Chapter 9 Lesson 2

Trouble in the New Nation

Washington faced difficult challenges, Britain and France were pushing the US to get more involved in their conflicts. Native Americans, aided by the British and the Spanish, fought the westward advance of American settlers and there was growing unrest from within the American population.

The Whiskey Rebellion

The new government wanted to collect taxes on some products made in the US. 1791, Congress passed a tax on the manufacture and sale of whiskey. This upset Western Pennsylvania farmers. This anger turned to violence in July 1794, an armed mob attacked tax collectors and burned down buildings. This protest, called the Whiskey Rebellion, alarmed government leaders. Washington sent federal troops to meet this challenge sending a strong message to the public. The government would use force to maintain order.

Challenges in the West

The British and Spanish were trying to foment unrest and anger with Native American peoples in the Northwest Territory. To block these efforts, Washington signed treaties with Native American groups, yet settlers ignored the treaties and moved onto lands promised to the Native Americans. Fighting eventually broke out amongst the two groups.

Washington again decided to use force, sending an army under Gen. Arthur St. Clair to restore order in the Northwest Territory. In Nov. 1791, St. Clair’s army met a strong Native American force led by Little Turtle, a Miami chief. More than 600 US soldiers died in the battle. It was the worst defeat US forces had ever suffered against Native Americans.

The US hoped an alliance with France would help them achieve full control of the West. The possibility of French involvement led Great Britain to take action. 1794, the British urged Native Americans to destroy American settlements west of the Appalachians. The British also began building a new fort in Ohio.

Native Americans demanded that settlers who were living north of the Ohio River leave the area. In response, Washington sent Anthony Wayne, a Revolutionary War general, to the area. August of 1794, Wayne’s army defeated more than 1,000 Native Americans under Shawnee chief Blue Jacket. The Battle of Fallen Timbers, near present day Toledo, Ohio, crushed the Native Americans’ hoped of keeping their land. In the Treaty of Greenville (1795), Native American leaders agreed to surrender most of the land in what is now Ohio.

Problems with Europe

In 1789 France erupted in revolution. Americans cheered at first as the French rose up against their king. By 1793, however, the revolution had turned terribly violent, with some Americans horrified by the bloodshed. Public opinion became divided. When Britain and France went to war in 1793, some Americans sympathized with the French. Others supported Britain. Washington hoped that the US could stay neutral and not take either side.

Washington Struggles to Stay Neutral

Staying neutral proved difficult. The French tried to draw the US into their conflict with Britain. They sent Edmond Genet to ask American volunteers to attack British ships. Washington issued the Proclamation of Neutrality, which prohibited Americans from fighting in the war. The proclamation also barred French and British warships from American ports.

Britain also challenged Washington’s desire for neutrality. The British would capture any US ship that traded with the French and force the American crew into impressment, forcing them to serve in the British military.

Washington sent John Jay to discuss a solution with the British, known as Jay’s Treaty. The British agreed to withdraw from American soil but there was no mention of impressment or British interference with American trade. Few Americans approved of this treaty, Washington also had issue with it but believed it would end the crisis. After a fierce debate, the Senate approved Jay’s Treaty in a close vote.\

Pinckney’s Treaty with Spain

Spanish leaders were nervous about Jay’s Treaty, they were worried the US and Great Britain would work against Spain in North America. Washington sent US diplomat Thomas Pinckney to settle the matter with Spain. In 1795, Pinckney’s Treaty gave the Americans free navigation of the Mississippi River and the right to trade at New Orleans.

Washington Leaves Office

After 8 years, Washington decided not to seek a third term. In his farewell address he urged his fellow citizens to “observe good faith and justice towards all nations. …It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances.” These parting words would influence US foreign policy for more than a 100 years. He also warned against something he saw as a growing threat: political parties.