

American Foreign Policy in the Late 18th Century

<p>Gouverneur Morris, the man responsible for the final draft of the Constitution, witnessed one of the great events of history—the French Revolution. On July 14, 1789, a mob stormed the Bastille, the infamous Paris prison, releasing the prisoners and killing the prison governor. Not long afterward, while walking on a Paris street, Morris got a close look at revolutionary violence.</p> <p>“[T]he Head and Body of Mr. de Foulon are introduced in Triumph. The Head on a Pike, the Body dragged naked on the Earth. Afterwards this horrible Exhibition is carried thro the different Streets. His crime [was] to have accepted a</p>	<p>Place in the Ministry. This mutilated form of an old Man of seventy five is shewn to Bertier, his Son in Law, the Intend't. [another official] of Paris, and afterwards he also is put to Death and cut to Pieces, the Populace carrying about the mangled Fragments with a Savage Joy.” —quoted from his journal</p> <p>Morris was appointed minister to France in 1792. Despite his horror at the violence around him, Morris remained at his post throughout the bloodiest days of the Revolution. Meanwhile, at home, Americans were divided in their views concerning the events underway in France.</p>
<p>Main Idea:</p>	

<p>In The United States wanted to secure land claims west of the Appalachian mountains and to gain shipping rights on the Mississippi River. To do this, it needed to come to an agreement with Spain, which still held Florida and the Louisiana Territory, a vast area of land west of the Mississippi River.</p> <p>Negotiations stalled because of the turmoil in Europe. Spain, unlike Britain, signed a treaty with France. Spain then feared British retaliation and suspected that a joint British-American action might be launched against the Louisiana Territory. Suddenly, Spain agreed to meet with</p>	<p>U.S. minister to Great Britain Thomas Pinckney, and on October 27, 1795, both sides signed a treaty.</p> <p>Pinckney’s Treaty of 1795, also known as the Treaty of San Lorenzo, included virtually every concession that the Americans desired. Spain gave up all claims to land east of the Mississippi (except Florida) and recognized the 31st parallel as the southern boundary of the United States and the northern boundary of Florida. Spain also agreed to open the Mississippi River to traffic by Spanish subjects and U.S. citizens, and to allow American traders to use the port of New Orlean</p>

Most Americans initially supported the French Revolution because, like the American Revolution, it was inspired by the ideal of republican rule. Heartened by the American struggle against royal tyranny, the French set out to create a government based on the will of the people. The alliance between France and the United States, created by the Treaty of 1778, served as an additional bond between the two nations. Whether or not the United States should support the French Revolution was one of the most important foreign policy questions that the young nation faced.

Despite the bonds between the nations, Americans soon became divided over the Revolution. In early 1793, a radical group called the Jacobins seized power in France. They beheaded the French king, Louis XVI, and launched the Reign of Terror against their opponents, sending moderate reformers and royalists alike to the guillotine. In an excess of revolutionary zeal, the Jacobins also declared war on other monarchies, including Great Britain.

Because of their alliance with the United States, the French expected American help. The American reaction tended to split along party lines. Democratic-Republicans, such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, wanted to

honor the 1778 treaty and support France. Federalists, such as Alexander Hamilton, wanted to back the British. President Washington took a middle position. On April 22, 1793, he issued a declaration of neutrality, a statement that the United States would support neither side in the conflict. Hamilton and Jefferson came to agree; entering a war was not in the new nation's interest.

Earlier in April, the French had sent a young diplomat, Edmond Genêt, to win American support. Before following diplomatic procedure and presenting his credentials to the Washington administration, Genêt began to recruit Americans for the war effort against Great Britain. This violation of American neutrality and diplomatic protocol outraged Washington, who demanded that the French recall Genêt. By then, however, Genêt's political backers had fallen from power in Paris. Fearing for his life, the young envoy remained in the United States and became a U.S. citizen. Although Jefferson protested against Genêt's actions, Federalists called Jefferson a radical because he supported France. Frustrated by these attacks and by his ongoing feud with Hamilton, Jefferson resigned from the cabinet in 1793.

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