire to re-acquire Canada. Wrong goes so far as to call France's actions another *trojan horse*.[31] As a result of this inability to trust France, Washington would carefully watch over his newfound allies, so that they would not "come out of the wooden horse," subjugating the colonies. Wrong also includes details of how Washington projected happiness by publicly dining with his commissioned officers when news of the treaty reached them.[32] This happiness stemmed from a pragmatic root, because of the famine and devastation that the army had suffered through at Valley Forge the winter prior. Washington's acceptance of this alliance pared a careful, continuous scrutiny of France with a necessity for the soldiers and supplies of France.

In lieu of World War II, and the ongoing Cold War, the *progressive* perspective would be replaced by the *consensus* school of historical thought – an angle which would seek to personify Washington as a symbol of American values and character. It is during this consensus, historiographical period that Douglas Southall Freeman would write his *Pulitzer Prize*-winning, multivolume work, titled – *George Washington: A Biography* (1948-1957). While not a consensus historian himself, Freeman's work does share a lot of similarities with the ongoing historiographical trend. Freeman applied his "Lost Cause" Civil War interpretation to Washington, highlighting his unselfish patriotism and unassailable character. In his work,

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[31] George M. Wrong, *Washington and His Comrades in Arms: A Chronicle of the War of Independence* (New Haven: Oxford University Press, 1921), 188-90.

[32] Ibid, 193.

Freeman argues that Washington had heartfelt joy when he received the news of the alliance, even throwing a celebration for his men.[33] Freeman furthers this perspective by saying that "the alliance was a boon for which Washington scarcely had permitted himself to hope."[34] The source of this hope and joy is all the more intriguing when earlier in his work Freeman discusses the death and destruction seen at the hands of the French during the French and Indian War. This implication of personal transformation that Washington had undergone to get to the point of joy in France's alliance brings up a counter opinion to the main thesis question.

As George Washington developed into a consensus symbol and a personification of American values and the American national character, Edmund S. Morgan wrote his work titled: *The Genius of George Washington* (1980). In this study of power, Morgan argues that "the revolution created such an array of talent" that a large portion of great American heroes' careers began or culminated in the American Revolution.[35] There is none more heroic than George Washington, Morgan reasons, because he was able to utilize his "American genius" to skillfully wield his power, both military and political, to create the great nation of the United States.[36] Morgan, in particular, focuses on Washington as the General of the Continental Army and his use of the power of his station to help the United States win the Revolutionary War. In relation to his attitudes and actions towards the French, Morgan argues that Washington never stopped being wary of France, but instead worried that the alliance of the two nations could jeopardize the American quest for freedom. Morgan notes that the naval power that came from the alliance

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[33] Douglas Southall Freeman, *Washington: An Abridgment in One Volume*, ed. Richard Hartwell (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 390.

[34] Ibid, 390.

[35] Edmund S. Morgan, *The Genius of George Washington* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), 4.

[36] Ibid, 10.

with France was still woefully short of the supreme power of Great Britain.[37] Any claim that France was the reason that the United States won was highly inaccurate. *The Genius of George Washington* emphasizes that Washington used France for the benefit of the thirteen colonies but knew that France's aid alone would not ensure victory.[38]

The consensus position soon gave way to the *New Social History* trend that began to focus on minority groups, particularly the plight of African Americans, Native Americans, and women – consistent with the political turmoil of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. It also opened the door for interactions with other professions and the marriage of multiple disciplines as evidenced by Alexander DeConde's, *Entangling Alliance: Politics & Diplomacy under George Washington* (1958), William C. Stinchcombe's, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance* (1969), and Jonathan Gregory Rossie's, *The Politics of Command in the American Revolution* (1975). These three works all attempt to look at the Franco-American alliance from a political perspective (their inclusion and noteworthiness is related to their discussions of Washington). DeConde, whose work looks at the alliance from the perspective of the Washington presidency, argues that the Franco-American alliance was something that Washington moved away from by noting his isolationist tactics and treaty. He insists that the treaty was purely pragmatic.[39] Stinchcombe, who wrote his book as an attempt to understand how American leaders responded to and maintained the French alliance, contends that Washington was wary of the alliance until he saw and felt the magnitude of French aid which convinced him

[37] Ibid, 64.

[38] Ibid, 22.

[39] Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics & Diplomacy under George Washington.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1958), 26.

of the value of this alliance.[40] This *actions speaking louder than words* stance supports the pragmatic supposition. Rossie on the other hand, focuses his political assessment on the politics of leadership, arguing that factionalism shaped military and political decisions during the American Revolution. He asserts that the French alliance elongated the war, bringing Congress and the Continental Army into a stronger, more harmonious relationship.[41] For Rossie, this alliance helped reduce some of the divisions within the army and provided Washington with the resources he needed to secure the victory at Yorktown. This proposed unification reasoning continues to develop the pragmatic stance.

While each of the preceding historiographical perspectives have advanced the historiography of George Washington in some way, during each of these periods, there were authors who stood out as anomalies as they attempted to be more synthetic in their approach. The *synthetic* perspective attempted to write a more balanced opinion of Washington and delved into both his strengths and weaknesses. A key example of this is James Thomas Flexner's *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (1969), which offers one of the most well-rounded opinions of George Washington. In this synthetic approach, Flexner argues that Washington was a "fallible human being made of flesh and blood and spirit – not a statue of marble and wood. And inevitably… a great and good man."[42] Flexner's holistic depiction of Washington delves into his private and public life. He discusses some of the commander-in-chief's shortcomings such as power struggles with Rochambeau, the leaking of personal anti-French sentiments, and his

[40] William C. Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 134.

[41] Jonathan Gregory Rossie, *The Politics of Command in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1975) 203-4.

[42] James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (Boston and New York: Back Bay Books, 1994), xvi.

neutrality proclamation in 1793.[43] Flexner also emphasizes Washington's greatness – a prime example of this is done through the story of how George Washington refused to accept the kingly or dictatorlike powers that Congress was willing to give him.[44] Yet, in the midst of this synthetic approach, Flexner contends that Washington happily received the news of French alliance due to the daily fear of mutiny, the starvation of his army, the national laxity, and the lack of funds to pay his troops – adding depth to the pragmatic perspective.[45]

The next major work in the synthetic historiographical trend is Ron Chernow's *Pulitzer Prize*-winning work, *Washington: A Life* (2011). Chernow crafts a clear narrative of Washington's life. He does not shy away from things like Washington's youthful emotions (on which Chernow would write that Washington "was prone to tears as well as a temper"[46]). These emotions, he argues, would later be honed by Washington to "exert his will and inspire and motivate people."[47] Chernow also discusses Washington more negative attributes: like his cravings for money, status, and fame. Chernow, however, is not without his compliments, writing that Washington was "that rare general who was great between battles and not just during them."[48] In relation to the central question of this research, Chernow's work contrasts Washington's infamy, at the hands of the French for the supposed assassination of Jumonville, with his delight for their alliance, even throwing a party for his soldiers upon hearing of the news. While Chernow does not directly discuss the reasons as to how he went from enemy to friend, he does make a unique point by discussing the rise and fall of General Horatio Gates as

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[43] Ibid, 139-40; 152-3; 284.

[44] Ibid, 209.

[45] Ibid, 133-4.

[46] Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), xx.

[47] Ibid, xx.

[48] Ibid, 457.

part of the underlying reasoning behind Washington's joy. Washington had been fearful that he might lose his position, Chernow contends, but with the catastrophic losses at Camden by Gates, Washington's position was now secure.[49] It is from this synthetic position that Chernow argues that Washington was "never a perfect man," but he was "the indispensable man of the American Revolution."[50]

Another key synthetic work is Peter Stark's *Young Washington* (2018). Stark's biography focuses on Washington's early life, detailing how he was ambitious, temperamental, vain, and stubborn. Stark uses stories to explain how Washington at a younger age was quick to erupt in explosive anger when his plans were thwarted.[51] In reference to the central question, Stark argues that Washington's time during the American Revolution transformed him into a leader that could work with his enemies. Washington had to listen to the pleas of dying soldiers, hear the requests of frontiers men and women for aid, see the dozens of brutally murdered homesteaders, and watch children being captured by Native Americans. Yet gradually Washington had to learn how to overcome his youthful inhibitions and channel his drive, passion, and anger. Starks puts it this way, "rather than lashing out at whatever obstacle blocked [Washington's] self-advancement, he now channeled that drive and passion and anger for the greater good, shaping it into something powerful and useful."[52]

Another perspective of note is Alexis Coe's *You Never Forget Your First* (2020). Coe a historian and research curator at the New York Public Library, wrote her biography from a female perspective. Her book stems from a love of Washington and out of the jarring realization

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[49] Ibid, 313-22

[50] Ibid, 812.

[51] Peter Stark, *Young Washington* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018), 101.

[52] Ibid, 416.

that women rarely if ever wrote about Washington.[53] Coe's biography adds a unique perspective on this central thesis question, for Coe notes:

> [F]or all Washington's talk of the 'American Union and Patriotism,' his arsenal of personal grievances cannot be underestimated. He had grown and changed over the previous sixteen years, but at his core, he was still a man eager to be recognized.[54]

She details how after the Battle of Monongahela, Washington had four bullet holes in his coat, two horses shot out from underneath him, and his commanding officer killed. Yet even in this defeat, his prestige grew to the point that he was given the task of establishing a line of defense along the western border.[55] This command would soon, however, fizzle out with the French burning Fort Duquesne, but Washington would continue to look for ways to elevate his status. Coe argues that this hunger is what led him to accept the commission as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, and when he was faced with chance to beat Britain by aligning himself with France, he took it. Coe believes that Washington's actions were self-motivated and out of a desire to be recognized.

The overwhelming consensus of these perspectives in the larger historiographical narrative, is that Washington was overwhelmed by pragmatism which allowed him to overcome any antagonism he had as a British citizen and colonial officer towards the French when his country allied themselves with France. These evaluations consistently state the same result without expanding the reasoning or thinking behind this change for Washington. Historians universally accept the immense impact that the Franco-American alliance had upon the Colonies but fail to delineate the interpersonal nature of that alliance, particularly with George

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[53] Coe notes, "No woman had written an adult biography of George Washington in more than forty years, and no woman historians has written one in far longer." Alexis Coe, *You Never Forget Your First* (New York: Penguin Books, 2020), xxvii.

[54]Ibid, 53.

[55]Ibid, 24-5.

Washington. It is the journey to this change that is incredibly significant, due to its core causality in the emergence of the United States of America. Had Washington not been able to fight alongside the French, the American Revolution might have ended differently. This is an area that is lacking in the overall discussion of George Washington. Consequently, this paper will attempt to find out more about how Washington was able to overcome his antagonism, in order to offer an alternative perspective and broaden the conversation surrounding the colonial perspective on the Franco-American alliance.

There is an ancient saying that states that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" – an adage which explains that a common enemy can be a powerful, unifying factor for people. Historically, people have assumed, argued, and attested to this being the causality for the Franco-American alliance. France loathed Great Britain and was still seething after its losses during the Seven Years War. This anger would lead them to quietly support a rebellion within the British Empire for many years. After, sustainability was demonstrated to them (via the Battle of Saratoga), the French would pronounce their alliance and return to open warfare with the British. Many of their actions were done in an attempt to regain lost territory – the discussed second attempt at the liberation of Quebec and the conflicts in the West Indies. While for the United States, the alliance with France was seen as an opportunity to receive aid during an elongating conflict. As resources continued to diminish and its major ports stayed blockaded, the fledgling Continental Congress would, with increasing regularity, implore European nations for aid. Times were dire and the Colonies were willing to beg, borrow, deceive, and even commission privateers to aid in their quest for freedom and resources. France, in particular, received multiple emissaries such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Jay, all in hopes that their pleas would bring about aid. However, things eventually led to the absolute best-case scenario

when France entered into an alliance with the United States. This alliance brought with it a plethora of resources, troops, a navy, and global consideration that the colonists desperately needed.

Under Washington, this alliance with the sworn enemy of his previous country of allegiance, and by extension his own, was greeted with celebrations and festivities for him and his troops. Previously, Washington had been publicly humiliated by France when a journal of his was captured and then published (to the ridicule of the French), had been accused of assassinating a Frenchman, and had seen first-hand the atrocities that France had committed against his fellow colonists. Yet, he celebrates their alliance. This alliance with France meant that there was a mounting chance for a decisive victory against Great Britain. The typical assumption is that the causation of these revelries and later use of this alliance stems from a purely, pragmatic stance that out of necessity he overcame any animosity towards France, but again, this falls short of fully encompassing the situation or explaining his actions. As posited by this research, Washington's actions were done as an amalgamation of several different causes.

In order to answer the main thesis question that addresses these multiple causes, the following organization of chapters is described. The first chapter will explore George Washington's actions during the French and Indian War (the American part of the Seven Year's War) and how the events that transpired there caused resentment and animosity between Washington and France. It will attempt to delineate the growing animosity by chronologically working through the progression of events. In so doing, this chapter will attempt to answer the following sub-questions: What events developed animosity in Washington towards the French? In what ways did those events impact Washington's personal opinions?

The second chapter will explore the possible pragmatism of George Washington's future decision to ally with France. It will pursue the exploration of this topic by examining the communication of Washington with his peers and the Continental Congress. It will attempt to answer the following sub-questions: Was there any other alternative method to receiving the necessary supplies? Is pragmatism the main underlying reason to Washington's actions or are there better alternatives?

The third chapter will investigate the impact that the rapport of French officers in the Continental Army had on Washington's ability to reconcile his antagonism towards the French prior to their alliance. This chapter will delve into the actions of French officers who served with Washington and his correspondence with them and his peers. In attempting to explore this impact, this chapter will ask the following sub-questions: What role, if any, did the actions of French Continental officers have on Washington? How did the actions of officers, like Lafayette and Duportail, positively influence Washington? How did the negative actions of officers, like Preudhomme de Borre and Philippe du Coudray, negatively influence Washington?

The fourth chapter will examine the influence that Washington's ideologies had on his actions towards the French. Washington's actions are based upon his beliefs and this chapter will attempt to establish this correlation by looking at his opinions on the Enlightenment, the Revolution, and his own personal social improvement. This will be done by looking at his writings and his journals to illuminate his beliefs. In attempting to prove this correlation, this chapter will ask the following sub-questions: What were Washington's beliefs? How did his early experiences shape future actions? How did his actions align with his beliefs?

The conclusion will be a synthesis of the answers found in chapters two, three, four and five in an attempt to assess the thesis that Washington was able to reconcile his antagonism

towards the French due to an amalgamation of pragmatism, the rapport of certain French officers in the American Army, and his personal beliefs. Observations from this research should provide: a geo-political object lesson on how nations could work with enemies (potential allies), a methodology on how to overcome preconceived perceptions, and an historical prescription on how to deal with inter-religious and international conflict.

## Chapter 1: "The Loosing Order": Animosity from the French and Indian War

On October 31, 1753, a twenty-one-year-old George Washington was commissioned by the Virginian Lieutenant Governor Robert Dinwiddie to investigate allegations that the French were building forts on colonial Virginia and Ohio Company land. If found to be true, then Washington was, by order of the British Crown, to:

> require of them peaceably to depart, and not to persist in such unlawful proceedings, and if, notwithstanding your admonitions, they do still endeavor to carry on any such unlawful and unjustifiable designs, we do hereby strictly charge, and command you, to drive them off by force of arms.[1]

To ensure and validate this directive, instead of sending an army, Governor Dinwiddie gave Washington a letter to deliver to the commander of the French forces on the Ohio in an attempt to keep the fragile peace which had existed since the end of King George's War (1744-1748).[2] Dinwiddie understood that while the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle restored all conquered territories to their pre-war owners, it failed to clarify who rightfully owned the Ohio River Valley. Both the French and British settlers had claimed this land and had in the past five years been reinforcing their assertion that the land was theirs.[3] British colonists, as part of the Ohio Company, had received a land grant for the land in question from the Crown and sent explorers and traders like George Croghan, Thomas Cresap, and Christopher Gist into the area to help legitimize their claim and aid in its settlement.[4] Contrastingly, the French governor, the Marquis de Duquesne,

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[1] W. W. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 1, *7 July 1748–14 August 1755*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 57.

