The Federalists’ Cold War:  
The Fries Rebellion, National Security,  
and the State, 1787-1800

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To forbear...from taking naval and military measures to secure our trade,  
defend our territory in case of [French] invasion, and prevent, or sup-press domestic insurrection would be to offer up the United States a cer-tain prey to Europe and exhibit to the World a sad spectacle of national degradation and imbecility.

James McHenry, Secretary of War, April, 1798

...the business of defence would be very imperfectly done, if [Congress]  
confined their operations of defence to land and naval forces, and ne-glected to destroy the cankerworm which is corroding in the heart of the  
country...there are a great number of aliens in this country from that  
nation [France] with whom we have at present alarming differences...there  
are emissaries amongst us, who have not only fomented our differences  
with that country, but who have endeavored to create divisions amongst  
our own citizens. They are...assiduously employed at this moment, and it  
is much to be lamented that there exists no authority to restrain this evil.

Samuel Sitgreaves, U.S. Rep. PA, May 1798

In the spring of 1798, as war with France loomed on the horizon, James  
McHenry and Samuel Sitgreaves surveyed the state of national security, exter-nally and internally, and found it wanting. The national government should  
be stronger, they worried, for in power lies real security. Rewind eleven years.  
At 9:00 am on Monday morning, June 18, 1787, Alexander Hamilton rose to  
his feet on the floor of the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia. He  
stood to denounce the democratic, individual state-centered “New Jersey Plan”  
for a central government. For nearly six hours on one of that summer’s hot-test days, Hamilton held the floor in an uninterrupted conditional endorse-ment of the “Virginia Resolves.” He favored the latter for its strength, but to  
his mind, the national government should be much stronger than a federal  
union would allow. “...[W]e must establish a general and national govern-ment, completely sovereign,” Hamilton demanded, “and annihilate the state distinctions and state operations.” It was not the state governments them-selves that Hamilton feared, but their local orientation and tendency to bend  
to the sway of the people, who “seldom judge or determine right,” that influ-
enced him to advocate an aristocratic, sovereign national government based on the British model. As much as the specter of popular democracy, the omni-presence of well fortified European forces surrounding the infant nation haunted Alexander Hamilton. Foremost among the defects of the democratic Confederation of independent states, Hamilton lamented, were security matters: that the states "can raise no troops nor equip vessels before war is actually declared. They cannot heretofore take any preparatory measure before an enemy is at your door." So here we see Hamilton at his most conservative, and his most monarchical. In order to attain an internal security, or "individual security" as he deemed it, Hamilton called for a limited electorate of elites, lifetime tenures for Presidents and Senators, and a national government veto of state laws. This powerful, sovereign, and energetic national state, invigorated with "public strength," could then provide a military defense to meet external security threats. Hamilton had two ends in mind that day, first, the creation of an omnipotent, "completely sovereign" national state, and of course that end would be the means toward securing the survival of the country and its republican experiment. Hamilton concluded his oratory at about three in the afternoon, surprisingly to no general disapprobation. On Tuesday, the delegates went back to discussing the merits of the Virginia and New Jersey Plans, almost as if Monday had never occurred.

Although the federal document that emerged from Philadelphia would create a significantly weaker nation state than Hamilton thought prudent, it was a start, and one that he enthusiastically endorsed in his home state of New York and around the country in The Federalist. Like infants, nations too are born weak, he surmised, and if properly conditioned by doting parents both can mature to be strong adults. Hamilton's quest to build a national state of immense power did not end that steamy June afternoon in Philadelphia; rather it had just begun. For the twelve years to follow, Hamilton would work as a Treasury Secretary, a General, and a lobbyist to enact policies that would create a vibrant and varied national economy, ensure the public credit, and provide internal and external security not only as ends in themselves, but as means to the ultimate goal of finishing what he believed was started at Philadelphia—the establishment of a "national government, completely sovereign." (He would work with and through several of the most conservative members of the Federalist elite, whom earlier historians have referred to as "The High Federlists." This essay terms them "Hamiltorians" and will identify them below.) Viewing this activity, especially the development of those internal and external security systems, through the lens of the modern "national security state" concept can do two things at once; it can rationalize what has heretofore been considered actions of irrational Federalist paranoia in the 1790s while at the same time revealing Hamilton for the true Machiavellian that he was.3
The National Security State and the Early Republic

