Dublin born Mathew Carey presented his new magazine, *The American Museum, or Repository of Ancient and Modern Fugitive Pieces &c., Prose and Poetical*, to the people of Philadelphia in January, 1787. Called the "greatest of eighteenth century magazine editors," at least in America, he was opening the brief career of one of the most important magazines of that period. Carey started with fewer than twenty subscribers, but sold out his first edition of a thousand copies and within six months had a subscription list of 1,250 persons. Unhappily, much of this was on credit and it may be that slow collections, combined with the failure of the Post Office Act of 1792 to provide for transporting magazines, caused the *American Museum*'s demise.

Carey opened Volume I with a flourish: publication of a roster of notable subscribers. George Washington headed the list, which then turned alphabetical and included John Dickinson, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Francis Hopkinson, Jared Ingersoll, Thomas Jefferson, Rufus King, James Madison, Gouverneur Morris, Robert Morris, Charles Willson Peale, Timothy Pickering, Charles Pinckney, Edmund Randolph, and Benjamin Rush. Charles Carroll, Oliver Ellsworth, Aaron Burr, and Don Diego de Gardoqui, the Spanish minister to the United States, joined the subscribers by January, 1789. Thrifty John Adams was almost conspicuous by his absence.

2 Mott, 100–103.
Such a group, including a number who would write for the *American Museum* as well as read it, meant that Carey's magazine became a kind of forum for the exchange of ideas among Americans of prestige and influence. Hence, it is an especially useful source for studying the emergence of ideas which Americans have used in governing themselves. Because foreign policy was crucial in the life of the young republic, there was a lot of material on it in the pages of the *American Museum*, including ideas which affected American diplomacy a century and a half after the magazine had vanished.

A few book-length studies of early American diplomatic ideas have been published in recent years, but the general topic still needs systematic investigation and a good way to begin is to look into what members of America's governing elite said to each other in the pages of the *American Museum*. Five major themes relating to foreign affairs can be found. The most prominent one in early issues was argument in favor of a strong national government, aimed at gaining advantage abroad as well as providing security and prosperity at home. Next in prominence, and continuing through the whole life of the *American Museum*, came statements of America's superiority over Europe in physical setting, politics, economic potential, and character. Third, emerging in part from the second, if often by implication, were remarks urging political isolation from Europe and its problems. Fourth, and again continuing through the life of the magazine, came strong arguments in favor of vigorous international trade as well as copious information on foreign commerce. Finally, scattered throughout the pages of the *American Museum* were articles of political analysis: the balance of power, national interest, national rivalries, and the character of foreign nations.


4 Gilbert, 149.
Carey opened his campaign to strengthen the central government with Benjamin Rush's "Address to the People of the United States" in the *American Museum*'s first issue. Rush noted that while the war for independence was over the American Revolution was not, for the country had not yet perfected a framework of government. He ascribed the weakness of the Confederation to its having been created during a time of violent reaction against the British system of government, a time when Americans understood liberty but not administration.5

Others applied such ideas to foreign affairs. "A Bostonian" whose "view of the federal government of America: Its defects and a proposed remedy" appeared in April, 1787, commented sourly on the impotence of the Confederation and then wrote:

This is no longer a secret in Europe: and our ambassadors abroad are treated with bare civility by allies, and with neglect by aliens. . . . Americans, in the estimation of Englishmen, are sunk into the lowest pit of contempt. The government and people of that island, speak of us as they do of animals that contaminate by the touch: while our public faith, like that of ancient Carthage, is settled into a vulgar proverb.

The result, he found, was that Britain did not carry out terms of the treaty of 1783 regarding vacating western frontier posts, thinking America an easy mark for future conquest.6 Weak government was perilous.

Carey also printed petitions of Philadelphia and Boston merchants as well as resolutions of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, all calling for a new and stronger central government which would have "a full and entire power" to regulate commerce and to aid our foreign trade.7 He even reprinted Washington's Newburgh letter of June 18, 1783, addressed to the governors of the several states and urging a strong government for reasons which included supporting our credit abroad and keeping our treaties valid.8

The *pièce de résistance* was Carey's publication, beginning in November, 1787, of all of the Federalist essays.9 Later, he displayed

5 *The American Museum*, I (January, 1787), 8—11.
6 Ibid., I (April, 1787), 269—272.
7 Ibid., I (April, 1787), 281—282, 289—290.
8 Ibid., I (May, 1787), 387—397.
9 Ibid., II (November and December, 1787), *passim*. 
his approval of the regime elected in 1788 by dedicating the July, 1789, issue to the new President and the members of the Congress, "with sincere wishes for the smiles of heaven on their patriotic labours to promote the virtue, peace, liberty, and prosperity of this rising empire."10