[2] This letter was essentially a "cease and desist" proclamation that was written by Richard Corbin, Philip Ludwell, and William Fairfax in hopes of stopping the impeding confrontation between the French and British colonists over the land between the Ohio Rivers. Washington was also given £150 to cover his expenses. Ibid, 57-8.

[3] For the French this land and its native inhabitants was an essential part of their hold on the American fur trade, while the British saw this fertile land to ensure their continued wealth and growth. William John Eccles, *The French in North America, 1500-1783* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 198.

[4] This land grant was given to the Ohio Company by King George II for approximately 500,000 acres in the Ohio Valley between the Kanawha and the Monongahela Rivers. Emilius O. Randall, *History of Ohio: The Rise and Progress of an American State*, vol. 1. (New York: The Century History Company, 1912), 216.

attempted to validate the French authority over this land by ordering the construction of four forts in the Ohio River Valley.[5] While the actions of the French seem more drastic and definitive, they were necessary to protect their claim from the vast number of British colonists.[6] It is from the clash of these two beliefs that Governor Dinwiddie, a member of the Ohio Company, colonially commissioned Washington to resolve the ownership of the land.[7]

Despite both being youthful and diplomatically inexperienced, Washington was entrusted with this mission. That trust came as a result of his own personal involvement in the Ohio Company and the nepotism within the leadership of said business, as two of Washington's older half-brothers, Lawrence and Augustine, were founding members.[8] A second reason for this trust was his experience as a land surveyor where for the past four years he had worked for William Fairfax and Culpepper County, Virginia completing over two hundred surveys.[9] Thirdly, Washington was perceived by Governor Dinwiddie to be a mature wise young man.[10] While living in Barbados during his childhood, Washington had been given the opportunity to dine with

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[5] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Publishing, 2001), 27, 32; Walter O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 10-11.

[6] In 1750, there were approximately 55,000 French settlers and 1.3 million British colonists in North America. The French knew that they were outnumbered almost twenty-four to one and hoped to use military supremacy and alliances with Native Americans as a means of keeping the British settlers out of the Ohio River Valley. John J. Miller and Mark Molesky, *Our Oldest Enemy* (New York: Random House, 2004), 19.

[7] Prior to Washington's commissioning, Dinwiddie had written to the crown saying, "I hope you will think it necessary to prevent the French taking possession of the lands on the Ohio, so contiguous to our settlements, or indeed in my private opinion they ought to be prevented making any settlements to the westward of our present possessions." He essentially argues that the French were moving in on British land but fails to mention that the land was given to his company to make money on. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 1, 57.

[8] Kate Mason Rowland, "The Ohio Company," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 1, no 4 (April 1893): 197.

[9] Chernow, *Washington*, 10, 19; *"*George Washington's Professional Surveys*," Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/ 02-01-02-0004.

[10] Chernow, *Washington,* 31-2; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 41.

Dinwiddie and subsequently impressed him.[11] Dinwiddie would later refer to him as "a person of distinction."[12] A fourth reason was that due to his physical appearance and riding ability, Dinwiddie believed that Washington was physically prepared for the hard journey of this expedition which was approximately 500 miles of snow and ice, with sparse inhabitants and respites.[13] Finally, Washington himself even provided a reason as to how he got the job in a later letter to his brother, "I believe few or none would have undertaken it."[14] He believed that he was given this opportunity because no one else wanted it. As a result of all these reasons, Washington was entrusted with a letter that would change the course of American history as well as stir up within him a sense of animosity towards the French.

Such was Washington's personal sense of urgency to complete his objective that he set out on his mission the exact same day he received his commission. Along the way, Washington enlisted the services of Jacob Van Braam (French interpreter), Christopher Gist (Navigator), John Davidson (Native America interpreter), Barnaby Currin, John McGuier, Henry Steward, and William Jenkins.[15] The group made fairly good progress reaching Logstown (a Native American settlement near the forks of the Ohio River), a mere twenty-five days after the start of their journey.[16] At Logstown, Washington met with the Seneca tribal chief Tanacharison – known commonly as the Half-King. The Half-King had an ineradicable dislike for the French,

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[11] Donald Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, *1748 – 1765* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 34.

[12] Ibid, 34.

[13] W. W. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington*, Confederation Series, vol. 5, *1 February 1787–31 December 1787*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 516; Chernow, *Washington, 3*2.

[14] George Washington, "From George Washington to Augustine Washington, 2 August 1755," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0176.

[15] Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, 130, 133.

[16] Logstown was located about 18 miles above the Forks of the Ohio on the northern bank of the Ohio River. It was one of the main Iroquois trading villages in the Ohio Valley. Ibid, 132.

who he claimed had "murdered, cooked and consumed his father" motivating him to align with the British by signing a treaty of friendship in 1752.[17] By all indications the meeting of these two men went surprisingly well and by the end of their meeting, Tanacharison had given Washington a Native American name, Conotocarious – the same name that had been bestowed upon his great-grandfather, John Washington.[18] The next day, Washington addressed the Native American council and requested that they provide him with an escort of young warriors on his journey to the French commandant. This request was met with delay, and after Washington pressed them on the issue, he received four escorts.[19] Washington's four escorts were the Half-King, Jeskakake, White Thunder, and the Hunter, or Guyasuta as he would later be known. Washington had planned on leveraging both the personal good will and general hatred of the French by the Half-King to muster a formidable force to help bring about the completion of his mission. Instead, Washington had uncovered a larger issue with the small force he had been given: the deep-seated ambivalence that the Native Americans had towards their British allies.[20] He rationalized this failure as simply, "a greater number might give the French suspicion of some bad design, and cause them to be treated rudely" and continued towards his destination.[21]

Five days later, Washington's party arrived at the now French trading post of Venango, located where the French creek meets the Allegheny River.[22] Washington details in his journal how after he saw the French colors flying here, he "repaired to it" thus demonstrating his belief

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[17] Chernow, *Washington,* 37; Randall, *History of Ohio*, vol. 1, 216-217.

[18] Chernow, *Washington*, 34.

[19] Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, 140-3.

[20] Chernow, *Washington*, 35.

[21] Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, 142.

[22] Howard Glenn Clark, "John Fraser, West Pennsylvania Frontiersman," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 38, no 3-4. (Fall 1955): 83.

that the French were trespassers or usurpers on British soil who needed to be removed.[23] Once the colors were removed, he requested to know where the commander resided and had his first recorded conversation and meeting with the French. This meeting was with Captain Philippe Thomas de Joncaire, who was the son of a French officer and Seneca woman. As a man who was raised in both world, Joncaire was, as Douglas Southall Freeman puts it, "the man whom the French Indians of the region looked for guidance… he was one of the ablest and most resourceful of the French spokesmen in Canada."[24] So, when Joncaire met with Washington and his entourage, he took the opportunity to delay their mission in an attempt to woo the Seneca Chief, and so Joncaire informed Washington that while he was in charge of the Ohio, the commander that he was looking for was at the next fort – Fort Le Boeuf.[25] In a feigned act of hospitality, he preceded to invite Washington and his entourage to dine with him that evening before they continued on their journey.[26] Warily, Washington accepted the invitation but declined to bring the Native Americans. At the dinner, Joncaire and his fellow officers drank freely from the bountiful wine and soon revealed the reason as to their occupation of Venango. As Washington would record,

> They told me it was their absolute design to take possession of the Ohio… They pretended to have an undoubted right to the river from a discovery made by one La Sol 60 years ago and use of this expedition is to prevent our settling on the river of waters of it.[27]

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[23] Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, 144.

[24] Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography*, vol.1, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 303.

[25] O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks*, 4-5.

[26] Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, 144.

[27] Ibid, 144.

Washington also learned the locations of four newly erected forts and the knowledge that about 150 men were manning each of them.

Before Washington and his party could leave the next morning, the weather turned sour and halted their departure. Joncaire used this opportunity to summon the Half-King, and confronted Washington in front of the Half-King why he was not included in the festivities the night before. Washington attempted to sidestep this issue and explained, "I did not think their company agreeable, as I had heard [Joncaire] say a good deal in dispraise of Indians in General."[28] Joncaire ignored the remark and continued to use the opportunity to continue to woo the Half-King by presenting him with several small gifts and copious amounts of alcohol. Seeing his native ally seduced in front of his very own eyes was highly troublesome for young Washington. His adversary, Joncaire, was actively working against him by undermining the very relationships and goals his mission required. It was then that Washington knew he had underestimated Jocaire and was out of his depth when it came to Native American affairs. Washington would describe this feeling later in his journal by saying, "I was desirous of giving no more opportunity than could be avoided."[29] However, the problem continued, for the very next day the Half-King requested that Washington's party stay one more day so that he could offer the French a Wampum Belt, to which Washington begrudgingly agreed.[30]

When Washington was finally able to leave that evening, Jocaire sent with him a party of four French soldiers to accompany them on their trip to Fort Le Boeuf (a visible reminder to Washington over the next five days of both what it was like to be bested and that the French

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[28] Ibid, 146.

[29] Ibid, 146.

[30] This wampum was used a sign to disavowal once dependence on another nation. Essentially making it a letter of disassociation between the Seneca tribe and the French. Freeman, *George Washington*, vol. 1, 296.

were not going to go away without a fight). When his now sixteen-person party finally reached the crude, four building structure of Fort Le Boeuf on the evening of December 11, they were met with indifference.[31] Washington, the leader of this party, was to the French, just some young British colonist with no significant relations or experience and therefore not worthy of their time or concern. Even with his military escort, this act of apathy was a significant affront to Washington, his mission, and ultimately the British government. The next morning, when Washington was granted an obligatory reception from the fort's aged commander Captain Jacques Legardeur de St. Pierre, Washington was stonewalled.[32] The commander took the letter and then requested for several days to respond to the letter. He dismissed Washington, leaving him and his party to their own devices. As Washington later recorded, this delay was just another ploy to woo the Half-King. In his journal he describes the situation, by writing,

> I found many plots concerted to retard the Indian's business, and prevent their returning with me, I endeavored all in my power to frustrate their schemes, and hurry them on to execute their intended design… The Half-King told me that he offered the Wampum to the Commander, who evaded taking it, and made many fair promises of love and friendship; said he wanted to live in peace and trade amicably with them; as a proof of which, he would send some goods immediately down to Logstown for them.[33]

Washington was once again faced with the reality that the French were more concerned with winning the allegiance of the Half-King than any requests from a king an ocean away. This experience of devaluation of his person and his mission would engender his growing animosity towards the French.

On the evening of December 14, Washington was finally presented with an answer from St. Pierre. The response in the form of another letter made it abundantly clear that the French

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[31] William M. Darlington, ed., *Christopher Gist's Journals with Historical, Geographical, and Ethnological Notes and Biographies of His Contemporaries*, (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1893), 83.

[32] Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, 148.

[33] Ibid, 150.

were not intimidated by the British and retained every right to their claimed land along the Ohio Rivers.[34] "As to the summons you send me to retire," St. Pierre wrote, "I do not think myself obliged to obey it."[35] After waiting and watching his compatriots and allies slowly being seduced by the French, this dismissive remark ignited a raw zeal within Washington to soon return and root out these scheming trespassing Frenchmen before any more damage could be done. However, before he could set out the next morning, St. Pierre used, as Washington would later describe it, "every scheme that the devil and man could invent, to set our Indians at variance with us, to prevent their going 'till after our departure."[36] Surfacing within him a great deal of anxiety, Washington wrote that "I can't say that ever in my life I suffered so much anxiety as I did in this affair."[37] While he needed to get home to complete his mission, Washington concluded that the French needed to be driven out by force. Washington eventually convinced the Half-King to leave and set off towards Williamsburg, Virginia. So impassioned was Washington that the journey which had taken him month and half to originally make, was now made in less than a month.

Upon his arrival to Williamsburg, George Washington met with Governor Dinwiddie on January 16, 1755 and presented to him the French commander's letter, his personal verbal account, and his journal detailing the events surrounding the expedition. As a result of this meeting, Dinwiddie initiated the publication and circulation of Washington's journal, even

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[34] Stark, *Young Washington*, 56.

[35] Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, 151.

[36] Ibid, 151.

[37] Ibid, 152.

sending a copy back to the British Parliament as proof of the French malevolence.[38] Washington was personally rewarded for his actions with £50 and a military commission as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Virginia militia, but he had to recruit his own soldiers (a task which Washington would quickly prove himself capable, for within a week he had personally persuaded twenty-five people to enlist).[39] By April 2, 1754, Washington had amassed 160 green recruits and a directive from Governor Dinwiddie to "to march what soldiers you have enlisted immediately to the Ohio."[40] Not only was Washington to move his new soldiers, but he was further commanded to "act on the defensive, but in case any attempts are made to obstruct the works or interrupt our settlements by any persons whatsoever you are to restrain all such offenders, and in case of resistance to make prisoners of or kill and destroy them."[41] This simple order would prove to be pivotal in Washington's military career.

When it comes to assessing the start of Washington's military career and highlighting the resulting animosity, a modern, major, contextual issue arises which stems from a debate over the authenticity of Washington's subsequent journal. This second journal which covers his first military command (March 3 – June 27, 1754) is contested due the failure to locate a primary source for this journal.[42] The earliest records of the text in question are preserved through a

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[38] The journal would be published in various colonial newspapers (i.e. Maryland *Gazette* on 21 and 28 of March 1754 and the Boston *Gazette* from April 16 to May 21, 1754) helping kindle the spark which would eventually lead to the French and Indian War. Ibid, 161; Chernow, *Washington*, 38.

[39] Freeman, *Washington,* vol. 1, 336.

[40] Robert Dinwiddie, "To George Washington from Robert Dinwiddie, 15 March 1754," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0038.

[41] Robert Dinwiddie, *The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Virginia, 1751-1758*, vol. 1. (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1883), 59.

[42] A proponent of the inauthentic perspective concerning the journal comes from Douglas Southall Freeman who concluded that the text is "suspect in all that concerns British Policy and Washington's behavior in the Jumonville affair." Freeman, *George Washington,* vol. 1, 541. Donald H. Kent, however, disagrees arguing that, "even though the journal may have some discrepancies with Washington's letters and with what is known of the expedition from other sources, these can be explained without assuming editorial tampering or falsification." Donald

contemporary French translation.[43] This translation originated from a copy of Washington's captured or discovered journal from the Battle of Great Meadows which was sent to Jacob-Nicolas Moreau and contains both Washington's words and Moreau's negative interpretations of them.[44] The publication of this replica was titled *Mémoire contenant le précis des faits, avec leurs piéces justificatives, pour server de réponse aux 'Oberservations' envoyées par les ministers d'Angleterre, dans les cours de l'Europe* and was printed to direct "public opinion against the English by casting dispersion upon Washington, who was in command of the small body of colonial troops and Indian allies at the Battle of Great Meadows."[45] This French translation was then captured and translated back into English by a Mr. H. Gaine in 1757 under the title *A Memorial Containing a Summary View of Facts with Their Authorities, in Answer to Observations Sent by the English Ministry to the Courts of Europe.*[46] It is this second translation back into English that is often included in various collections of Washington's words.[47] However, since American historians have been compiling Washington works, there has been a discovery of a variant contemporary copy of Washington's journal, in French, in the Contrecoeur

H. Kent, ed., "Contrecoeur's Copy of George Washington's Journal for 1754," *Pennsylvania History* 19, no 4. (January 1952): 8.

[43] Kent, "Contrecoeur's Copy," 1.

[44] For more information about Jacob-Nicolas Moreau see Keith Michael Baker, "Controlling French History: The Ideological Arsenal of Jacob-Nicolas Moreau," in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 59-85.

[45] Theodore F. Dwight, "The Journals of Washington," *The Magazine of American History with Notes and Queries* 6, no 2. (February 1881): 84.

[46] H. Gaine, trans., *A Memorial Containing a Summary View of Facts with Their Authorities, in Answer to Observations Sent by the English Ministry to the Courts of Europe*, (New York: Bible and Crown, 1757), iii.