During the hottest days of the Cold War, Southern historian C. Vann Woodward lamented that America's "age of free security" had come to an end with the close of World War II. Woodward as well as historians of American foreign policy have maintained that prior to 1945, oceanic buffers and weak neighbors in the Western Hemisphere afforded the U.S. a "free" national security in two ways. These conditions not only precluded expensive defensive measures during peacetime, but they saved Americans from increased governmental authority and incursions upon their liberties. During this era, America erected military schemes only during wartime and relaxed its defensive posture during peacetime. Thus, the tensions natural to a democratic-state between guarding the individual liberties of its citizens and providing for national security rarely surfaced.

In the last two decades, historians of the Cold War have described the post-War American reaction to a perceived Soviet threat as the creation of a "national security state." Jet propulsion, nuclear weapons, and intercontinental delivery systems shrunk the world and destroyed America's natural barriers of defense. Meanwhile, most Americans feared a Communist conspiracy to destroy America and dominate the globe. They feared the possibility of military invasion or nuclear attack. But just as much, Americans worried that the Communists would infiltrate American society and government, spread the ideology of socialism, and corrode the Americans' attachment to their own core values of independence, democracy, capitalism, and the free exercise of religion. The nation would then become ripe for Communist revolution and Soviet invasion. This popular attitude of anti-Communism sanctioned the national government's augmentation of power and authority during peacetime through the implementation of: (1) foreign and domestic policies such as containment, intervention, and the communist-hunting of McCarthyism (2) institutions like the FBI, the CIA, the National Security Agency, and the Department of Defense and (3) legislation like the Taft-Hartley Act, the McCarran Act, and massive tax increases. Americans willingly and otherwise sacrificed their tax dollars and, more important, their individual liberties for the preservation of shared national core values. In the 1940s and 1950s the threat seemed real enough, and many people, all too agreeably, complied. Fear motivated a democratic people to accept governmental strictures designed by national security advisors and military personnel whom they did not elect. Fear also led them to champion the oppressive policies, legislation, and bombastic anti-communist antics of some men they did choose. According to most historians of American foreign relations, the age of "free security" died with the close of the Second World War. Even the most recent edition of a very popular reader for undergraduates on American foreign relations from the Revolution to 1920 still opens with C. Vann Woodward's 1960 article describing the era as an "age of free security."
Indeed, in Cold War America, national security came with a very high price tag. But this does not mean that during America’s first century and a half that security was always free.7 When we judge the national security concerns of earlier policymakers by the benchmarks of popular attitude, policies, institutions, legislation, and perceptions of power relationships, the national security state model emerges as a useful tool for understanding the interconnection of America’s foreign relations and domestic policies during the pre-Cold War era—especially the 1790s. In that decade, the Hamiltonian Federalists attempted to build their own version of a national security state, although obviously to a lesser extent than did their Cold War followers. Their reaction to French Jacobinism in many ways foreshadowed the twentieth century response to Soviet Communism. Hamiltonians feared the French Revolutionaries’ radical, social-levelling democratic ideology and the violence and authoritarian government it spawned, much as their Cold War counterparts feared Soviet Communism. They shuddered at the thought that such an ideology might cross the Atlantic and take hold in America through the Francophile Democratic-Republican party. Federalists understood America’s weak position on the world stage and saw that Great Britain was the fulcrum in the balance of world power. They denied the validity of the Franco-American Treaty of Alliance, stuck to the 1793 policy of neutrality, signed the Jay Treaty, commissioned private armed vessels to protect Anglo-American trade, and ultimately fought a limited naval “Quasi War” with France from 1798-1800. The official policy, as Congressman Fisher Ames described it, was to “wage war while calling it self-defense,” and thus they would be prepared to meet the coming French invasion.8