The belief in America's superiority over the Old World appeared in the first issue, in Benjamin Franklin's "Consolation for America, or remarks on her real situation, interests, and policy." After commenting on America's basic stability because of her sound agriculture, Franklin drew attention to the much greater extent of poverty in Europe than here, Americans being generally of a middle-class condition.11 Feelings of superiority were hardly quelled by Carey's reprinting of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense"12 and they must have been intensified by Tench Coxe's remarks to "the friends of American manufactures," delivered at the University of Pennsylvania on August 9, 1787. Coxe counted on emigration from Europe to increase America's population, migrants being attracted by "the blessings of civil and religious liberty in America, and the oppressions of most foreign governments—the want of employment at home, and the expectations of profit here—curiosity, domestic unhappiness, civil wars, and various other circumstances. . . ."13

The leading article in November, 1787, was a Fourth of July oration from Petersburg, Virginia, in which the orator portrayed "the wide Atlantic, a powerful barrier against the intrigues, the ambition, the avarice of the European world: on the other hand, the vast Pacific, that also might secure us from the corruption and luxuriant effeminacy of the Atlantic." Americans thus had the noblest of all advantages, the right to form their own systems of government.14

Part of Carey's campaign for adoption of the Constitution of 1787 was his printing of Charles Pinckney's address at the May, 1787, opening of the South Carolina ratifying convention. Pinckney reinforced the superiority concept by stating that among European

10 Ibid., VI (July, 1789), 1.
11 Ibid., I (January, 1787), 5-8.
13 Ibid., II (September, 1787), 248-255.
14 Ibid., II (November, 1787), 419-422.
states only Britain confirmed to its citizens their civil liberties, making Americans "the first perfectly free people the world had ever seen," for even Britain denied some of her people full religious liberty.15 An anonymous writer went somewhat beyond Pinckney a year later in crying "O! why may we not flatter ourselves, that it was reserved for America to convince the world, that a republican government may exist in its utmost purity, to the final close of human nature?"16

Noah Webster, Jr., subscribed to these sentiments, listing the political advantages of America: a constitution written in the most enlightened moment of world history, equal distribution of property (assuming that slavery would decline), no hereditary distinctions of rank, almost perfect religious freedom, general education of young people (especially in the North), and the division of labor into specialties of economic efficiency.17

The Rev. William Rogers, Professor of English and Oratory at the University of Pennsylvania, shared the concept of American purity, assuring those who read his Fourth of July oration that

In America a nobler criterion has arisen. Her sons have felt no influence but the glory and prosperity of their country; and have claimed no re-
muneration, but the honour and bliss which naturally accompany the act that has rescued her from oppression.18

The author of "Observations on the Prospects of America" asserted in 1791 that the only threat to public tranquility was Indian trouble on the frontier,19 and another essayist compared "the civilized man and the savage" to America's obvious advantage. European peasants could not toil for themselves and were hampered by chains, kings, laws, prejudices, all society; Americans worked with the sure prospect of reward and had no limits to the range of their ideas.20

That would seem to complete the picture. But no possible advantage of life in America escaped the American Museum's readers.

15 Ibid., IV (September, 1788), 256-263.
16 Ibid., VI (November, 1789), 387.
17 Ibid., VI (November and December, 1789), 389-391, 450-451.
18 Ibid., VII (March, 1790), 161-163.
19 Ibid., X (December, 1791), 282.
20 Ibid., XI (May, 1792), 213-214.
A letter to the printer inquired, with apparent seriousness, "Are there any facts which prove, that longevity and fruitfulness have been promoted, by emigration to America from European countries?"\(^{21}\)

Belief in the superiority of their country strengthened Americans in their desire for isolation from the decadence and travails of Europe. When the Petersburg, Virginia, orator described the Atlantic as "a powerful barrier" between America and Europe,\(^{22}\) he encouraged his countrymen to rejoice at and to seek isolation. Charles Pinckney, describing Europe as "a melancholy picture of the depravity of human nature,"\(^{23}\) reinforced the desire to avoid injurious contact. An essay "on national pride of character," ascribed to John Fenno, printer of the *United States Gazette*, asserted that national pride promotes patriotism and that a nation becomes great by having it. The essayist acknowledged that Americans had derived their laws, opinions, manners, and fashions from Britain, but averred that the new central government would help develop true national character.\(^{24}\) Again, the strong implication was that less involvement with Europe would lead to an earlier development of such national character and with it national greatness.