[47] Washington himself commented on this re-translated journal saying that, "In regard to the journal, I can only observe in general, that I kept no regular one during that expedition; rough minutes of occurrences I certainly took, and find them as certainly and strangely metamorphosed, some parts left out, which I remember were entered, and many things added that never were thought of…" Sparks, ed., *The Writings of George Washington*, vol. 2, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1885), 463.

Papers at the Archives du Seminaire de Québec, Université Laval.[48] This manuscript contains a preface dated September 8, 1754 from the Marquis Duquesne, the governor of New France and provides his scathing review of Washington's words and actions.[49] This discovery along with the inclusion of this letter has seemingly ended any debate regarding the veracity of the journal. Regardless of the authenticity of this journal, its presence demonstrates the growing antagonism between Washington and France.

Washington's second mission into the Ohio River Valley solidified his animosity towards his mother nation's habitual enemy. As he began to move his troops into the Ohio, at the beginning of April, he received disastrous news; a French force of 1,000 men had descended upon a British fort being constructed at the forks of the Ohio River (modern day Pittsburgh) and forced its surrender.[50] This news prompted within him a "glowing zeal… to assert the rights and privileges of our king… and rescue from the invasions of a usurping enemy, our majesty's property, his dignity, and lands."[51] He rattled off highly spirited letters to Lieutenant Governor James Hamilton of Pennsylvania and Governor Horatio Sharpe of Maryland requesting for reinforcements. Evidently, the letters of this young commander with no military experience worked for he persuaded both governors to either dispatch troops or send funds to the cause. The same passion that motivated Washington to write these letters would fuel his actions during the first military conflict of the French and Indian War.

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[48] Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, 151.

[49] Kent, "Contrecoeur's Copy," 2-4.

[50] This fort would be later finished by the French and rename it Fort Duquesne, after the governor of New France. Chernow, *Washington*, 40.

[51] George Washington, "From George Washington to Horatio Sharpe, 24 April 1754," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0044.

On the evening of May 24, Washington received distressing news that a French detachment had crossed the Youghiogheny River, a mere eighteen miles away, intent on confronting Washington's forces.[52] With this news, he decided to establish a defensive position in a place called Great Meadows. The thought of open engagement excited Washington, for he wrote to Governor Dinwiddie with sense of juvenile bravado saying, "we have with natures assistance made a good intrenchment and by clearing the bushes out of these meadows prepared a charming field for an encounter."[53] However that same evening, Washington's sentries heard rustling noises outside their camp and fired at them. The source of this disturbance was never discovered, but the incident flustered an untested Washington and convinced him to switch to a more aggressive stance. Over the next couple of days, as more intelligence on the ever-eminent arrival of the French trickled in, this waiting period further predisposed Washington to an act of aggression. So, when news reached him on the evening of the 27th, from his native ally, the Half King, that the French had been spotted a mere six miles away, he along with forty of his men would march through "a heavy rain, and in a night as dark as pitch" to reach their ally's camp by the next morning.[54] Upon their arrival and brief council of war, it was decided that their combined force would surround and hopefully force a surrender from the enemy. Ultimately, things would not go according to plan, as the French would spot their advance and unleash a hasty volley of bullets.[55] However, Washington's troops returned fire and after fifteen minutes of gunfire the skirmish was over, and the French had been routed. In a later letter to his brother,

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[52] Gaine, trans., *A Memorial*, 80.

[53] George Washington, "From George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 27 May 1754," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0053.

[54] Gaine, trans., *A Memorial*, 82; George Washington, "From George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 29 May 1754," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0054.

[55] Freeman, *Washington,* vol. 1, 372.

Washington would gleefully describe his feelings on the battle, "I can with truth assure you, I heard bullets whistle and believe me there was something charming in the sound."[56] The casualty report showed the death of ten Frenchmen and one Englishman as well as the capture of twenty-one French soldiers.[57] However, what caused this negligible battle to develop into a worldwide incident was the death of Ensign Joseph Coulon de Villiers Sieur de Jumonville.

What makes Jumonville's death so significant is that he was on his own diplomatic mission to the British to demand that they vacate the Ohio River Valley. While Washington makes no mention of this knowledge prior to interrogating the prisoners from the battle, the French consider his death to be an assassination of their ambassador.[58] They claimed that during the battle "M. de Jumonville made a sign that he had a letter from his commander; hereupon the fire ceased, and [the colonial force] surrounded the French officer, in order to hear it. [Washington] immediately order the summons to be read, and, as it was reading… the English assassinated him."[59] While Washington never details how Jumonville died, a private, John Shaw, would later blame the Half-King for Jumonville's death. In his account, the Half-King "took his tomahawk and split the head of the French Captain having first asked if he was an Englishman and having been told he was a French man. He then took out his brains and washed his hands with them and then scalped him."[60] What further complicated this issue and exacerbated Washington's growing animosity was the fact that Washington would later sign a French

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[56] George Washington, "From George Washington to Augustine Washington, 31 May 1754," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0058.

[57] Gaine, trans., *A Memorial*, 83.

[58] Ibid, 84.

[59] Ibid, 13.

[60] William L. McDowell Jr., ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754-1765*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 4-5.

document stating that he had assassinated Jumonville – an accusation that he would oppose for the rest of his life. Regardless of who killed Jumonville, his death was a point of contention for Washington and a personal wedge of ill-feelings towards the French.

This incident, at what is now referred to as Jumonville Glen, forced Washington to make a decision: did he accidentally allow an ambassador to be killed along with some of his entourage or were these Frenchmen lying and now his prisoners of war?[61] While it was plausible that they were simply who they said they were, the events surrounding their capture and Washington's personal animosity towards the French convinced him otherwise. Washington believed that they were his prisoners of war and as a result, had them sent under guard on foot to Governor Dinwiddie.[62] He would further elaborate in his journal,

> Instead of coming as an ambassador, publicly, and in an open manner, they came secretly and sought after the most hidden retreat, more like deserters than ambassadors in such retreat they encamped, and remained hid for whole days together, and that, no more than five miles from us: from thence they sent spies to reconnoiter our camp… Besides an ambassador has princely attendants; whereas this was only a simple petty *French* officer; an ambassador has no need of spies, his character being always sacred. And seeing their intention was so good, why did they tarry two days at five miles distance from us without acquainting me with the summons or at least, with something that related to the embassy?[63]

Washington took the events of the rustling outside their camp, the location of the French soldiers, as well as their lackadaisical approach to visiting him, and synthesized them together to form a conclusion that was in line with his conception of Frenchmen. The French were, in all of his experiences, liars, manipulators, and knaves. Therefore, he concluded that they must be frauds with some ulterior motive at this time – even cautioning the Governor against listening to

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[61] Gaine, trans., *A Memorial*, 85.

[62] Ibid, 85.

[63] Ibid, 84-5

their "smooth stories."[64] In addition, the Half-King agreed with Washington's decision saying that, "their intentions were evil, and that is was pure pretense, that they never intended to come to us but as enemies."[65] Washington's experiences and beliefs were now unequivocally influencing his actions.

Aware that the French would soon hear of the conflict and retaliate, Washington vowed to not "give up one inch of what we have gained" and ordered his soldiers to further entrench themselves by building a crude circular stockade at Great Meadows. [66] This backwoods barrier, later dubbed Fort Necessity, was covered with bark and animal skins and could only house nine small cannons and about sixty to seventy men.[67] To accommodate for the rest of his soldiers, Washington had his men dig trenches and erected earthen breastworks around the fort. However, despite all these fortifications, Fort Necessity was built in a soft, boggy valley with an elevated forest surrounding it. Washington was convinced that this flimsy fortress could withstand against a much larger French force, ultimately renouncing the Half-King as a French spy after he counseled him against staying there.[68]

On the morning of July 3, 1754, Washington learned that a large French force was coming, led by Captain Louis Coulon de Villers the older brother of Jumonville, who along with his men was infuriated by the actions of Washington.[69] By late morning, they descended upon

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[64] George Washington, "From George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 29 May 1754," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0056.

[65] Gaine, trans., *A Memorial*, 85.

[66] George Washington, "From George Washington to Joshua Fry, 29 May 1754," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0057.

[67] Chernow, *Washington*, 47.

[68] Gaine, trans., *A Memorial*, 95.

[69] De Villiers and his men stopped at the place where his brother was killed on the morning of the battle. They discovered there that the British had failed to bury the bodies of their compatriots, fueling their rage as they marched on Washington and his men. Chernow, *Washington*, 47.

Fort Necessity with an irregular formation (an oblique angle to the fort) and began a barrage of the fort from the edge of the woods a mere sixty yards away.[70] De Villers commanded that his men take cover and keep their enemy pinned in the fort. He knew that while this strategy would result in a slower victory, it would ensure that he was victorious. By that afternoon his victory was guaranteed, a torrential rain began to fall soaking Washington's men and their gunpower. By the end of the day, the fort was, as historian Ron Chernow would put it, "a horrific swamp of mangled bodies, lying in blood and rain."[71] The French had killed or wounded approximately one hundred of Washington's troops, compared to their three dead and seventeen wounded.[72] This conflict would further be compounded by the disintegrating discipline of the British soldiers who proceeded to break into the fort's rum supply.[73] It was as if Washington had commanded his troops from one "massacre" to another. Just as dusk began to fall the French commander beseeched Washington to surrender and offered safe conduct to any British officer who wish to discuss terms. Lacking both discipline and dry gunpower, Washington had no other choice but to surrender. He sent his French interpreter Jacob Van Braam to discuss the terms of capitulation.

These terms of capitulation caused Washington more grief than any other experience during the French and Indian War. While the terms were more than generous to Washington, allowing him and his troops to leave the fort unharmed with their arms, goods, and colors, they contained one phrase that pinned responsibility for the death of Jumonville on Washington. While it does not take a French scholar to read the word "*assassiné"* and know what it means, Washington claims that

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[70] Edward G. Lengel, *General George Washington: A Military Life* (New York: Random House, 2005), 42.

[71] Chernow, *Washington*, 47.

[72] Washington would later exaggerate the number of French deaths to more than three hundred, portraying the battle as more of a stalemate. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 1, 159-164.

[73] Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 63.

> We were willfully, or ignorantly, deceived by our interpreter in regard to the word assassination, I do aver, and will to my dying moment; so, will every officer that was present. The interpreter was a Dutchman, little acquainted with the English tongue, therefore might not advert to the tone and meaning of the word in English; but whatever his motives were for doing, certain it is, he called it *death*, or *loss*, of the Sieur Jumonville. So, we received and so we understood it, until to our great surprise and mortification, we found it otherwise in a literal translation.[74]

When Van Braam returned with the terms, Washington and the other officers strained to read it, as one officer would later recount: "We could scarcely keep the candlelight to read them… they were wrote in a bad hand, on wet and blotted paper, so no person could read them but Van Braam who had heard them from the mouth of the French officer."[75] Regardless of whether or not Washington understood what he was signing, he signed the document and from those simple pen strokes he moved from celebrity to notoriety. Washington was now branded throughout Europe as belligerent and an assassin who murdered a man on a peaceful mission.[76] If there was any doubt as to the animosity between Washington and the French, the consequences of the signing of this document remove any reservation.

A dejected Washington returned to Williamsburg with his men, and upon his arrival, he is confronted with the restructuring of the Virginia Regiment with a captain now being the top rank.[77] Instead of accepting this insulting demotion from his colonel's rank, he chose to resign his commission and returned to his home. However, in the following weeks, his alienation gradually changed to exaltation. So sharp was this reversal of opinions, that he was actually paid a special tribute for his gallant behavior in the defense of his country.[78] His miserable defeat had

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[74] Jackson, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington,* vol. 1, 170.

[75] Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 1, 168.

[76] Chernow, *Washington*, 49.

[77] Ibid, 50.

[78] Freeman, *Washington,* vol. 1, 432.

been reinterpreted to be seen as a heroic defense against insurmountable odds. Washington was once again a hero, except in France.

He continued as a civilian for the rest of that year eventually moving into his permanent residence, Mount Vernon. However, he was not long for the non-combatant life for when Major General Edward Braddock arrived in Virginia with two regiments of British redcoats, he invited Washington to join his personal staff.[79] The opportunity to join General Braddock's staff, however, came at an inopportune time – amid Washington planting his first spring crop. Yet, Washington yearned for a military command and with it a regular army commission.[80] However, Washington was afraid that people would suspect him of being a power-hungry opportunist and therefore agreed to serve as a volunteer aid. This allowed him to finish planting and serve his country.

Sadly, Washington was not in Braddock's service for long. Less than two months after agreeing to serve the General, Braddock died as a result of wounds he received from the Battle of Monongahela on July 13, 1755.[81] This death had a profound impact on Washington's animosity towards France, partially because so many officers were wounded or killed during the battle of Monongahela that Washington was the "only person left to distribute the Generals orders."[82] As a result, Washington rode through the night (a total of 80 miles) to bring Colonel Dunbar's

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[79] George Washington, "From George Washington to Robert Orme, 15 March 1755," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0121.

[80] George Washington, "From George Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, 18 May 1754," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0050.

[81] There has been some debate over the years regarding who fatally wounded General Braddock, while the commonly held belief is that he was wounded by the French. Historian James Hadden claims that a soldier under Braddock named Tom Fausett shot Braddock as an act of avengement for death of his brother, whom he claimed Braddock had run through with his sword for hiding on the battlefield. James Hadden, *Washington's Expeditions (1753-1754) and Braddock's Expedition (1755),* (Uniontown, PA: James Hadden, 1910), 115.

[82] George Washington, "From George Washington to Mary Ball Washington, 18 July 1755," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0167.

division to the front to assist the legions of wounded soldiers.[83] Years later Washington would recall the events of that night vividly, "The dead—the dying—the groans—lamentation—and cries along the road of the wounded for help… were enough to pierce a heart of adamant. The gloom and horror of which was not a little encased by the impervious darkness occasioned by the close shade of thick woods."[84] The painful hearing of his fellow soldier's cries that night, added even more enmity between Washington and the French. The other poignant impact that Braddock's death had on Washington was that it ultimately meant the end of his aspirations for a Royal Army commission. Even though his heroic actions earned him a colonial appointment as commander of all military forces in Virginia, he could never seem to earn his coveted commission. Subsequent clashes with John Dagworthy, Governor William Shirley, and Lord Loudoun confirmed that he would not receive a royal commission.[85] Governor Dinwiddie would later speculate that if Braddock had survived, "I believe that he would have provided handsomely for [Washington] in the regulars."[86] Even though Washington continued to lead Virginian troops until 1758, he would never receive his commission.[87]

Washington would describe his actions during the French and Indian, like this:

> I was employed to go a journey in the winter … and what did I get by it? My expenses borne! I then was appointed with trifling pay to conduct a handful of men to the Ohio. What did I get by this? … I went out, was soundly beaten, lost them all—came in, and had my commission taken from me … I then went out a volunteer with General Braddock

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[83] Of the approximately 1,300 men Braddock had led into the battle, 456 were killed outright and 422 were wounded. Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 104.

[84] Adamant is an archaic form of the word diamond. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington*, Confederation Series, vol. 5, 515-26.

[85] Chernow, *Washington*, 67, 76; Stark, *Young Washington*, 291-302, 325-28.

[86] W. W. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 3, *April – November 1756*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984), 181.

[87] Washington would resign his commission a mere eight months before the French and Indian War would end because of a friendly fire incident during the Forbes Expedition. Lengel, *General George Washington,* 76.

> and lost all my horses and many other things … I have been upon the losing order ever since I entered the service.[88]

From the midst of the conflict, it is easy to see why Washington would call his time in the military a "losing order," for years of service, with nothing really to show except for some bullet torn clothes and memories of actions of his enemies had left him without any notable, personal advancement. Washington had experienced deception, dismissal, defamation, retribution, ridicule, pain, anguish, and frustration all at the hands of the French. He had seen his allies, commander, friends, and his soldiers all die because of the fraudulent claims over the Ohio River Valley. All these events provided Washington with a deep-seated personal resentment and animosity towards the French. A bitterness that would take something exceptional to depose.