And Federalists feared that invasion would soon come, so they created institutions such as the Provisional and “Eventual” armies, a Naval Department, and a Marine Corps, passed anti-Jacobin legislation such as the Alien, Sedition, and Naturalization Laws, and imposed the nation’s first direct tax to fund the military build-up. Federalists drafted these measures not merely to thwart invasion, but to prevent the French, or their American sympathizers, in the Republican party, from subverting their authority from within. They feared that the French would persuade Americans to join them in a war against their European adversaries here on the American continent and subject the young nation to the possible loss of independence. Worse still, they feared a French attempt to divide the nation internally to facilitate an external, Atlantic military invasion of the United States, what Alexander Hamilton termed “internal invasion.”9 And given the activity of French Ministers Genet, Fauchet, and Adet in America during the 1790s, Federalist anxiety seems understandable. The Federalists assumed, or at least hoped, that the American people would sacrifice the individual liberties of the first amendment and their freedom from direct federal taxation, and tolerate the creation of a “standing army,” in
order to safeguard independence, republican government, and the public and individual liberty attached to those hard-won achievements.

During the height of the Quasi-War, the Hamiltonians perceived that their fears had become real. On March 7, 1799, John Fries led an armed group of Pennsylvania Germans into Bethlehem to secure the release of neighbors whom the local marshall had jailed for resisting the Direct Tax. They wore “French Cockades,” professed a hatred for Philadelphia Federalists, and claimed loyalty to Thomas Jefferson. In reality, this affair hardly deserved its designation as the “Fries Rebellion.” With only the threat of violence, the marshall released the prisoners and the “rebellion” peacefully ended. As a result, historians generally ignore the event, or trivialize it as the “Hot Water War,” since one method of the tax resistance involved scalding the assessors. But Fries’s Rebellion did not seem trivial to the Hamiltonians. Their suppression of the insurrection with the Federal “Eventual Army” was the direct consequence of the national security policy formulated in the previous months. Moreover, the use of Federal troops, the charges of treason that followed, and the vehement Hamiltonian demands for executions became additional elements of national security policy. The Hamiltonians intended to make an example of the Fries rebels to prevent any further “Jacobin” insurrections that could expose the young nation to French invasion.

The eighteenth-century specter of Jacobinism failed to frighten most Americans into forgoing their liberties as the twentieth-century anti-communist hysteria did. Resistance to Federalist wartime demands is a testament to the political education Americans imbibed from the Revolutionary and Constitutional eras. Federalists asked too much too soon from a republican citizenry who jealously defended the liberties that their Constitution protected. Nevertheless, when we realize that the Federalists were elitist republicans, not democrats, their untroubled decisions to sacrifice individual liberties for the freedom of the American community make more sense. Moreover, the modern concept of the national security state is useful to understand Alexander Hamilton and the Federalist party as state-builders, as mentioned above. Neither were the people ready to succumb to an all-powerful nation-state that national security institutions seemed to forebode. Finally, the national security state model can also explain the Federalist hysteria of the late 1790s, culminating in legislation aimed squarely at silencing the opposition press and the Republican party. When placed within the context of a Federalist national security state, at a time when Federalists perceived all opposition as treason, these laws do not appear to be the simple arbitrary abuse of power some have long assumed them to be. James McHenry’s report to the House of Representatives and Samuel Sitgreaves’s remarks on the House floor, quoted above, exuded the Federalists’ anxieties about the democratic and insurrectionary tendencies among the people, their real fear of war with France, and
their determination to uphold the honor of the infant nation against the depredations of giants with the firm and unforgiving hand of order.

Anti-Jacobinism and National Insecurity

Throughout the 1790s, various domestic and international events reinforced the Federalists’ narrow conception of liberty and popular sovereignty and led to their increasing distrust of its use by the American people, such as: the fear of popular democratic and insurrectionary tendencies, the terror of the French Revolution, serious apprehensions over the emergence of a pro-French opposition party in America, and Federalist anxieties over French interference in American politics and society. As the decade wore on, Hamiltonian Federalists had increasing difficulty in separating these issues, and by 1798, they appeared to be parts of a concerted whole: democratic ingredients in a recipe for the destruction of Federalism, republican government, and national independence. Hamiltonians’ perceptions of the domestic political events and international crises in the decade after the Philadelphia convention convinced them to exert and expand their governmental authority, to demand order over individual liberty as necessary to secure republican liberty for all.

