

Entangling Alliances

Because they were astute observers of the workings of men and nations, the founders of this Nation wisely admonished the Nation to avoid relationships with foreign powers which would cause the Nation to be drawn into international controversy and conflict. Their solemn admonition was to avoid what they termed “entangling alliances.”

Many dozens of instances could be cited which would unequivocally establish the founder’s position in this matter, but a few statements must suffice:

In his monumental “Farewell Address,” George Washington counseled us:

“Europe has a set of primary interests, which have to us none, or very remote relation. Hence, she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collusions of her friendships or enmities.

“Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor, or caprice?”

Washington restated his intentions in this matter in a letter to Patrick Henry in 1795, explaining that his purpose was “to keep the United States free from political connections with every other country, to see them independent of all and under the influence of none. In a word, I want an American character, that the powers of Europe may be convinced we act for ourselves and not for others.”¹

Thomas Jefferson had much to say on the matter, stating, at various times:

“I know that it is a maxim with us, and I think it a wise one, not to entangle ourselves with the affairs of Europe.”²

“The Constitution thought it wise to restrain the executive and Senate from entangling and embroiling our affairs with those of Europe.”³

“Determined as we are to avoid, if possible, wasting the energies of our people in war and destruction, we shall avoid implicating ourselves with the powers of Europe, even in support of principles which we mean to pursue. They have so many other interests different from ours that we must avoid being entangled in them. We believe we can enforce these principles, as to ourselves, by peaceable means, now that we are likely to have our public councils detached from foreign views.”⁴

“I have ever deemed it fundamental for the United States never to take part in the quarrels of Europe. Their political interests are entirely distinct from ours. Their mutual jealousies, their balance of power, their complicated alliances, their forms and principles of government are all foreign to us. They are nations of eternal war. All their energies are expended in the destruction of the labor, property, and lives of their people. On our part, never had a people so favorable a chance of trying the opposite system of peace and fraternity with mankind, and the direction of all our means and faculties to the purposes of improvement instead of destruction.”⁵

“I am for free commerce with all nations, political connection with none, and little or no diplomatic establishment. And I am not for linking ourselves by new treaties with the quarrels of Europe, entering that field of slaughter to preserve their balance, or joining in the confederacy of kings to war against the principles of liberty.”⁶

And perhaps the following statement, which Jefferson made in his First Inaugural Address, most succinctly captures the essence of his position:

“I deem [one of] the essential principles of our government, and consequently [one] which ought to shape its administration,...peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.”⁷

Of course, there were other prominent founders who reinforced the official position of the United States, such as this statement which John Quincy Adams made in a July 4th 1821 speech:

“America has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when the conflict has been for principles to which she clings...She goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.”

And, in the inspired “Monroe Doctrine” we find James Monroe’s great wisdom:

“In the wars of European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy so to do...Our policy in regard to Europe...is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers...”⁸

This position became the official policy of the United States, and was largely followed until the 20th century. The United States grew and prospered under it. And we avoided the almost constant bloodshed which was occurring throughout the rest of the world.

We, as a Nation, now find ourselves constantly embroiled in the conflicts of belligerent nations around the world. This is because we have abandoned the sound doctrines which were implemented as this Nation was established. Our involvement in global conflict has become epidemic since the United States abandoned the advice of the Nation’s founders, and entangled itself with international organizations: The United Nations, NATO, SEATO, CENTO, etc. etc.

Since we have embraced these “entangling alliances,” the United States has fought to a bloody stalemate in Korea, assisted in the enslavement of the Christian province of Katanga in Africa,

endured the agony of Southeast Asia, squandered our blood and treasure in countless “police actions,” and we are currently embroiled in numerous locations, such as the morass of the Middle East, as well as in a religious civil war in Kosovo which has been going on for centuries. And almost all of these conflicts have been entered into at the behest of the United Nations, or one of its “authorized subsets.” Since becoming involved with the UN, the United States has been drawn into a steady stream of almost constant and unremitting wars and rumors of wars.

In the matters of war and international relations as noted herein, the wisdom of the Nation’s founders could never be more apparent!

This Nation must awaken and arouse itself to a sense of its awful situation, turn from the false entangling philosophies which have been so highly organized, so cleverly disguised, and so powerfully promoted for so many years, and return to the sound principles upon which this Nation was founded, and which allowed the Nation to become the greatest, freest, most prosperous, most respected, and happiest nation on earth.

We must seek the withdrawal of the United States from this insidious effort to involve the United States in entangling alliances which constantly draw the Nation into undeclared, un-Constitutional international conflicts.

—Scott N. Bradley

1 - George Washington to Patrick Henry 09 Oct 1795, Fitzpatrick 35:334-335

2 - Ford 4:483. (1787)

3 - Manual of Parliamentary Practice. Bergh 2:442. (1800).

4 - To Thomas Paine. Ford 8:18. (1801)

5 - To President James Monroe. Bergh 15:436. (1823)

6 - To Elbridge Gerry. Bergh 10:77. (1799)

7 - First Inaugural Address. Bergh 3:321. (1801)

8 - James Monroe, Monroe Doctrine