[88] George Washington, "From George Washington to Augustine Washington, 2 August 1755," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-01-02-0176.

## Chapter 2: The Franco-American Alliance: Pragmatism Delineated

Fifteen years after the events at Fort Necessity, something exceptional did ameliorate George Washington's animosity, for on May 6, 1778, Washington hosted a celebration of the Franco-American alliance - a celebration which included: dress uniforms, an oral reading of the treaty, a firing of thirteen canons, a *feu du joie*, a gill of rum to each man, and a loud chant of "long live the King of France, and long live the friendly European powers to the United States."[1] So jovial was the affair that Washington was remarked as having "wore a countenance of uncommon delight."[2] Washington's stark reversal of attitude towards the French is conventionally believed to have been as a result of pragmatism. Historian Alexander DeConde summarizes this perspective expertly by writing "in times of distress a weak power groping for aid had no choice. It had to risk even puppetry and grasp the hand of the devil if proffered."[3] This perspective argues that pragmatically this alliance made sense for the United States and George Washington, for so dire was their need for assistance that any real chance for independence would only be attainable as the result of external aid. However, comprehending the enormity of the American need is only the first part to understanding Washington's ability to overcome his personal animosity.

During the first twenty months of the American Revolutionary War, the Continental Army underwent a devastating series of losses. From Lexington to the retreat across New Jersey

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[1] Rum was such a luxury for the Continental Army at this time that the handing out of a gill (which is equivalent to a half a cup or four liquid ounces) demonstrates the celebratory nature and favorable perspective that George Washington had of the Franco-American Alliance. George Washington, "General Orders, 5 May 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-15-02-0039; George Washington, "From George Washington to Brigadier General Casimir Pulaski, 26 January 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0312.

[2] *New York Journal*, June 15, in *Diary of the American Revolution*, ed. Frank Moore, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner, 1860), 52.

[3] DeConde, *Entangling Alliance*, 26.

in late 1776, the war seemed like just another "losing order" for Washington. The most notable failure of this timespan was the Canada campaign where an estimated two to five thousand colonists lost their lives in an attempt to free and unite Canada with their cause.[4] So grim were these early months that George Washington would write, "I think the game is pretty near up" to his brother in December of 1776.[5] In addition, behind these military defeats, there was a catastrophic problem that was impairing all attempts to win independence. The problem was that there was a systemic lack of planning and careless reactions to the military needs of the Continental Army from a disorganized and mismanaged logistical system – a system that had become so broken, that the Continental Army was in dire need of food, clothing, armaments, discipline, manpower, leadership, and medical care, a mere two years after the start of the war.[6] The logistics of these needs fell to a fractured organization of congressional committees, state authorities, military commanders, staff officers, and even civilians.[7] So undependable was this structure that Washington and many of his fellow commanders began to implore Congress to restructure and reorganize the entire system.[8]

By 1777, major reforms began to occur in an attempt to resolve many of the issues that Washington and his fellow officers had with the structure. Complaints and pleas for more bread and clothing led Congress to the appointment of a superintendent of bakers, the commissary of

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[4] There are no accurate numbers as to the exact number of losses that this campaign incurred, however estimate range comes from these sources. E. Wayne Carp, *To Starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administration and American Political Culture 1775-1783,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 19; Rick Atkinson, *The British Are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775-1777*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2019), 294.

[5] George Washington, "From George Washington to Samuel Washington, 18 December 1776," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0299.

[6] Carp, *To Starve the Army*, 19.

[7] Ibid, 35

[8] Erna Risch, *Supplying George Washington's Army,* (Washington, D.C.: The United States Army Center of Military History, 1981), 29.

hides, and the clothier general.[9] Demands for more administrative structure and military discipline resulted in the appointment of the commissary general of musters and the inspector general.[10] Even issues concerning the overburdening of the quartermaster general led to the appointment of a wagon master general and various quartermaster deputies and assistants.[11] However, these reforms did little to mitigate these problems for they came with their own set of hefty regulations and oversight. These precautionary steps were done to clarify logistical duties and prevent fraud.[12] While it seemed like Congress had acted appropriately in an attempt to provide Washington with the necessary supplies and aid, these reforms instead had an injurious effect on the logistical infrastructure of the Continental Army.

Part of the problem with these infrastructural alterations was a host of resignations across the commissariat, including the commissary general, Joseph Trumbull. Trumbull's resignation came because of Congress' refusal to pay him an agreed half a percent commission on purchases as well as holding him responsible for the actions of assistants he did not appoint.[13] Many of Trumbull's subordinates would join him in requesting payment on a commission basis due to the catastrophic inflation of the continental currency. Ultimately, these requests would be denied leading to widespread resignations. Many of the officers who left claimed that their resignation

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[9] Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 7:287, 323; Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 9:794.

[10] Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 7:221-2; Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 11:820.

[11] Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 7:355-59.

[12] There was a serious problem early in the American Revolution concerning the squandering of public money and the fraudulent increase in prices by several members in the Commissary Department. This issue led to a heightened level of checks and balances to prevent embezzlement and fraud within the continental army. One of these checks and balances was an elaborate system of record keeping upon which much of this chapter is based. Carp, *To Starve the Army*, 37, 42.

[13] Joseph Trumbull, "To George Washington from Joseph Trumbull, 19 July 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0334.

was as a result of forced impoverishment by the Continental Congress.[14] More departures would follow these when Congress instituted strict regulations regarding recordkeeping, requiring the accounting of all expenditures. This left the commissariat on the brink of collapse, forcing Congress to attempt to replace these resignations. Their choices, however, were inadequate since they did not have the acumen and experience to successfully carry out their duties which just furthered the growing disarray within the logistical part of the Continental Army.[15] As a result, when it came time for them to go into their winter quarters that year, they were extremely ill-prepared.[16]

While the reforming zeal of the Congress seemed beneficial, the resulting internal logistical disarray only compounded the already growing disparity of need within the Continental Army. Since the beginning of the American Revolutionary War, the commissariat had consistently struggled to properly provide for and equip the Continental Army. Even when crops were bountiful and a price of goods were set by the Board of War, purchasing agents often could not convince farmers and merchants to part with their items unless they agreed to exorbitant terms.[17] These outrageous prices were the by-product of the lack of a stable continental currency throughout the Colonies. Even when purchasing agents were given the legal right to seize these goods, the very act of doing so was seen by the colonists as an abuse of power and tantamount to legalized theft. While the seizure of goods was a common place practice by nations at war at this time (even something that British were principally doing during the American Revolution

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[14] Carp, *To Starve the Army*, 43.

[15] Deputy Commissary Peter Colt would explain the situation like this, "no person knows how to act or what to do. Every kind of Commissary business is here entirely stopped." Peter Colt to Alexander Hamilton, October 4, 1777, Reel 93, Item 78, Papers of the Continental Congress, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[16] Risch, *Supplying George Washington's Army,* 24.

[17] Ricardo A. Herrera, *Feeding Washington's Army: Surviving the Valley Forge Winter of 1778*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 6-7.

through the Quartering Act), many in the commissariat found impressment extremely disagreeable and only to be used as a last resort measure. Washington agreed with this stance, believing that impressment alienated civilian compatriots. He understood that for many of the colonists the key issue at the heart of the American Revolution was property rights and that taking their property (even though owners were given certificates for the value that was taken) was a direct way to turn his fellow colonists against him and his army.[18] This desire to adhere to revolutionary ideals and not imitate the practices of the British would prove to be costly for the Continental Army.[19]

As the goods shortage continued throughout the fall and winter of 1777, the Continental Congress instructed Washington to "endeavor as much as possible to subsist his army from such parts of the country as are in its vicinity."[20] They went on to instruct him to specifically focus on areas that would most likely be subjugated by the British. This directive to seize the goods of the fellow colonists would later be referred to as the Grand Forage and was key to the survival of the Continental Army wintered at Valley Forge. Washington would go on to order over fifteen hundred Continental soldiers, militia, waggoneers, and member of the commissariat and quartermasters offices to forage, gather, and transport provisions and supplies to his army. As historian Ricard Herrera would put it, "foraging columns and purchasing agents had ranged across hundreds of square miles in southeast Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, northern and central Delaware, and northeast Maryland in search of cattle, sheep, swine, wheat, flour, and more."[21]

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[18] Ibid, 37; Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 9:1013-15.

[19] Herrera, *Feeding Washington's Army*, 7.

[20] Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 9:1014.

[21] Herrera, *Feeding Washington's Army*, 7.

While the Great Forage did ensure the survival of the Continental Army during the winter of 1777, it could not provide a sustainable or productive way to feed the Continental Army. Food rations for an enlisted soldier during the American Revolutionary War were one pound of meat, one pound of flour or bread, one pint of milk, and one quart of beer or cider every day.[22] On top of these daily rations there were also some weekly rations which included three pints of vegetables and a half pint of rice or a pint of corn meal each week.[23] While these standards seem diminutive by today's standards they were exceedingly lofty during the winter of 1777. Soldiers often merely dined on a food called fire cakes, which were crude concoctions of flour and water cooked on hot stones.[24] Sometimes there was meat, but often they went without. There were many days where there was little to no food at all. The month of February was perhaps the worst. Washington would begin by describing his troops as "starving" and by the middle of the month he would consider their condition as one of "famine."[25] As their circumstances worsened, Washington's solidarity with his men grew, as he would detail in a letter to Henry Laurens: "I feel superabundantly for them, and from my soul pity those miseries, which it is neither in my power to relieve or prevent."[26] This compassion would be a catalytic influence in Washington's willingness to ally with France.

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[22] Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 3:322.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 325.

[25] George Washington, "From George Washington to Major General Israel Putnam Laurens, 6 February 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0382; George Washington, "From George Washington to George Clinton, 16 February 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0466.

[26] George Washington, "From George Washington to Henry Laurens, 23 December 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0628.

Beyond simply feeding the troops, the internal logistical disarray of the Continental Army cascaded into other areas particularly the equipment that the troops needed. In a letter to John Hancock, the residing president of the Continental Congress during the fall of 1777, Washington would write,

> It gives me pain to repeat so often the wants of the army, and nothing would induce me to it, but the most urgent necessity. Every mode hitherto adopted for supplying them has proved inadequate, notwithstanding my best endeavors to make the most of the means, which have been in my power. The enclosed return will show how great our deficiency in the most essential articles… 3,084 coats, 4,051 waistcoats, 6,148 breeches, 8,033 stockings, 6,472 shoes, 6,330 shirts, 137 hunting shirts, 4,552 blankets, 2,399 hats, 341 stocks, 356 overalls, and 1,140 knapsacks.[27]

Washington laments his numerous requests to Congress but is motivated of the direness of the clothing situation as the winter of 1777-78 looms ever nearer. Compounding this need for clothing was the inability of the Colonies to produce enough cloth or shoes to clothe the Continental Army.[28] This meant that any clothing either had to be repurposed from civilian colonists or had to be imported from foreign nations. Moreover, individual states and officers determined the color and design of their regimental uniforms. Together, these factors made the job of James Mease, the clothier general nearly impossible to successfully accomplish.

The Board of War would respond to this situation by authorizing and instructing eight militia officers to seize "blankets, shoes, and stockings" from British sympathizers in nearby Chester County.[29] The council also instructed these officers to give certificates of continental currency to the owners as compensation, but with the nearly worthless value of these certificates, their actions were tantamount to theft. These efforts, however, would do little to stop the growing

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[27] George Washington, "From George Washington to John Hancock, 13-14 October 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0506.

[28] Risch, *Supplying George Washington's Army,* 24; Herrera, *Feeding Washington's Army*, 25.

[29] Richard Peters, "To George Washington from Richard Peters, 18 October 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0555.

disparity of need for clothing within the Continental Army. Soon, Washington would have to widen the range of locations and people needed to procure more clothing. In a letter to Governor Thomas Johnson of Maryland, Washington would explain their predicament, "The approaching season, and the scanty supplies of clothing… without an immediate prospect of their being increased, have induced me to send Lt. Colonel Adams of your state to procure, if possible, a quantity for the troops which come from thence."[30] Washington would elaborate on just how great the need was later in the same letter by saying that "our wants extend to every [type of clothing] and to blankets… and to shoes and stockings… these requisitions are not the result of choice, but of painful necessity."[31] Without any other options, Washington had to once again rely on impressment to provide for his army. Even with the legal right to carry out these actions, Washington would write that he was "extremely sorry to find we have no prospect of obtaining supplies of clothing, except by forcing them from the inhabitants."[32] Furthermore, he believed that doing so "would not relieve our wants," but instead "greatly distress the people and embitter their minds."[33] Yet, this was currently the only option he had.

While scrounging to clothe and feed the men of Washington's army was crucial, it would be for naught if the soldiers were not properly equipped with weapons and ammunition. After the battles of Lexington and Concord, historian Orlando Stephenson noted that there were only 80,000 pounds of gunpowder available to the colonial army.[34] So dire was this situation that

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[30] George Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Johnson, 6 November 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0133.

[31] Ibid.

[32] George Washington, "From George Washington to Richard Peters, 11 November 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0197.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Orlando W. Stephenson, "The Supply of Gunpowder in 1776," *The American Historical Review* 30, no 2 (January 1925): 273.

Washington allowed each man no more than twelve to fifteen rounds to ensure that there were some reserves.[35] This scarcity of powder led the Continental Congress to attempt to obtain a supply through both internal manufacturing and external importation. They printed and distributed pamphlets teaching colonists how to create gunpowder and its key ingredient saltpeter.[36] Even creating a committee with a member from each colony to figure out ways to encourage and generate more manufacturing.[37] Yet, despite these efforts by the fall of 1777, the Colonies had only produced a total of 115,000 pounds of gunpowder from locally sourced materials.[38] In contrast, they were able to import 2,347,355 pounds and produce another 698,245 pounds of gunpowder from imported saltpeter.[39] Despite the scarcity of powder, soldiers were often wasteful of their supply due to a common practice of firing their guns to clean them. This practice enraged Washington, leading him to make a general order that no musket be loaded "until we are close to the enemy, and there is a moral certainty of engaging them."[40] Even with this order in place, Washington's supplies continued to dwindle and caused him to be reliant on foreign aid.

The necessity for weapons and bullets followed in a similar fashion. Early in 1776, Washington told Congress that there were nearly two thousand troops without guns.[41] Congress

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[35] George Washington, "From George Washington to John Hancock, 30-31 January 1776," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-03-02-0157.

[36] Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 2:218-19.

[37] Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 4:170-71.

[38] Stephenson, "The Supply of Gunpowder in 1776," 277.

[39] Ibid.

[40] George Washington, "General Orders, 17 July 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0300.

[41] George Washington, "From George Washington to John Hancock, 9 February 1776," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-03-02-0202.

responded by putting forth effort to stimulate internal manufacturing and external importation. While there was little success within the Colonies, the efforts to procure them from foreign nations was met with greater success. France, a sworn rival of Great Britain provided the Continental Army with many of these coveted arms.[42] So desperate was Washington that he was willing to even work with a nation towards which he had animosity, to ensure that his men were equipped to fight against their enemy. Historian Ron Chernow describes this exchange by saying that Washington tolerated the French "to guarantee the flow of munitions."[43]

Beyond these day-to-day needs, Washington required more troops to make any real stand against the British. For most of the early stages of the war, he had been out-strategized and out-gunned. This forced him to act as more of an annoyance, attacking smaller targets, then a formidable threat who could confront the invading British forces head on. While Henry Knox estimated that 396,000 men served during the American Revolution, more modern estimates place then number around 100,000 men.[44] From this estimated size range, the army that Washington himself commanded never exceed 24,000 fit and present soldiers and only exceeded 20,000 men for eight months of the entire war.[45] Comparatively, Great Britain had at their height 56,000 "regular" soldiers stationed in colonial America.[46] Even though many of these were foreign mercenaries, their military experience was superior to many of the colonial militia men.

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[42] Risch, *Supplying George Washington's Army,* 352.

[43] Chernow, *Washington*, 335.

[44] Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Clair Clarke, eds., *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832) 1:14-19; John Ferling, *Almost A Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 334.