Alexander Hamilton began calling for a professional army to guard against insurrection as early as the Confederation era. In The Federalist, No. 6, he recalled the 1784 attempt by western Carolinians to forcibly secede and form the independent nation of Franklin and cited a similar plan by Pennsylvanians and New Yorkers of the Wyoming Valley. Of course, Shays’s Rebellion in Massachusetts and related violence in other states were more frightening still. Referring to Shays in Federalist no. 25, Hamilton insisted that “cases are likely to occur under our government... which will sometimes render a military force in time of peace essential to the security of society.” And in stark contrast to Jefferson’s metaphor that rebellions manured the tree of liberty, Hamilton noted in Federalist no. 28 that insurrections are “maladies as inseparable from the body politic as tumours and eruptions from the natural body” and “whatever may be its immediate cause, eventually [endanger] all government.” At the Constitutional Convention, his anti-democratic June 18 address pleading for a strong state focused on the need for military preparedness. And when violent resistance to his excise tax on whiskey erupted throughout the backcountry only a few years later, Hamilton and President Washington marched a volunteer army to make an example of frontier Pennsylvanians. In the few years after national unification under a republican constitution intended to secure both national independence and personal liberty, Americans proved to Hamilton their capability for violent insurrection and signalled the necessity for a peacetime army. Hamilton’s controversial arguments so shortly following the Revolution—its precipitated partly by a fear of standing armies—revealed the gravity of the threat to order he per-
ceived. They also reveal the risk he was willing to take, so soon, of using what anti-insturrectionary public sentiment did exist to justify the strengthening of the state.

The threat to order also had roots outside the United States. In the summer of 1789, the French Revolution commenced with the meeting of the Estates-General, the formation of the National Assembly, the storming of the Bastille, and the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen intended to be prefixed to a written constitution. Americans showed their universal approval, even future Federalists, with celebrations, parades, banquets, toasts, and memorials. Yet Hamilton recognized the potential troubles of the French Revolution as early as 1790. In a letter to the President, he advised Washington to avoid “any step that may embroil us with Great Britain” while France remained unstable. By 1793, the revolution in France had failed to stabilize, much as Hamilton had feared, and increased violence followed their attempted transition to democracy. The Girondins permitted unspeakable massacres when they suspended the monarchy in the previous fall of 1792, and then, on January 21, they publicly executed their king. Later that year, the Girondins would fall to the Jacobins and “The Terror” of Robespierre as political and social scores were settled with a torrent of bloodshed. In a series of published essays under the titles “Americanus” and “Pacificus,” Hamilton began to question “Whether the cause of France be truly the cause of liberty?” In a 1794 essay he answered that theirs was “the cause of Vice Atheism and Anarchy.” Hamilton’s anxiety over the French Revolution stemmed not from his concern for the French people but rather from its threat to order and government in America.

Since the beginning of the decade, if not much earlier, national politics had slowly factionalized over domestic issues such as Hamilton’s plan to fund the Revolutionary War debt, the creation of the Bank of the United States, and his “Report on Manufactures.” Questions of international commerce and alliances further divided the emergent parties precisely because of their intricate relation to domestic policies and the future direction of the young republic. The presence of the pro-French, Republican party in the United States during the years of the French Revolution placed fear in Federalists’ minds of a trans-Atlantic migration of French democracy, violence, and anarchy. The menace to order seemed obvious.

As early as 1792, Hamilton had identified Thomas Jefferson and James Madison as “the head of a faction... subversive of the principles of good government and dangerous to the Union.” To Hamiltonians, the danger emanated from their “womanish attachment to France and their womanish resentment against Great Britain,” emotions that would inevitably lead to war with England if they should control the government. Hamilton and the Federalists detested the Republicans’ attachment to France and worried that “the
Spirit of faction and anarchy” it spawned “in this country... [is] the only en-
emy which Republicanism has to fear.” Oliver Wolcott, a Hamiltonian and
Secretary of the Treasury under President Adams, also worried “that the French
count upon the support of a party in this Country;” it was “a systematical
measure of France to destroy the publick [sic.] confidence in the Friends of
Govt.” The Republicans, or the “French Party” as Federalists referred to them,
challenged the authority of the “Friends of Govt.” John Adams’s Secretary of
State, Timothy Pickering, furthered the Hamiltonian rhetoric by referring to
the Republicans as “our internal enemies.”