Not only did the Rev. Rogers ascribe ambition and depravity as motivating British deeds\(^{25}\) but a later essayist rejoiced that "the causes, which create war among European powers, do not here exist"\(^{26}\) and that Americans could live in tranquility. Once more, the implication was clear that peace depended upon avoiding involvement in the affairs of Europe.

Yet, not all contact was to be eschewed. Economic involvement was just as essential as political and cultural disengagement. The *American Museum*’s second issue contained Benjamin Franklin’s essay in favor of "open trade"\(^{27}\) and the third one a letter on manufactures which proclaimed "A free trade is a constitutional privilege and a great blessing. . . ."\(^{28}\)

\(^{21}\) *Ibid.*, VI (July, 1789), 23.
\(^{22}\) *Ibid.*, II (November, 1787), 421.
\(^{23}\) *Ibid.*, IV (September, 1788), 256.
\(^{24}\) *Ibid.*, VI (November, 1789), 391-393.
\(^{26}\) *Ibid.*, X (December, 1791), 282.
\(^{27}\) *Ibid.*, I (February, 1787), 110-111.
\(^{28}\) *Ibid.*, I (March, 1787), 191.
As long as the *American Museum* lasted it printed information on the condition of American commerce. In March, 1787, Carey published a report of the *Empress of China*'s voyage to Canton in 1784, telling his readers that the Chinese "were highly pleased at the prospect of so considerable a market" and "very indulgent" toward American traders.\(^29\) The same issue contained an exchange of letters between Thomas Jefferson, then minister to France, and Charles Alexandre de Calonne, French Comptroller-General. Jefferson was trying to promote American tobacco and rice sales; Calonne was opposed to tobacco but was willing to encourage the importation of American fur and rice, and even to end French duties on whale oil, potash, naval stores, and ships.\(^30\)

A year later, Carey printed "Remarks on the conduct of Spain with respect to the navigation of the river Mississippi" by a Charleston man who signed himself "Fabius." This was an account of a trek by some forty Americans from Augusta, Georgia, to Natchez in the summer of 1785. They found a tiny garrison at Natchez, one reinforced because of their arrival, and, while treated decently, were not permitted to do any business. Apparently they discussed the problems of trade and boundaries with the Spanish Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana who had no instructions to trade with Americans and who asserted that Spain would hang on to her lower Mississippi territory unless driven out by superior force. One of the Americans replied that Spain's attitude was impolitic; if America once entered into conquest she would never stop until she had taken all of West Florida from the Perdido River to the Mississippi. "Fabius" concluded by remarking that should Spain ever be so unwise as to force America to fight for the rightful boundary (31 degrees north latitude) and trade rights 2,000 Americans could conquer Louisiana; 2,000 more could carry our flag to the heart of Mexico.\(^31\) Here a report on trade barriers was also an incitement to expansion.

These stirrings of what was to become "Manifest Destiny" did not divert Carey from the Far East. "Remarks on the commerce of America with China" counted the number of ships trading at Canton and Macao in the years 1784–1789 and revealed a slightly

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increasing American activity. An article describing Japan from volcanoes to social customs concluded that trade would be easy to open there. But Carey paid more attention to Great Britain than any other single trading nation. An essayist complained that Britain sought not only a tea monopoly in Europe but also exclusive trade in "the eastern division of the globe." Another reported the first Earl of Sheffield's conclusions that America was an essential market for British manufacturing goods and that American exports were equally necessary to his country. America need not pay court to Britain. This, too, must have given Americans reason to believe in their future. At the same time, Carey made his readers aware of trade problems by printing "A table of the principal restrictions, impositions and prohibitions sustained by the United States in their trade with the British dominions," which showed how much less restrictive America was toward British commerce.

In addition, Carey printed views of what American mercantile policies should be. The petitions by Boston and Philadelphia merchants which urged a new and stronger central government also favored its being able to restrict British trade and thus protect itself. Dr. John Morgan of North Carolina suggested exporting agricultural surpluses and importing manufactured goods from Europe. After all, he said, Europeans could manufacture more efficiently than Americans and could therefore furnish goods more cheaply. America might even injure her economy by attempting too much manufacturing too soon. This suggestion from an agricultural state was an isolated note in the American Museum. Carey was basically Hamiltonian and supported the Secretary of the Treasury's policies even to the first Bank of the United States.