[45] While the reported total size of the Continental Army was larger than that of the British. The total number of soldiers within Washington's camp was less than the British troops he positioned himself against. Charles H. Lesser, ed. *The Sinews of Independence: Monthly Strength Reports of the Continental Army*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 84-86.

[46] Edward Ely Curtis, *The Organization of the British Army in the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 51.

In a letter to Alexander Hamilton, Washington would make this same point, "without a well-disciplined army we cannot rationally expect success against veteran troops."[47] Throughout the war, Washington made do with what he had, but was ever desirous to multiply his army's size. Washington understood that unless he could grow his army, he would be "under the necessity of calling in the militia and minute men of the country to [his] assistance."[48] While that might not seem like a terrible option, Washington expressed his trepidation that "it will be next to an impossibility to keep them under any degree of discipline, and that it will be very difficult to prevail on them to remain a moment longer than they choose themselves; it is a mortifying reflection to be reduced to this dilemma."[49] Washington wanted an army, not a ragtag group of volunteers whose actions could not be controlled.

Another key military necessity for Washington was a navy. Washington was cognizant that the Continental Army would need a navy if they were going to defeat the British blockade and supply lines.[50] Great Britain relied on their ships to supply them with their needs or at least the money to purchase them in the Colonies. Concurrently, they also used them to exert pressure on many of the colonial port cities, blocking goods and resources from entering the Colonies.[51] Washington understood that any disruption of these lines would have ripple effects on both the

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[47] George Washington, "From George Washington to John Hancock, 24 September 1776," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-06-02-0301.

[48] George Washington, "From George Washington to John Hancock, 28 November 1775," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0404.

[49] Ibid.

[50] James L. Nelson, *George Washington's Secret Navy: How the American Revolution Went to Sea* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 53.

[51] Risch, *Supplying George Washington's Army,* 80.

morale and actions of the Colonial and British armies.[52] As historian James Nelson would later explain,

> Washington was thinking simply of providing for his men and depriving the British, two highly valid objectives. But raiding British commerce did more than that. It constituted a direct attack on the British merchant class, who exerted considerable influence in government. It drove up insurance rates, creating discontent with the war in London. It forced the British navy to divert resources to protect vulnerable but essential shipping. It struck the empire at its economic base.[53]

To bring about this impact, Washington would send pleas to Congress for the construction of a navy on October 5, 1775. His petition was approved later that month, but without the resources to build and staff these boats the most that Congress would ever be able to muster at one time was thirty-one ships (eight of which were frigates).[54] Washington knew that he did not have to control the sea to negatively impact every action of the British, he only needed to provide a naval threat to their economic enterprises to allow insurance rates to cripple them.

As the war continued, particularly through the winter of 1777-78, Washington became savvier and more proactive in his attempts to resolve the ever-growing wartime demands that his army would make. However despite his efforts, the immense need for munitions, rations, clothing, and soldiers required the colonial government to implore foreign nations for these necessities.[55] While many pleas would be sent throughout the war, three key foreign relationships, those of France, Spain, and the Netherlands, would provide the majority of

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[52] Sam Willis, *The Struggle for Sea Power: A Naval History of the American Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2015), 473.

[53] Nelson, *George Washington's Secret Navy*, 329.

[54] George Washington, "From George Washington to John Hancock, 5 October 1775," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0098-0001; Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 3:293-94.

[55] Risch, *Supplying George Washington's Army,* 25.

assistance to the fledgling Continental Army.[56] Through the well documented efforts of men such as Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Silas Deane, Arthur Lee, and John Jay, the Continental Army was able to gain many of these necessities.[57] The process of attaining these goods, however, was lengthy because it took time, resources, and relationship-building to induce.

The reason why this process was lengthy for the thirteen Colonies was the simple fact that they had no international history. When the thirteen Colonies banded together to birth a new nation, the United States of America, they had no connecting relationship with anyone else. Their history and past relationships were tied with those of their mother nation Great Britain whom they were in active rebellion against. Further compounding this issue was their location which was an ocean away from any real aid. Yet, these issues did not deter them. In fact, they used their rebellious actions to garner sympathy with European nations who were historically antagonistic towards the British Empire. While the Dutch and the Spanish did provide the colonial government with aid, the majority of the foreign aid came from France who boasted the most extensive antagonistic history with Great Britain dating back to the Normandy Conquest of 1066.[58] In the ensuing seven hundred years leading up to the American Revolution, France and

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[56] For further information about the aid other foreign nations gave to the United States see Buchanan Parker Thomson, *Spain: Forgotten Ally of the American Revolution*, (North Quincy: The Christopher Publishing House, 1976); Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Larrie D. Ferreiro, *Brothers at Arms: American Independence and the Men of France and Spain Who Saved It*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2016); Fredrich Edler, *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1911); and H. A. Barton, "Sweden and the War of American Independence," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no 3 (July 1966) 408-30.

[57] For further information on the efforts of these men and others in gaining essential foreign aid see Ronald Angelo Johnson, "A Revolutionary Dinner: U.S. Diplomacy toward Saint Domingue, 1798—1801," *Early American Studies* 9, no 1 (Winter 2011): 114-41; James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1980); John P. Kaminski, "Honor and Interest: John Jay's Diplomacy During the Confederation," *New York History* 83, no 3 (Summer 2002): 293-327; Jonathan R. Dull, *Benjamin Franklin and the American Revolution*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); and Milton C. Van Vlack, *Silas Deane: Revolutionary War Diplomat and Politician*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2013).

[58] Richard Davis, "Franco-British Relations and Rivalries: One-upmanship, *Schadenfreude* and the Weight of History," *French Journal of British Studies* 27, no 1 (January 2022): 3.

Britain were perceived as being diametrically opposed: temperamentally, sociologically, economically, culturally, politically, legally, ideologically, and philosophically.[59] Their antagonism had been built upon centuries of heroes and anti-heroes along with memorable dates and places which combined to form part of each nation's national identity. While at times, these two countries did align themselves for some common purpose, they were unable to evade their history, slipping back into division.[60] Memories of long past events were often used as reference points to reinforce their deep-rooted enmity.[61] By the eighteenth century, their relationship had entangled most of western Europe in a web of alliances known as the Stately Quadrille. So prevalent was their antagonism, that a mere fifteen years prior France and England had been at war in the New World – a war which had caused Washington and many others in the thirteen Colonies to develop their own animosities towards France. Yet so pressing was their need for aid that the Continental Congress would build a pivotal relationship with France.

While this relationship building was going on behind the scenes, things continued to deteriorate for Washington and his men during their winter stay of 1777-78 at Valley Forge. Albigence Waldo, a surgeon at Valley Forge, would aptly capture through his writing of these words:

> I am sick, discontented, and out of humor. Poor food, hard lodging, cold weather, fatigue, nasty clothes, nasty cookery, vomit, [and] half my time smoked out of my senses – the Devil's in it. I can't endure it! Why are we sent here to starve and freeze? What sweet felicities have I left at home: a charming wife, pretty children, good beds, good food,

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[59] Both France and Britain share a lot in common – adopting or copying the others socio-political approaches, sharing fundamental values, fighting common causes, borrowing each other's languages, food, music, art, culture. Ibid, 2-3.

[60] Leading up to the American Revolution, France and Britain had been in an alliance known as the Anglo-French Alliance (1716-1731). This alliance was created to stop the expansion of Spanish and Russian Power. It was also created to help provide certainty in France as to the line of succession, for King Louis XV was young and childless. However, when the Dauphin was born in 1729, French interest in maintaining the alliance faded causing both to end up on different sides in the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748), part of which was fought in the North American Colonies known as King George's War (1744-1748).

[61] Ibid, 14.

> good cookery – all agreeable, all harmonious. Here, all confusion, smoke, cold, hunger and filthiness – a pox on my bad luck. Here comes a bowl of beef soup, full of burnt leaves and dirt, sickish enough to make a hector spew. Away with it, boys! I'll live like the chameleon upon air.[62]

In the midst of all these problems, Washington would get word that his new nation, whose army he had been entrusted to lead, had been granted both the most-favored-nation status and an alliance with France.[63] While it was not a surprise to Washington, since France had been secretly aiding the Colonies since 1776, this alliance put Washington in an undesirably close association with France.[64] Washington had experienced deception, dismissal, defamation, retribution, ridicule, pain, aguish, and frustration all at the hands of the French during the Seven Years War, but right now his army was suffering and in dire need. This alliance would give him the open support of the French army, navy, and treasury, providing him with a means to obtain the essential arms, clothing, supplies, and troops that he needed in light of ongoing issues, including that which he was facing with the commissary department. Pragmatically, the alliance would bring about a desirable solution to Washington's problems and was therefore worth celebrating. As Washington would put it in a letter to his brother, "this is great, 'tis glorious news."[65] However, the reasoning behind the acceptance of the Franco-American alliance only explains how Washington was able to go from enemy to ally, it does not explain how he would go from ally to comrade-in-arms, standing alongside his ally when mistakes were made.

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[62] Albigence Waldo, "Valley Forge, 1777-1778: Diary of Surgeon Albigence Waldo, of the Connecticut Line," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 21, no 1 (January 1897): 306-307.

[63] Simeon Deane delivered the news of the treaty of commerce and alliance with France to the Colonies. He arrived in the district of Maine on April 15, and by April 20 the news was in the Boston Papers. It is unclear as to whether George Washington was first informed of the alliance, through this letter by William Heath or through a Bostonian newspaper. William Heath, "To George Washington from Major General William Heath, 21 April 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-14-02-0527.

[64] Jonathan R. Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 61.

[65] George Washington, "From George Washington to John Augustine Washington, May 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-15-02-0296.

## Chapter 3: Washington's Rapport with French Officers

Alliances matter in politics and war. Allies are often the friends, supporters, donors, partners, followers, or connections which provide reciprocating aid when it is matters.[1] In the eighteenth century, most international alliances were based upon a relationship, whether that be a familial or a fraternal one.[2] This was a problem for the Thirteen Colonies at the start of the American Revolution, since the only nation with which they had any bond with was the one they were actively rebelling against. In addition, their lack of leadership with a single family or person, both figuratively and literally, in charge of their government was an added complication. As a result, they were a new nation without any connections, formal leadership, or friends. Many European countries followed the growing conflict between Great Britain and its American Colonies with great interest to see if it would warrant involvement. For the rebellious colonists, their freedom and their survival necessitated European intervention. In an attempt to gain allies, the Continental Congress sent numerous diplomats throughout Europe to woo nations to their cause. France in particular would receive considerable attention from these dignitaries, but as is the case in most relationships, the Continental Congress would need to participate in a give and take exchange in order to cultivate these new relationships. This meant that for the George Washington and the Colonies, they would have to accept an influx of foreign soldiers serving in their army in exchange for the sustaining aid that would come from various European countries.

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[1] P.E. Digeser, *Friendship Reconsidered: What It Means and How It Matters to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 3.

[2] Some examples of the familial alliances around this time are France and Austria through the marriage of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, England and Denmark through the marriage of Queen Anne and Prince George of Denmark, and Spain and the Papal States through the marriage of Charles III and Maria Amalia of Saxony.

The idea that an army could be made up of multiple nationalities was commonplace during the eighteenth century.[3] Militaries in Europe often incorporated citizens, allies, mercenaries, and even enemy dissenters into their armies since their entire military system was underpinned by the Eurocentric laws of war and military etiquette.[4] So common place was this practice that in the 1760s twenty-five percent of the French army and thirty-eight percent of the British army were foreigners.[5] The Continental Congress, however, neither instructed nor empowered its diplomats to hire or recruit foreign soldiers. Instead, they sent requests for the procurement of European arms, funds, and ammunition. This notable omission and distinctly non-European action stemmed from a delineation that, as Charles Royster would describe it, "a central element in [the colonial] definition of their army was voluntarism."[6] The Continental army was so entrenched in this belief that approximately ninety percent of their force would be militia volunteers who would only serve a total of one to three months.[7] Yet, as both Congress and their representatives in foreign countries (particularly Silas Deane and Benjamin Franklin) would come to understand the acceptance of foreign soldiers would be needed to keep the supply ships sailing.

George Washington would also see the necessity for foreign soldiers when his requests for more engineers failed to locally procure them.[8] Washington needed these men to provide him

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[3] Stephen Conway, "The British Army, 'Military Europe,' and the American War of Independence," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (January 2010): 70.

[4] Ibid, 70.

[5] Janice E. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 28-29.

[6] Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775 – 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 50.

[7] Eric Spall, "Foreigners in the Highest Trust: American Perceptions of European Mercenary Officers in the Continental Army," *Early American Studies* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 345.

[8] George Washington, "II. Letter Sent, 10-11 July 1775," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-01-02-0047-0003.

with the insight and skills necessary for his army to gain and hold territories from the British – the effectiveness of which was seen early on through the fortification of Dorchester Heights and expulsion of British troops from Boston. The Continental army's inability to acquire these skilled workers was due to the harsh reality that there were very few colonists who had any engineering skills, but even fewer who also had any military background. [9] The only colonial officer with any real, military, engineering experience was the sixty-five-year-old Richard Gridley. Gridley who had helped besiege and capture the Fortress of Louisbourg in 1745 during the War of Austrian Succession, would become Washington's first Chief of Engineers. Due to his age, however, he could not be expected to endure the rigors of warfare for any extended period. With no other valid options, Congressional delegate Benjamin Harrison would express his remorse to Washington saying that "the want of engineers, I fear is not to be supplied in America."[10]

The desire to fulfill Washington's request would lead Congress to attempt through the Committee of Secret Correspondence to "find out and engage in the service of the United Colonies skillful engineers, not exceeding four, on the best terms they can."[11] The best engineers at the time were trained in France at the École Royale du Genie de Mézières (Royal Engineering School of Mézières), where they were given six extensive years of training in mathematics and science, as well as practical military experience.[12] Consequently, the Committee of Secret Correspondence would make their objective known to the French through France's secret envoy to the Colonies Julien-Alexandre Achard de Bonvouloir, resulting in Bonvouloir offering on

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[9] Larrie D. Fereiro, *Brothers at Arms: American Independence and the Men of France and Spain Who Saved It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 120.

[10] Benjamin Harrison, "To George Washington from Benjamin Harrison, 21-24 July 1775," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-01-02-0088.

[11] Francis Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 2:63.

[12] Fereiro, *Brothers at Arms,* 121.

behalf of France to provide the necessary engineers.[13] News of this opening for foreign soldiers to join the colonial army would quickly spread back to Europe and result in the inundation of "memorials from officers and engineers, offering their services in America" when Silas Deane arrived in Paris in July of 1776.[14]

There were many reasons why foreign soldiers, and in this case, particularly French soldiers would want to travel across the Atlantic to fight in the American Revolution. For some the war was seen as a chance to continue their long-term conflict with the British after the Treaty of Paris of 1763 had stymied this possibility.[15] The war was an outlet for the French to enact revenge and release their growing aggression and hatred upon the British. As American historian James Truslow Adams would later explain, "Our revolt gave [the French] the long-desired opportunity to wipe off scores with England, and they seized it."[16]

A second motivational factor was the prestige that could be earned through the war.[17] For many young French officers the war gave them the opportunity to both restore the glory of France and gain their own personal fame through acts of valor. Many foreign soldiers wanted to

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[13] Julien-Alexandre Achard de Bonvouloir et Loyauté said is "[l]a France est bien en état de vous fournir deux bons ingénieurs, même plus. La seule démarche, c'est de les demander," which can be translated as "France is in a good position to provide you with two good engineers, even more. The only step is to ask for them." Henri Doniol, *Histoire de la participation de la France à l'établissement des États-Unis d'Amérique: Correspondance diplomatique et documents*, Vol. 1, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1886), 269.

[14] Silas Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, August 18, 1776, in *The Deane Papers*, ed. Charles Isham, vol. 1, *1774-1777* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1887), 202.

[15] Fereiro, *Brothers at Arms,*122.

[16] James Truslow Adams, *The March of Democracy: The Rise of the Union* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), 136.

