any cost, convinced that the fragile American republic was neither militarily nor economically capable" of becoming involved in a war.[1] Furthermore, Washington strongly believed that America's future interests were not beholden to Europe, but instead lay westward.[2] The spectacle of the ongoing conflict between the French and British (and other European powers) was a "sideshow that must not divert attention from the enduring strategic interests of the United States," meaning that it would be both a waste of time and resources (and a fundamental blunder) if America entered the European maul.[3] Instead, Washington turned his (and the nation's) attention towards the western frontiers of the Northwest Territories, the Ohio Valley, and the Appalachian Mountains, believing that America's future laid here. Essentially, Washington considered the western frontiers the source of America's future (and continued) prosperity and feared that should the nation divert its attention to a needless war, it would prove fatal.

Peace, therefore, was the ultimate aim of the country in the immediacy, especially since the country lacked the adequate capabilities to prosecute a war in the first place. In his First State of the Union Address, President Washington declared that if the nation wished to be at peace then it should be "prepared for war."[4] The president hoped to use the military as a deterrent against would-be aggressors and in cases of emergency for when war did break out, and issued a call for Congress to raise troops and supplies.[5] But Washington's would-be aggressors were not the European powers per se. Instead, his concern was over the rising hostilities being encountered with the Indians to the west.[6] The lands of the Ohio Valley and Appalachia (that the British seceded following the Revolution) were not uninhabited. Instead, they were quite populated with approximately 76,000 Indian souls, with around 20,000 of them being warriors.[7] As settlers began to enter these "virgin" lands, Washington became more concerned with the rising tensions between "invading" settlers and the indigenous Indians. Initially, the president had hoped to create Indian "homelands" in the west that would be off-limits to American settlement, agreements that would be protected by treaty.[8] The president knew (from his previous experiences) that the Indian warriors could be formidable foes and would not back down easily against the arriving American settlers, which led to his Proclamation of 1790 that forbade any settling on Indian lands established under treaty.[9] Here, Washington hoped to avoid a protracted struggle with the Indians while also, through his calls for an establishment of a military, be prepared for a war if it came.

[1] Joseph Ellis, His Excellency: George Washington (New York: Vintage Books), pg. 211.
[2] Joseph Ellis, His Excellency, pg. 209.
[3] Ellis, 209.
[4] George Washington, First Annual Address to Congress, 8 January 1790, www.gwpapers.virginia.edu.
[5] George Washington, First Annual Address; George Washington, Third Annual Address to Congress, 25 October 1791, www.gwpapers.virigina.edu.
[6] George Washington, First Annual Address.
[7] Ellis, 211-212.
[8] Ellis, 212.
[9] Ellis, 212-213.

Ironically, the war that Washington feared would prove disastrous for the country came not from the European theatre but instead from the western front. In flamboyant fashion, settlers defied the Proclamation of 1790 and encroached on Indian tribal lands in the Ohio Valley. An uprising of Miami, Wyandot, and Shawnee began to target white settlers, prompting Washington to send in a military force to "protect" American citizens (who nevertheless were in violation of treaty).[10] The expedition, commanded by General Arthur St. Clair, was utterly repulsed and destroyed in 1791, provoking further outrage amongst the American public and new calls for Congressional action.[11] In his Third State of the Union Address sent to Congress, Washington called for further action from the House and Senate in order to establish a proper military stance, specifically "Magazines & Arsenals," so as to ensure that continued supplies for the war effort would be available and readily accessible.[12] While this statement arguably could be a general call of preparedness against any hostile force (including those from Europe), Washington's context was the backdrop of the "offensive operations" currently in progress to protect American settlers in the Ohio Valley as well as the failed St. Clair expedition.[13] In short, Washington feared that the tribes in the Ohio Valley would soon be joined in their endeavors by others, enlarging the conflict and putting even more strain on the already limited military resources available (which were largely already committed completely to the Ohio Valley).

Such an enlargement of the conflict began in 1792 when Southern tribes, specifically the Cherokee Nation, began to commit "depredations" on white settlements, causing the Indian war to move southward.[14] Since the outbreak of fighting in the Ohio Valley, Washington had been, as stated in his Fourth Annual Address to Congress, attempting to make peace with the tribes, but the Cherokees' "unprovoked hostilities upon…the United States" made such efforts difficult if not futile.[15] Instead, Washington declared in 1792 to Congress that he was taking further defensive measures in order to combat the uprisings in the South, as well as continuing his overtures of peace.[16] While Washington did state that the country was prepared to confront these newfound conflicts, he implored Congress to continue to raise more troops as the previous requests now proved to be "incomplete."[17] This statement is quite revealing, especially in demonstrating just how overextended the small American war machine was. Moreover, in 1793, clashes between Indians and settlers spread from the Ohio Valley to Florida and all places in between, with the Ohio tribes boldly declaring "war on any person

[10] Ellis, 213; George Washington, Second Annual Address to Congress, 8 December 1790, gwpapers.virigina.edu; George Washington, Third Annual Address.
[11] Ellis, 214.
[12] George Washington, Third Annual Address.
[13] George Washington, Third Annual Address.
[14] George Washington, Fourth Annual Address to Congress, 6 November 1792, gwpapers.virginia.edu.
[15] George Washington, Fourth Annual Address.
[16] George Washington, Fourth Annual Address.
[17] George Washington, Fourth Annual Address.