Political analysis in the pages of the American Museum ranged from a superficial glimpse of "the national character of the Spaniards" (laziness, slowness, but sometimes violence because of being...
overimaginative), through the usual Fourth of July type of oratory extolling the virtues of America, to somewhat more sophisticated reasoning which still bore a heavy emotional burden. The most significant article of the latter sort came from the pen of William Vans Murray, later American minister to Holland and France. The fifth in his series of “Political Sketches,” it appeared in September, 1787. The topic was the balance of power, which Murray denounced as retarding the advance of “enlightened policy.” Monarchs, he said, led by ambition and love of glory, direct men ignorant of their own rights to invade the rights of others in wars which sealed monarchic claims but settled nothing of importance. Government should be put on a basis of “just power and right” which the playing of balance of power could not do. In fact, while the game of balance of power pretended to smother universal monarchy it actually organized universal slavery and ignored “the cause of human rights.” The solution was to bring nations to act toward each other as “moral agents” do, and nothing would tend more toward that happy goal “than the habits of a liberal commerce.”

European governments, observed Murray, were marked with “bigotry, superstition, and despotism,” while Americans, happily at a distance, felt little interest in the “claims of princes” or in the suppression of the rights of peoples.

In America, the policy of the balance of Europe will not apply. Her views are different from its attractions. A consciousness of security will give her repose: and her situation, her citizens . . . will protect this repose from interruption. . . .

In the United States, the principles of foreign policy will be regulated by the rights of nations. . . . Self-defense will not hold out the sophistry of ambition. No pretext will assume the form of a reason of state, to commit injustice or depredation under the guise of expediency. Not “to humble the haughty” but “to protect the oppressed,” will be [the] wise and amiable policy of states which have already proved their sense of glory, and have no interest to create another object for their exertions.

40 Ibid., VI (November, 1789), 365-368.
41 Ibid., VI (November, 1789), 385-387; II (November, 1787), 419-422; XI (May, 1792), 212-214.
42 Ibid., II (September, 1787), 240-241.
43 Ibid., II (September, 1787), 243.
America, far from playing the game of balance of power, would lead the way to a new and righteous mode of international behavior.

Small wonder that others joined Murray by cataloguing the elements of American greatness: unity "in sentiments, customs, and language," yet continental size and security because of the distance from Europe;\(^{44}\) a share in government for people of all ranks;\(^{45}\) soon, the growing "firmness and stability" of the new general government; and, again:

Our remote situation from other nations promises long peace. They will not be fond of contending with an empire so fast increasing, so firmly established, and having such powerful resources at command. The causes, which create war among European powers, do not here exist. . . .\(^{46}\)

Perhaps the clearest and most pragmatic forecast of American resentment of Europe and of her interest in future expansion was in "The Politician," reprinted from Fenno's Gazette. Its author granted that one must expect rivalry among nations of different interests who were "naturally jealous of each other's prosperity and growing greatness." For instance, it was the interest of Britain and France to close the Mediterranean to American commerce by fomenting "an eternal enmity" between America and the Barbary states. But, situated as America was, all she needed to enhance her prosperity was "to find markets to take off our almost inexhaustible and still increasing" surpluses. How should this be done?

The establishment of colonies, or even factories in advantageous situations, particularly in Asia (though I would by no means confine my views to that quarter of the globe), is evidently an object of vast importance to the United States, as naturally tending to promote the rapid increase of their naval strength, which would soon render them too formidable to dread any unprovoked injury or insult.\(^{47}\)

Here is an early hint of the imperialism of a century later, which has been described as "not a break in . . . history, but a natural culmination."\(^{48}\)

\(^{44}\) Ibid., II (November, 1787), 421.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., VI (November, 1789), 385–387.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., X (December, 1791), 282.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., VII (January, 1790), 13–19.
Also no aberration in American history was the role of the American Museum. It was obviously Federalist in its viewpoint, not only in supporting specific measures of the Washington-Hamilton program but also in supporting the concept and reality of a strong central government and in urging vigorous international trade. It publicized a number of ideas widely held in the governing group that founded the republic, helping to spread these ideas among Americans of the sort we now call opinion molders. In this way Carey's magazine shared in the creation of traditions and attitudes which have lasted into the twentieth century. Among them are opposition to monarchic or despotic government, the conviction that America is morally and politically superior to the Old World, the desire for political isolation from Europe, and the belief that America would become a beacon of new ways of conducting diplomacy by eschewing the use of raw force and turning instead to moral behavior.

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