[17] Maurice Ross, "Teaching the Reasons for France's Participation in the American Revolution," *The French Review* 36, no. 5 (April 1963): 498.

utilize the constant retreat of George Washington at the hand of the British to elevate their professional status through gaining experience by guiding the amateur colonial army to victory.[18]

A third reason was that the freedom for which the Thirteen Colonies were fighting for was seen as a living embodiment of their own enlightenment ideals.[19] Much of the political discourse and beliefs in Europe during the 1730-1780s were influenced by philosophies of Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Payne, and Locke. The idea that all individuals have inherent rights which are foundational to the power of their government, and that a rebellion is justified against a government which has infringed upon those rights was actively being tested in front of them. This ignited in many French soldiers, particularly those in the nobility, an enlightenment zeal to ensure that their previously untested ideologies of liberty and republicanism would become a lasting reality.

A fourth reason French soldiers would want to fight in the American Revolution was that the war was seen as a way to flee a disgraced reputation.[20] A person's reputation was of paramount importance during the eighteenth century and the American Revolution provided many familial black sheep with the opportunity to remake themselves in a new foreign country far disconnected from the networks of Europe. An anonymous French officer would describe many of these soldiers as "officers deeply in debt, several discharged from their corps. The

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[18] Mike Duncan, *Hero of Two Worlds: The Marquis de Lafayette in the Age of Revolution* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2021), 33.

[19] Leslie Lipson, "European Responses to the American Revolution," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 428, no. 1 (November 1976): 25.

[20] Cosby Williams Hall, "French and Hessian Impressions: Foreign Soldiers' Views of American during the Revolution" (master's thesis, College of William & Mary, 2003), 45.

governors [of French colonies] clear them as well as they can of all worthless fellows who arrive from France, by giving them letters of recommendation to the Anglo-American generals."[21]

Lastly, there were some who looked to join in the cause as a way to get rich. Many Europeans saw the New World at the time as a land of untapped wealth and resources. This stereotypical perspective in conjunction with the belief that war could make a person wealthy would entice people to join the Continental army. Louis de Recicourt de Ganot, a French artillery officer, would explained this reasoning by writing that "all those who were troubled by poverty and bachelorhood have dashed across the ocean in hopes of putting an end to their complaints."[22] However, as many who left for this reason would soon realize, making one's fortune took the same time and energy in the Colonies as it did in France.

A list compiled in 1903 for the Library of Congress by the French Foreign Ministry recorded that over 40,000 French soldiers fought during the American Revolution.[23] While most of these would either fight against the British outside of the Thirteen Colonies or arrive after the Franco-American alliance of 1778, there were many French soldiers who volunteered and were commissioned early in the war. Their arrival and inclusion meant that Washington's army was inundated with subordinates from a foreign nation that he had previously developed a resentment towards. This would force his opinion of and relationship with France into a critical point. Washington could either stand with or stand against these foreign soldiers.

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[21] B.F. Steven, ed., *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America*, vol. 7, (London: Malby & Sons, 1889), no. 754.

[22] This quote comes from Louis de Recicourt de Ganot's French manuscript that was translated and published by Durand Echeverria and Orville T. Murphy. Durand Echeverria and Orville T. Murphy, trans., "The American Revolutionary Army: A French Estimate in 1777," Military Affairs 27, no. 4 (Winter 1963-64): 157.

[23] H. Mérou, ed., *Les combattants français de la guerre américaine, 1778-1783*, (Paris: Ministère des affaires étrangères, 1903).

Early interactions seemed to affirm and support Washington's previous experiences with French soldiers. In February of 1777, Claude-Noël-François Romand de Lisle, an apparent captain in the French artillery, would arrive at Washington's headquarters in Morristown, New Jersey. Upon his arrival, he would present Washington with his commission and a personal letter stating that he was the new commander of the Continental Army.[24] In reality, the commission appointed him as a major but made no mention of any higher rank or position. De Lisle was also accompanied by Louis-Joseph-Henri Robillard d'Antin who arrived without any paperwork and claimed he was a new artillery captain. Needless to say, Washington's letter to the President of Congress, John Hancock was less than complimentary of these men and their nation as a whole. He wrote: "You cannot conceive what a weight these kinds of people are upon the service, and upon me in particular, few of them have any knowledge of the branches which they profess to understand, and those that have, are entirely useless as officers from their ignorance of the English language." Many other French volunteers would act similarly, arriving unannounced and with the presumption that they would be granted a rank higher than their previously held one in France. In a later letter to Richard Henry Lee, Washington would elaborate on his frustrations with French recruits,

> These men have no attachment or ties to [our] country, further than interest binds them—they have no influence—and are ignorant of the language they are to receive and give orders in, consequently great trouble, or much confusion must follow; but this is not the worst, they have not the smallest chance to recruit others, and our officers think it exceedingly hard, after they have toiled in this service, and probably sustained many losses to have strangers put over them, whose merit perhaps is not equal to their own; but whose effrontery will take no denial… gentlemen of this profession ought to produce sufficient and authentic testimonials of their skill and knowledge, and not expect that a

[24] George Washington, "From George Washington to John Hancock, 11 February 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-09-02-0448.

> pompous narrative of their services, and loss of papers (the usual excuse) can be a proper introduction into our army.[25]

These early interactions with unskilled and unqualified French soldiers were a great frustration to Washington.

Washington's experiences with Philippe Hubert, Chevalier de Preudhomme de Borre, and Philippe Charles Jean Baptiste Tronson du Coudray, would typify the supposed veracity of his animosity towards France. Both men arrived in the Colonies in May of 1777 and were given high ranking positions with the Continental Army. Although Washington was worried about Preudhomme de Borre's inability to understand English, his military experience in Bavaria, Bohemia, and Flanders during the 1740s caused him to be granted the commission of brigadier general and be put in charge of the second Maryland Brigade.[26] Preudhomme de Borre would soon ostracize his own soldiers after clashing with one of his subordinates Major Mullen and his decision to execute a suspected colonial loyalist without a trial.[27] On the later issue, George Washington would write that "the whole proceeding was irregular and illegal … there is none of our articles of war that will justify your inflicting a capital punishment, even on a soldier much less on a citizen."[28] These early problems would serve as a pre-indicator of his ineptitude. His final and greatest blunder would be when his brigade followed his orders and retreated instead of preparing for action at the start of the Battle of Brandywine.[29]

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[25]George Washington, "From George Washington to Richard Henry Lee, 17 May 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0593.

[26] Stephen R. Taafe, *Washington's Revolutionary War Generals*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 111, 117.

[27] Ibid, 117; George Washington, "From George Washington to Preudhomme de Borre, 3 August 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0506.

[28] George Washington, "From George Washington to Preudhomme de Borre, 3 August 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0506.

[29] Michael C. Harris, *Brandywine: A Military History of the Battle That Lost Philadelphia but Saved America, September 11, 1777*, (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2014), 292-93.

Washington's experiences with du Coudray followed in a similar fashion. Du Coudray was a leading figure in the French artillery (having written books on the subject) and a key figure in providing highly coveted artillery supplies and equipment.[30] As a result of his decision to join the colonial cause, he was promised the position of major general, which did not go over well with many of the colonial officers. [31] He would eventually be given the rank of Inspector General of Ordinance and Military Manufacturing as a compromise. Even though this was an excellent use of his skillset, it was far from the combat command he desired. As a result, he grew increasingly petulant and frustrated. He would quarrel with other officers outside of his command on procedure and planning, he accused James Lovell, a Massachusetts Congressional delegate, of discriminating against him, and he even tried to manipulate Washington into doing what he wanted.[32] This infuriated Washington who would reply:

> I shall be at all times obliged to you for any information respecting the state of the artillery, and your opinion as to anything you may think eligible; but I am not as yet authorized to consider you as giving advice or direction in an official capacity; since Congress have not instructed me in what light I am to view you; and I am not at liberty to anticipate events, that may hereafter take place, or to suppose you invested with any character that they have not delineated you in to me.[33]

So dreadful were many of Washington's early interactions with French soldiers that had his interactions with two key individuals not occurred, his opinion of the French might never have changed.[34]

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[30]Taafe, *Washington's Revolutionary War Generals,* 94.

[31] Du Coudray was supposed to granted to position of major general but after Henry Knox (a brigadier general in the artillery) threated to resign if du Coudray was given a position over him. Congress wanting to resolve this issue and keep the services of both men, instead appointed du Coudray to Inspector General. Noah Brooks, *Henry Knox: A Soldier of the Revolution,* (London: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1900), 93.

[32] Taafe, *Washington's Revolutionary War Generals,* 96.

[33] George Washington, "From George Washington to Major General du Coudray, 13 July 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0262.

[34] Washington would even write to Silas Deane on August 13, 1777, asking for a better vetting process. He complained that "[the French officers] have turned out but little better than adventurers," and that they have "thoughts of drawing pay without rendering service for it." George Washington, "From George Washington to Silas

These two individuals were Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette (or as he is commonly referred to as Lafayette) and Louis Antoine Jean Le Bègue de Presle Duportail who both positively impacted Washington and helped bring about the alleviation of his antagonism towards France during the American Revolution. When Lafayette, a nineteen-year-old French nobleman, heard that the general of the French army at Metz, the Comte du Broglie, was sending officers to the American Colonies to fight, he eagerly volunteered.[35] Even though he was young and inexperienced, Lafayette would convince both du Broglie and Silas Deane to allow him to join the colonial army. France would soon revoke their permission after news of France's intentions to send soldiers to the Colonies reached England.[36] This setback did not deter Lafayette who would secretly purchase a boat (the *Victoire)* to take him and other volunteers to the Colonies.[37] News of this did not go over well with his father-in-law (Jean-Paul-François de Noailles, Duc d'Ayen) and uncle-in-law (Emmanuel Marie Louis, Marquis de Noailles) who convinced French King Louis XVI to forbid Lafayette's departure.[38] With favorable winds blowing, however, Lafayette would disobey this order and ignore his family's pleas by setting sail to the Colonies. In an effort to explain his actions, Lafayette would write these words to his wife,

> Whilst defending the liberty I adore, I shall enjoy perfect freedom myself; I but offer my services to this most interesting republic from motives of the purest kind, unmixed with ambition or private views; her happiness and my glory are my only incentives to the task…The happiness of America is intimately connected with the happiness of all

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Deane, 13 August 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0593.

[35] Harlow Giles Unger, *Lafayette*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 20-21.

[36] Ibid, 23.

[37] William A. Duer, ed., *Memoirs, Correspondence and Manuscripts of General Lafayette*, Vol. 1, (New York: Saunders and Otley, 1837), 9-10.

[38] Henri Doniol, *Histoire de la participation de la France à l'établissement des États-Unis d'Amérique: Correspondance diplomatique et documents*, Vol. 2, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1886), 395.

> mankind; she will become the safe and venerable asylum of virtue, integrity, toleration, equality, and tranquil happiness.[39]

After the many negative encounters with other French Officers commissioned by Deane, Congress did not want to meet with Lafayette upon his arrival in Philadelphia in July of 1777.[40] Lafayette was undeterred by this and would sent his own petition to Congress in which he wrote: "After the sacrifices that I have made in this cause, I have the right to exact two favors: one is, to serve at my own expense – the other is, to serve at first as a volunteer."[41] He would go on to pledge his life, honor, and fortune for the cause of American freedom. This appeal worked and Lafayette would be given an honorary commissioned as a major general without pay on July 31.[42] Less than a week later, Lafayette would then have the opportunity to meet George Washington for dinner after he arrived in Philadelphia to brief Congress on military affairs. Aware of Lafayette's diplomatic value and sacrifices, Washington would invite him to join his staff as an aid. Lafayette, however, sensed that Washington did not fully trust him, "I could not rid my mind of the suspicion that the General harbored doubts concerning me; this suspicion was confirmed by the fact that I had never been given a command-in-chief."[43] This doubt was a nonentity compared to the concern he had when he saw when he reached the colonial camp two days later. "About eleven thousand men, ill armed, and still worse clothed… their clothes were

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[39] Duer, ed., *Memoirs*, 1:89-90.

[40] Chevalier Dubuysson, a companion of Lafayette's placed the blame for the unwarm welcome on du Coudray. He would write this in his memoir, "I believe M. Du Coudray has done us the most damage because he has disgusted the whole Congress. He arrived here with the airs of a lord, and let on that he was one, as well as a brigadier general in France, adviser to royal ministers, and friend of all the princes and dukes, from whom he carried letters." Stanley J. Idzerda, ed., *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution: Select Letters and Papers*, Vol. 1, *December 7,1776-March 30, 1778,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 79.

[41] Unger, *Lafayette,* 37.

[42] Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 8:592-93.

[43] Maurice de la Fuye and Emile Babeu, *Apostle of Liberty*, trans. Edwards Hyams, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1956), 42.

parti-colored, and many of them were almost naked; the best clad wore hunting shirts."[44] Washington sensed his new aid's apparent disappointment, and would respond by saying that "we must feel embarrassed to exhibit ourselves before an officer who has just quitted the French troops."[45] To which Lafayette responded that "it is to learn, and not to teach, that I come hither."[46] This humble answer had a real impact on Washington who had been dealing with a parade of pretentious, French officers who seemed only to clamored for commissions and high appointments. The stark contrast of Lafayette was refreshing and laid the groundwork for the deep familial friendship that would develop between these two men.

As Washington's aid, Lafayette dropped the title of Marquis and by many of the rank-and-file, who could not pronounce his name, he would simply go by "General Feyet."[47] This decision to disassociate himself with his aristocratic position was just one of many actions Lafayette took to Americanize himself. He worked daily on learning and improving his English, he ate and drank the colonial foods, he swapped out his French hat and jacket for one's like Washington's, and he even attempted to out American his compatriots. This Americanization of Lafayette did not go unnoticed by Washington who soon allowed him the opportunity enter the conflict at the battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777.

When word of Cornwallis' attack on the colonial right flank reached Washington and his entourage, Lafayette pressed Washington for a chance to help protect the freedom of the Colonies. Upon his arrival at the battle, the British launched a decisive assault on the colonial troops causing them to flee in terror. Lafayette gallantly attempted to stop their retreat by riding

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[44] Duer, ed., *Memoirs*, 1:19.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Sabra Holbrook, *Lafayette, Man in the Middle*, (New York: Atheneum, 1977), 21.

his horse up and down to block their exits. When that failed, he went on foot grabbing the shoulders and arms of soldiers ordering them to turn around, stand, and fight.[48] The shock and audacity of a major general to be standing among them coaxing them to continue fighting, halted the colonial retreat. They then rallied around Lafayette slowing the British advance. In the midst of the chaos, Lafayette would be shot through the leg but continue valiantly leading the colonial forces late into the night until they could be reorganized at the town of Chester.[49] His actions, particularly in contrast to de Borre's, at the battle of Brandywine would earn him acclaim as a hero in both the Colonies and France, but also endear him even further to Washington.[50] As Lafayette would later explain it to his wife:

> Be perfectly at ease about my wound; all the faculty in America are engaged in my service. I have a friend, who has spoken to them in such a manner that I am certain of being well attended to; that friend is General Washington. This excellent man, whose talents and virtues I admire, and whom I have learnt to revere as I know him better, has now become my intimate friend: his affectionate interest in me instantly won my heart. I am established in his house, we live together like two attached brothers, with mutual confidence and cordiality. This friendship renders me as happy as I can possibly be in this country. When he sent his best surgeon to me, he told him to take charge of me as if I were his own son, because he loved me with the same affection.[51]

Like Lafayette, Washington would feel the same way towards his younger confidant and protégé and would soon recommend him for divisional command. In a letter later that year, Washington would write these words to Lafayette,

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[48] Unger, *Lafayette,* 44.

[49] Duer, ed., *Memoirs*, 1:23-24.

[50] Lafayette would continue to win the favor of Washington and his colonial compatriots when, under the command of General Nathanael Greene and still not fully recovered from his wound, led a surprise attack against an encampment of Hessian troops in Gloucester, New Jersey. His actions earned him an official commission as major general and a command of his own. Washington would even trust him with building an alliance with the Oneida Indians, something that he would never have done without true perspective change after all that he went through at the hands of the French during the French and Indian War. Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 9:982-83; Duncan, *Hero of Two Worlds*, 66; Holbrook, *Lafayette,* 26.

[51] Duer, ed., *Memoirs*, 1:105.

> Your favor of yesterday conveyed to me fresh proof of that friendship and attachment which I have happily experienced since the first of our acquaintance, and for which I entertain sentiments of the purest affection. It will ever constitute part of my happiness to know that I stand well in your opinion, because I am satisfied that you can have no views to answer by throwing out false colors, and that you possess a mind too exalted to condescend to dirty arts and low intrigues to acquire a reputation.[52]

"Never during the Revolution was there so speedy and so complete a conquest of the heart of Washington," would write Washington's biographer, Douglas Southall Freeman.[53] Lafayette's rapport and growing familial relationship with George Washington would prove to be a catalyst for the transformation of Washington's perspective and feelings towards France.

While this relationship was more than sufficient in creating a shift in Washington's perspective, it can also be interpreted as the actions of Lafayette were merely influential in changing Washington's opinion of Lafayette. Consequently, the rapport of Louis Antoine Jean Le Bègue de Presle Duportail would further cement the transformative impact that the actions of productive French officers on Washington. Duportail, unlike Lafayette, had both military experience (Royal Engineer who had assignments at Strasbourg, Gex, Montpellier, Metz, Aire, and Bethune) and the approval of the French government to join the colonial army when he was commissioned as a colonel in July of 1777.[54]

Since Congress readily admitted that they needed engineers, Duportail was granted a commission even with the ongoing debacle of du Coudray's commission, and placed in charge of all the engineers of the continental army.[55] This proved to be nothing more than a figurehead

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[52] George Washington, "From George Washington to Major General Lafayette, 31 December 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0075.

[53] Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography*, vol.4, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 461.

[54] Desmarais, *Washington's Engineer*, 3.

[55] James Lovell, "To George Washington from James Lovell, 24 July 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0379.

position, as Duportail and his engineers were given menial tasks to do during the summer of 1777. Eventually, Duportail would petition Congress for a promotion as so to provide meaningful assistance to the colonial cause.[56] His request would be granted on November 17, and from that point forward Duportail would be indispensable to the colonial war effort.[57] General Duportail would then join the Continental Army at Whitemarsh after its defeat at Germantown, where Washington had called a Council of War on November 24. At this meeting, Duportail military knowledge and insight caused him to stand out in contrast to the other officers there (the likes of which included Lafayette, Gates, Greene, Knox, von Steuben, and Lee). Duportail's skill of analysis and synthesis caused Washington to later remark: "I have a high opinion of [Duportail's] merit and abilities and esteem him not only well acquainted with the particular branch he professes, but a man of sound judgement and real knowledge in military science in general."[58]

Duportail was then put in charge of the erection of shelters and defenses at the wintering location of the Continental army that year at Valley Forge. In January of 1778, Duportail proposed the creation of a school of engineering to create companies of combat engineers in the Continental army that was faithful to the principles he had learned during his time at Mézières.[59] Expectedly, Washington liked Duportail's plan since in ensured that there would be a steady supply of colonial engineers and urged Congress to set it into motion. As the winter of 1777-78 progressed, Washington sought advice from Duportail, who freely gave it and advised

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[56] Desmarais, *Washington's Engineer*, 15.

[57] Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress,* 9:932.

[58] George Washington, "From George Washington to Henry Laurens, 16 November 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-18-02-0171.

[59] Antoine Jean Louis Le Bégue de Presle Duportail, "To George Washington from Brigadier General Duportail, 18 January 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-13-02-0226.

Washington about when to leave Valley Forge, where they should go, of the possibility of a British plan for southern aggression, and to refrain from attacking Philadelphia.[60] After only one year in thirteen Colonies, Duportail had risen from a figurehead position with no power to one of the commander-in-chief's most trusted confidants.[61]

A mere fifteen years prior, France had been a mortal enemy of the Thirteen Colonies, however, now one of Washington's closest friends and one of his most loyal advisors were both French. This drastic change started from a place of pragmatic necessity and blossomed through the resulting interactions. Washington encountered French men who either emboldened his animosity or doused it. While the negative rapport of men like de Borre and du Coudray seemed to further cement Washington's attitude based upon his earlier interactions, they were replaced with Lafayette and Duportail. So stark was their contrast to his earlier experience that their interactions began to tear down the walls of animosity within Washington. They demonstrated to Washington that not all Frenchmen were like Jacques Legardeur de St. Pierre, Captain Philippe Thomas de Joncaire, and Captain Louis Coulon de Villers, Frenchmen whom he had negative interactions with during the French and Indian War. Washington had experienced both the heroes and villains that come from France and these two heroic men, Lafayette and Duportail, epitomized the reality that an alliance with France could work – not only as an alliance, but as a friendship as well.

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[60] Antoine Jean Louis Le Bégue de Presle Duportail, "To George Washington from Brigadier General Duportail, 20 April 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-14-02-0517; Antoine Jean Louis Le Bégue de Presle Duportail, "To George Washington from Brigadier General Duportail, 18 June 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-15-02-0457.

[61] Louis Gottschalk, "The Attitude of European Officers in the Revolutionary Armies toward General George Washington," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 32, no. 1 (March 1939): 41.

## Chapter 4: An Enlightened Perspective

While both the positive impact of the actions of Lafayette and Duportail and the overwhelming exigency of the colonial army aided in dismantling Washington's animosity towards France, a perspective substitution was necessary for there to be any substantial change. The demolition of Washington's prior antagonistic perspective (paradigm) required the attainment of a new one to supplant it. For Washington, this paradigm shift would occur during and as the result of an ongoing ideological change within Europe and the Thirteen Colonies – the Enlightenment.

While there are many opinions as to when the Enlightenment began in the Colonies and how long it lasted ranging from 1688-1820, there is a consensus that the "American Enlightenment" was foundational to the Colonist's identity and relationship with Great Britain.[1] The Enlightenment was a "radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections" of the Colonists based upon the presupposition of the political right of self-determination.[2] This right to self-determination incorporated the eighteenth century tenants of the primacy of reason, scientific rationalization, religious toleration, reliability of human understanding, and individual freedom, as well as a corresponding disregard for seventeenth century tradition, constituted authority, and received dogma.[3]

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[1] For perspectives on when the Enlightenment began and where it originated see: Robert A Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750–1820*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); C. Vann Woodward, ed., *The Comparative Approach to American History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); James M. Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Carolina Winterer, *American Enlightenments: Pursing Happiness in the Age of Reason*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); James MacGregor Burns, *Fire and Light: How the Enlightenment Transformed Our World*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013); and Neil C. Olsen, *Pursing Happiness: The Organizational Culture of the Continental Congress*, (Milford: Nonagram Publications, 2013).

[2] Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750–1820*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 1, 22.

[3] Ibid, 22.

Washington's enlightenment was distinct from the well documented enlightenment ones of Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, as it did not involve high philosophy or abstract thinking.[4] His was a more down-to-earth, practical paradigm shift in which his daily actions were affected.[5] The more the Enlightenment impacted him the more his life would become aligned with the overarching goals of the Enlightenment – to expel ignorance, promote happiness, and ensure freedom.[6] While George Washington never attended college or knew any foreign languages, there were three key areas in his life which the impact of the enlightenment can be clearly seen: faith, science, and politics. Each one interconnected with the others to create within Washington an enlightened worldview. As a result of this paradigm change, Washington would be referred to later in his life as the American Cincinnatus.[7]

Throughout Washington's many biographies, he is consistently characterized as a man of faith during a time where skepticism prevailed. While the exact nature for his personal faith has been an issue of debate for many years with suggestions ranging from a generic "Christian" to the specific, from "deist" to "theistic rationalist," the presence of his faith is not.[8] Washington's religious style reflected an enlightened discomfort with religious dogma in conjunction with his modest lifestyle. He like many Enlightenment thinkers adopted the idea of natural religion,

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[4] For more on Jefferson or Franklin's enlightenment see: Herbert W. Schneider, "The Enlightenment of Thomas Jefferson," *Ethics* 53, no. 4 (July 1943): 246-254; Douglas Anderson, *The Radical Enlightenments of Benjamin Franklin*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); James C. Thompson, *Thomas Jefferson's Enlightenment*, (Alexandria: Commonwealth Books of Virginia, 2014); and Richard R. Beeman, Benjamin Franklin, and Amy Gutmann, "Benjamin Franklin and the American Enlightenment," in *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin: Penn Reading Project Edition*, edited by Peter Conn, 145–49. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhqhr.6.

[5] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1992), 198.

[6] Caroline Winterer, *American Enlightenments: Pursuing Happiness in the Age of Reason*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 254.

[7] George Gordon Byron, *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte*, 13 ed., (London: John Murray, 1818), 17.

[8] Mary V. Thompson, *"Into the Hands of a Good Providence": Religion in the Life of George Washington*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 1-10; Gregg L. Frazer, *The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders: Reason, Revelation, and Revolution*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 197.

which transcended organized religion and emphasized active morality. "Natural religion," David Sorkin argues, "consisted in the truths accessible to unassisted reason, which usually meant a belief in God, His providence, and the rewards and punishments of a future life."[9] To Washington, true religion superseded any denomination or faction and was obtainable to all through reason resulting in a common morality for its adherents. As a result, Washington was highly tolerant of the various sects of Christianity and was known to attend a wide variety of churches without judgement or bigotry during and after the Revolutionary War, including those of the Presbyterians, Quakers, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Congregationalists, Dutch Reformed, Episcopalian, and Universalists.[10] He distrusted zealotry, never talked of hellfire or damnation, almost never referred to Jesus Christ (instead using phrases like "providence," "destiny," "author of our being," and "heaven"), and even shunned anything that might flaunt his religiosity like communion.[11] Washington loathed religious fanaticism and the political exploitation of it, choosing instead to often worship in private. General Robert Porterfield recalled that once he broke protocol and barged into Washington's tent to deliver an urgent message; inside he "found [Washington] on his knees, engaged in his morning's devotions."[12] Jared Sparks, one of Washington's early biographers, echoes this as he recorded that Washington's nephew George W. Lewis commented that he had on multiple occasions "accidentally witnessed [Washington's] private devotions in his library both morning and evening; that on those occasions he and seen him in a kneeling position with a bible open before him and that he believed such to have been

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[9] David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna*, (Princeton, University of Princeton Press, 2008), 13.

[10] James P. Byrd, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 42-42; Thompson, *"Into the Hands"*, 82.

[11] Chernow, *Washington*, 133-34.

[12] William Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1861), 2:492.

his daily practice."[13] Chief Justice John Marshall, a personal friend of Washington, would simply summarize Washington's faith as "without making ostentatious profession of religion, he was a sincere believer in the Christian faith, and a truly devout man."[14]

While Washington's was tolerant of the faiths of others and private about his own, his own life clearly demonstrated the impact that the American Revolution brought to his enlightened religiosity. Like a lot of his fellow wealthy Virginian planters, he seemed for a time to be addicted to pleasure, particularly after his actions during the French and Indian War.[15] He hunted foxes, attended balls, parties, plays, horse races, cockfights, as well as frequented the local gambling table.[16] Ever the compulsive record keeper, Washington's papers show that in the years between 1768-1775, he entertained about two thousand guests at Mount Vernon.[17] Many of these vices soon lost their appeal as a result of the tyrannical actions of Great Britain which caused him to begin to "cultivate the affections of good men" and practice "domestic virtues."[18] Washington connected being a good citizen with "genuine, vital religion," and would attempt to live a life where his conduct would live up to the most severe standards.[19] Washington would

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[13] Sparks, *The Life of George Washington*, 522-23.

[14] Marshall, *The Life of George Washington*, 466.

[15] Like many other Colonists, Washington was still involved in his local churches (his property bordered two parishes – Pohick Church and Christ Church) as was the custom to keep up appearances, but his actions on non-church days demonstrated that his life seemed to revolve around worldly pleasures. Philip Slaughter, *The History of Truro Parish in Virginia*, (Philadelphia, George W. Jacobs & Company, 1908), 34.

[16] On the point of gambling, Washington enjoyed playing loo and whist for money and recorded the sums he won and lost down to the last pence. Flexner, *Washington*, 51; Chernow, *Washington*, 134.

[17] Flexner, *Washington*, 52.

[18] George Washington, "From George Washington to George Clinton, 28 December 1783," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-12235.

[19] An examination of the remaining books from Washington's library indicates that there are roughly fifty volumes on various aspects of religion and philosophy along with one hundred seventy sermons, discourses, and other short religious works. Thompson, *"Into the Hands"*, 62; George Washington, "From George Washington to the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 29 May 1789," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-02-02-0297.

begin to see Providence as an active, intervening God who was interested in and impacted human affairs, particularly the creation of the colonial government and his army. In his first presidential address, Washington would elaborate by saying:

> no people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.[20]

This perspective particularly became real to Washington, when after the first major battle of the American Revolution he and his army of 9,500 soldiers were trapped on Long Island.[21] They were surrounded, with the British entrenching themselves to limit casualties. Just as all hope seemed lost, a "miracle arrived." A strong wind and rain pushed the British ships away from the colonial army's position providing them with an escape route across the mile-wide Brooklyn river.[22] As the sun set on the August 29, Washington would begin to send his troops across the river, but with so many soldiers it seemed an impossible task to get them all safely across.[23] During the night, a heavy fog rolled across the Long Island shore, further shielding the evacuees from the British. The fog was so thick that one could "scarcely discern a man at six yards' distance," and would continue to hold throughout the morning. [24] The fog's particularly providential occurrence allowed Washington to be able to get every single one of his troops safely across the river without causalities, including Washington who got into the last boat just a

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[20] George Washington, "First Inaugural Address: Final Version, 30 April 1789," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-16-02-0373.

[21] Chernow, *Washington*, 249.

[22] David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 99.

[23] Benjamin Tallmadge, "Major Tallmadge's Account of the Battles of Long Island and White Plains,"

in *The Campaign of 1776 Around New York and Brooklyn*, ed. Henry Phelps Johnston (Brooklyn: Long Island Historical Society), 2:78.

[24] Ibid.

British soldiers reached the beach. This event would force Washington to believe that not only was God involved in the broad issues, but that he was intimately involved in his only life. He would later write that he was "grateful to that Providence which has directed my steps and shielded me in the various changes and chances through which I have passed, from my youth to the present moment."[25] Washington's paradigm was changing due to his enlightened faith and evolving perspective of God through the events of the American Revolution.

The role of science and the scientific method was another key area affected by Washington's enlightened paradigm shift. To Enlightenment thinkers, science represented the reality of their foundational truths of the empirical method and rational thought, as well as an unquestionable way to erode erroneous traditions. For Washington, his scientific paradigm shift occurred due to of his desire to implement innovations that arose from the Enlightenment on his farm. In 1759, Washington became a full-time farmer, following his marriage to Martha Dandridge Custis, and, over the next sixteen years, he would dedicate himself to diversifying the agriculture and learning new farming methods to increase productivity and ensure the fertility of his farmland.[26] As he read British agricultural treatises (especially *Practical Treatise on Husbandry* and *The Farmer's Compleat Guide*) he would attempt to follow and augment their methods for his plantation. In true enlightened, scientific form, Washington paid careful attention to any unfamiliar crops or technological innovations as if it was both his civil and moral duty to make the best use of his land.[27] As historian Bruce A. Ragsdale would later put it, "Washington

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[25] George Washington, "From George Washington to William Gordon, 15 October 1797," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/06-01-02-0363.

[26] Bruce A. Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow: The Founding Farmer and the Question of Slavery*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), 5.

[27] For more on this idea of farming as a duty see: Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 50-67; Benjamin R. Cohen, *Notes from the Ground: Science, Soil, and Society in the American Countryside*, (New Haven: Yale

always sought to balance his pursuit of enlightened management and his idealized vision of a landed estate with the profitability that would make any system of farming viable."[28]

Soon Washington's harvests were so bountiful that the cultivation and harvesting of them required more workers and storage for their continued growth. This caused Washington to seek out and purchase skilled slaves to keep up with his agricultural output. Like many of his fellow plantation owners, Washington originally saw slavery as a legal and socially acceptable institution – treating slaves with a mixture of commercial, patriarchal, and paternal attitudes.[29] However, this would soon change with the *Stamp Act* of 1765, where Washington decried the act as unconstitutional and as an act of disregard and endangerment of the reciprocal nature of trade between the Colonies and Great Britain,

> The whole produce of our labor hitherto has centered in Great Britain— what more can they desire? And that all taxes which contribute to lessen our importation of British goods must be hurtful to the manufacturers of them, and to the commonweal [the good of the society]— the eyes of our people (already beginning to open) will perceive, that many of the luxuries which we have heretofore lavished our substance to Great Britain for can well be dispensed with whilst the necessaries of life are to be procured (for the most part) within ourselves.[30]

In addition, Washington believed that the *Stamp Act* was the beginning of further taxation on the colonial commodities. As a result, he began to acquire and build the necessary infrastructure to

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University Press, 2009), 2-12; and Colin G. Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 75-76.

[28] Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 13.

[29] Washington at times saw slavery as a business, it was a way that he could minimize expenditure and maximize profit. He also saw the slaves at times as his children, exercising strict control over them while simultaneously providing for and looking after them. In conjunction with these opinions, Washington was concern with the personal relationships of his slaves, since he disliked splitting up slaves who had personal and family ties with one another. Kenneth Morgan, "George Washington and the Problem of Slavery," *Journal of American Studies* 34, no. 2 (August 2000): 282.

[30] George Washington, "From George Washington to Robert Cary & Company, 20 September 1765," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-07-02-0252-0001.

be self-sufficient.[31] He even changed his focus from the major cash crop of tobacco to wheat in preparation for selling it to other nations.[32] As tensions between Britain and the Colonies grew, so did the disconnect between Washington's reliance on coerced labor and his personal dissatisfaction with Britain's denial of the individual freedoms of the thirteen colonies. This conflict forced Washington to acknowledge that slavery was antithetical to the self-sufficiency and agricultural improvements of his own enlightened, commercial prosperity and duty. So weighty was this problem on Washington that in a letter to his cousin, Washington would confide that "I every day long more and more to get clear of [my Negroes]."[33] In an attempt to solve this cognitive dissonance, Washington would set about to ensure the protection and welfare of his slaves – in hopes that treating them well would resolve his internal strife.[34] These efforts to would ultimately fail to satisfy the dissonance between the two issues, resulting in Washington eventual decision to free his slaves upon his death.[35] Washington's application of Enlightenment science in conjunction with Enlightenment reasoning helped erode the faulty tradition of slavery

[31] This infrastructure included things such as new barns with threshing floors, a textile mill, and a flour mill. Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 50-54.

[32] George Washington, "From George Washington to Robert Cary & Company, 1 June 1774," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-10-02-0061.

[33] George Washington, "From George Washington to Lund Washington, 15 August 1778," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-16-02-0342.

[34] Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 10.

[35] One might argue that Washington's provision to free his slaves upon his death without any posterity to pass them on to might seem like a *non sequitur* to the impact that the Enlightenment had on his life. However, there are two reasons why Washington would wait until his death to free his slaves. First, his primary concern was for the precariousness of the colonial union which would cause him to not want to do anything that might alienate a large group of Southerners. Second, he was concerned about the impact that it would have on his family, both white and black. There would be plenty of socio-dynamic issues that would arise if Washington or his wife was still alive when his slaves were freed — particularly, how to treat the ones who wanted to leave fairly compared to the ones who wanted to stay. Philip D. Morgan, "'To Get Quit of Negroes': George Washington and Slavery," *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 3 (December 2005): 428; George Washington, "George Washington's Last Will and Testament, 9 July 1799," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/06-04-02-0404-0001.

within his life, bringing about the freedom of his slaves from the shackles of his own ignorance and their bondage.[36]

A final area where the ideals of the Enlightenment affected George Washington was in the political realm. These enlightened, political beliefs included liberalism, that humans have inherent natural or God-given rights such as "life, liberty, and estate," and republicanism – that a government's authority and officials should be determined is based upon the will or consent of the governed.[37] During his time as general of the Continental army, Washington would be forced to decide concerning both of these beliefs. In regard to liberalism, Washington had to make a decision as to the continued inclusion and use of black African slaves and freemen as soldiers in the Continental army.[38] When Washington was appointed as commander of the Continental Army, black soldiers already composed an important part of the colonial military force – contributing to the battles of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill.[39] Further complicating this issue was the decision by Congress on November 12, 1775 to declare all blacks ineligible to serve, something that would be repealed a little over a month later as a result of Washington's congressional petitions.[40] In contrast, Virginian Royal Governor John Murray, the Earl of

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[36] Winterer, *American Enlightenments*, 2.

[37] Locke, *An Essay*, 45; Winterer, *American Enlightenments*, 228; Robert E. Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (January 1972): 50.

[38] African American people in the colonial period, whatever their legal status, were commonly referred to as "Negros," "Black," or "Africans." The term "African American" while it did appear in a *Pennsylvania Journal* ad on May 15, 1782, did not gain cultural acceptance and common usage until advocates like Jesse Jackson pushed for its usage. Jennifer Schuessler, "Use of 'African-American' Dates to Nation's Early Days," *New York Times*, April 20, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/21/arts/use-of-african-american-dates-to-nations-early-days.html.

[39] Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 62-62.

[40] "II. Minutes of the Conference, 18-24 October 1775," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0175-0003; George Washington, "General Orders, 12 November 1775," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0326; George Washington, "General Orders, 30 December 1775," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0575.

Dunmore would proclaim that all slaves and indentured servants who would fight for the British would receive their freedom.[41] As a southern slave owner who was already wrestling with his personal views of slavery, Washington saw Dunmore's proclamation as an attempt to humiliate the colonial rebels and "transplant the war to the southern colonies."[42] Dunmore's action, on behalf of the British empire was a direct assault on the Enlightenment ideal of liberalism by attacking many of the Colonist's property and livelihood which further cemented Washington's ideals concerning the basis of a government's authority. Washington's definitive paradigm shift towards liberalism would come the next year, when John Glover's Massachusetts regiment of sailors came to the rescue of Washington's men on Long Island. Many of the soldiers in his regiment were black, and Washington witnessed firsthand the "skill and courage of the black sailors of Massachusetts who saved his army."[43] Later on it was Glover's troops again who would ferry Washington's troops across the Delaware in their victory over the Hessians at Trenton on Christmas Day in 1776. These two experiences with these same black sailors helped bring about Washington's acceptance and recruitment of black soldiers.

While Washington's demonstration of his true acceptance of enlightened republicanism would only come at the end of the war, its impact cannot be discounted. At the end of the American Revolutionary War, Washington stunned the world by surrendering his sword to Congress on December 23, 1783 and retiring to his farm at Mount Vernon. "Having now finished the work assigned me," said Washington, "I retire from the great theatre of action, and

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[41] Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, 1775*,* Letters 1775-1776, Special Collections, Library of Virginia, Richmond, https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/dbva/items/show/268.

[42] George Washington, "From George Washington to Richard Henry Lee, 26 December 1775," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0568.

[43] Henry Wiencek, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004), 401.

bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body, under whose orders I have so long acted. I here offer my commission and take my leave of all the employments of public life."[44] This action resurrected the ancient legend of Cincinnatus – a Roman who left his farm to rescue Rome, and returned to his farm when the danger had passed.[45] As historian Gordon S. Wood would later write that "[t]his self-conscious and unconditional withdrawal from power and politics was a great moral action, full of significance for an enlightened and republicanized world, and the results were monumental."[46] In contrast to the actions of many military leaders throughout history, Washington willfully chose to leave his power and position. This event shows, if nothing else can, the impact that enlightened ideals had on the actions of George Washington.

As demonstrated, Washington actions were impacted by the Enlightenment. While its impact did not involve conventional high philosophy or abstract reasoning, Washington's life reflected the moral standards that an enlightened life should present. He was tolerant on matters of religion ("being no bigot myself to any mode of worship") and private on his own.[47] He used science and technological innovations which helped bring about personal change. And he even chose to live out the ideals of Liberalism and Republicanism in an affront to both society and tradition. The radical transformation of the Enlightenment in George Washington's life caused a change in his paradigm, resulting in a new perspective and a willingness to disregard tradition and dogma in acceptance of the primacy of reason, toleration, and freedom. Where Washington

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[44] Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 25:838.

[45] Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington & the Enlightenment*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984), 13.

[46] Wood, *Radicalism*, 206.

[47] George Washington, "From George Washington to Lafayette, 15 August 1787," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-05-02-0270.

once projected hatred, on France, he now saw that "France yields us every aid we ask."[48] Where he once was bitter towards France, he now tolerated French officers in his army. And where he was once bothered by their defamatory comments, he now delighted in their alliance which would ensure his nation's freedom. Therefore, the key tenants of the Enlightenment positively impacted Washington's relationship with France which helped lead to victory over Britain in the Revolutionary War.

[48] George Washington, "General Orders, 17 December 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0566.

## Conclusion

On October 19, 1781, British Lieutenant General Charles Cornwallis surrendered his army at Yorktown, Virginia. In an attempt preserve his own dignity, he feigned an illness and sent his second-in-command, Brigadier General Charles O'Hara to face the humiliation on his behalf. Whether as a deliberate snub or an honest mistake, O'Hara initially offered Cornwallis' sword to Lieutenant General Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau the leader of the French forces.[1] Instead of accepting it, Rochambeau direct O'Hara instead towards Washington. Washington perceiving the slight on him, had no intention of accepting the sword from Cornwallis' deputy and in turn directed O'Hara to give the sword to his second-in-command General Benjamin Lincoln.[2] O'Hara's actions, whether pre-meditated or not, reflected the British perceptions about who had beaten their army. It was not the tattered and disorganized colonial army, but rather the French who had sustained the rebellious Colonies through financial, naval, and military support.

Indeed, the 1778 Franco-American alliance played a pivotal role in the securing of colonial independence, but for Washington the alliance was something far more personal. It marked the culmination of his personal reconciliation towards France due to three key factors – pragmatism, personal relationships, and the Enlightenment. In the century proceeding the American Revolutionary War, the Colonists had been drawn into at least four major conflicts with France due to the foreign policy of Great Britain.[3] Each of these conflicts further ingrained

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[1] Mark Grimsley, "The Franco-American Alliance during the War for Independence," in *Grand Strategy and Military Alliances*, ed. Peter R. Mansoor and Williamson Murray, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 254.

[2] Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 418.

[3] While these colonial wars consisted of an almost continuous number of raids and skirmishes between the British and French colonists and their Native-American allies, they can be separated and organized based upon the four major corresponding wars in Europe: King William's War (War of the League of Augsburg) 1689-97, Queen Anne's War (War of Spanish Succession) 1702-13, King George's War (War of the Austrian Succession) 1744-48,

with the Colonies a distrust and hatred for the French, of which Washington was included. The delineation of this animosity for Washington can be traced back to the events of the French and Indian War, during which time Washington would experience deception, dismissal, defamation, retribution, ridicule, pain, anguish, and frustration at the hands of the French. All of which makes his willing acceptance of this alliance that much more impactful and poignant.

The major guiding force behind Washington's desire for and acceptance of an alliance with France was his pragmatic need for external aid. In the years preceding the Franco-American alliance, the management of the commissary department was so poor that often there was a complete breakdown of the transportation of provisional supplies. These supplies were essential to the colonial war effort and included items such as food, clothing, gunpowder, weapons, bullets, and other necessities of general life. So dire was the need, particularly at Valley Forge, that Washington had to command his soldiers to go out and forage for food – essentially stealing it from the locals. Brigadier General James Mitchell Varnum would describe the situation in a letter to Quartermaster General Nathanael Greene "that in all human probability the army must soon dissolve—many of the troops are destitute of meat and are several days in arrear—the horses are dying for want of forage."[4] Even when it looked like the end of their army, the Continental army survived. As a result of this desperation, Washington was willing to receive aid by any means necessary even from the enemy of his past experiences.

In response to this need, the Continental Congress also took active steps to secure European aid. They sent emissaries to Europe in an attempt to woo nations to their cause.

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and The French and Indian War (Seven Years' War) 1755-62. For more information of these conflicts see Howard H. Peckham, *Colonial Wars, 1689-1762*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

[4] Edward G. Lengel, ed., *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 13, *26 December 1777–28 February 1778*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 514–17.

Congress understood that for Washington to have a change to secure the Colonies survival and freedom, he would need the assistance of other nations. This early assistance often came in exchange for the permission for foreign soldiers to serve in the colonial army. Washington in particular would need many of the skills that these soldiers brought with them, however, many of the early additions were either unwilling to work under Washington or were unqualified and unsuitable for the task. While the negative rapport of men like de Borre and du Coudray seemed a vindication of Washington's animosity, their behavior and attitudes were soon overlooked due to the actions of Lafayette and Duportail. The behavior and knowledge of these two men in their service to the Continental army epitomized the reality to Washington that not only an alliance, but a friendship with France was possible.

While the great need and service of foreign soldiers would aid in Washington's ability to overcome his resentment of France, he needed a paradigm shift to cement the change. A foundational shift in his beliefs would ensure that Franco-American alliance would survive and thrive. For Washington, this paradigm change would come as a result of the ideological changes of the Enlightenment. Through the application of enlightenment on religion, Washington experienced and demonstrated tolerance towards other faiths. The issue of religion was particularly divisive when it came to the Colonist's opinions of and animosity towards France – the Colonists were overwhelmingly Protestant while the majority of France was Catholic (a perceived tyrannical religious organization). By the application of the Enlightenment to science and politics, Washington would see a shift in his views on slavery – another belittled and dismissed group of people. As a result of an Enlightened perspective within Washington, he would overcome the anti-France dogma that he had been taught or had come to believe through the Enlightened ideals of the acceptance of the primacy of reason, toleration, and freedom. This

new Enlightened paradigm allowed him to see and enjoy the benefits that an alliance with France would and did have for the Colonies.

Washington perfectly summed up his reconciliation in a letter to Lafayette's brother-in-law and fellow officer in the American Revolutionary War; he would write that "the kind and generous offices [assistance] which [France] has rendered to this country, will I hope, forever endear them to us and be a means of cementing an everlasting friendship between France and America."[5] Washington went from having a strong animosity towards France prior to the war to having a desire to have an eternal friendship with them after the War. This could only come because of a change within Washington, a change that would come through a combination of pragmatism, personal relationships, and an enlightened paradigm shift. As a result of these influences, Washington was able to reconcile his antagonism towards France, for both his own personal benefit and for the Colonies.

Further research on this topic can go in two different directions. The first is by looking at Washington's view of France while President and applying it to this research. Why did Washington issue a proclamation of neutrality towards France when they were undergoing their own political revolution? If they were truly his ally and friend, why not go to their aid? The second direction that this topic could go would be nationally. How was the Continental Congress able to ally itself with France? How did the Colonies come to accept the Franco-American alliance? Is Washington's personal reconciliation indicative of the larger colonial experience?

Washington's reconciliation with France also provides a poignant geo-political object lesson for today. In the globalized market and political world, there is a great amount of distrust

[5] George Washington, "From George Washington to Louis Marie, Vicomte [de] Noailles, 18 October 1782," *Founders Online*, National Archives. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-09761.

and antagonism towards other nations. Much of this dissonance is the result of negative historical interactions – some as recent as the Russia-Ukraine War, and others as far back as the Crusades and beyond. These negative interactions are often due to some sort of inter-religious or interpersonal conflict, with both sides having created a caricature of other to their detriment. In order works towards the resolution of their hostility, nations need to be willing to alter their paradigms of each other. This starts with individuals setting aside their fears and hatred to work on creating relationships with individuals of their enemy nation. As relationships are built and good will is established, then faulty paradigms can slowly be replaced by sound ones. While not universally applicable, much can be learned about on how to overcome preconceived perceptions through the historical events and life of George Washington and his relationship with the French.

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