But the leaders of this “French faction” did not worry Hamiltonian Fed-
eralists nearly as much as did its followers. Federalists like New England
Congressman Fisher Ames dreaded that the Republicans could not—or worse
yet would not—control their constituents, and the people would overtake their
leaders with democratic zeal and then overturn republican government and
replace it with a “mobocracy.” Particularly disturbing to Federalists were
the formation of the popular Democratic Societies in 1793 and 1794, the
eruption of the Whiskey Rebellion in Western Pennsylvania during the same
time, and the public outbursts in opposition to the Jay Treaty in 1795. In
each case, the Federalists resisted assertions by average people that they had a
right to participate in the governing of the republic by attempting to shape
public policy. Each also provided the Federalists with more reasons and op-
portunities to increase governmental power and to exert their authority for
the cause of order and public liberty.

In the Spring of 1793, Americans reacted with unbridled enthusiasm
when they learned that the French had launched their experiment in republi-
can government. Soon after, the French Republic declared war on Great
Britain while continuing to fight for survival against its despotic continental
enemies. When Citizen Genet arrived in Philadelphia that May, the people
greeted him with banquets and balls. One particular group who expressed
support for Genet, the French Republic, and the cause of republicanism ev-
everywhere, asked their honored guest to suggest a name for their club and he
replied with the title “Democratic Society.” Shortly thereafter, a German
Republican Society appeared in Philadelphia, and three more clubs material-
ized in western Pennsylvania. Within the following two years, more than
thirty-five Democratic-Republican Societies would form, with at least one in
every state except Rhode Island and Georgia. They styled themselves after the
Jacobin Clubs in France and proposed to eradicate popular ignorance, that
“irreconcilable enemy of liberty.” Furthermore, out of “love for their coun-
try,” they vowed to “examine into the conduct of its officers.” And this they
did for two years, continually and openly criticizing the policies and the poli-
ticians of the Washington Administration. Federalists were shocked at the
nerve of these people, interposing themselves between the electorate and their
representatives. Since these societies were not answerable to the people—and especially because they breached the principle of popular deference central to the order oriented Federalist political culture—the Federalists deemed them illegitimate and dangerous to republican society. Three Democratic-Republican Societies in western Pennsylvania who agitated resistance to Hamilton’s federal excise tax convinced Federalists of the danger.\textsuperscript{21}

For more than two years following the creation of the “whiskey tax,” trans-Appalachian farmers individually and collectively condemned the excise and harrassed its collectors. Hamilton worried that if the government did not enforce the law—either through proclamation or by force—that “the authority of government would be prostrate.”\textsuperscript{22} In 1793, three Democratic Societies formed in southwestern Pennsylvania at Washington, Yough, and Mingo Creek, and were immediately involved in writing petitions and planning resistance.\textsuperscript{23} After the shooting of one of the “rebels” and the subsequent militia rally of 5000-7000 resisters at Braddock’s field in August, 1794, Washington and Hamilton led the 12,000 man army of federalized militia to eradicate the resistance. In his annual address to Congress the following November, Washington declared that “a prejudice festered and bittered by the artifice of men,” or “certain self-created societies,” he called them, had “produced symptoms of riot and violence.”\textsuperscript{24} The Democratic Societies interposed themselves between the people and the government, were not accountable to the people, and criticized the policies of the federal government without any authority. Federalists could conceive of no greater threat to republican order and government.

The connection between the societies and the insurrection afforded the Federalists the opportunity to increase the power of government by raising an army, making an example out of western Pennsylvania, censuring the Democratic societies, and quieting the Republican party. As Republican leader James Madison correctly perceived, the Federalists’ “game was to connect the democratic societies with the odium of the insurrection—to connect the Republicans in Congress with those societies—to put the President ostensibly at the head of the other party in opposition to both.”\textsuperscript{25} While Washington’s condemnation tarnished the societies and they quickly faded from existence, the Federalists could not silence Republican opposition and in less than a year Republicans presented their most vocal resistance to Federalist policy in the ratification debates over the Jay Treaty with Great Britain.

Once again, more disturbing to Federalists than the Republican congressional opposition were the popular outbursts opposing the treaty. Some opposed the solidification of economic ties between the U.S. and its recent enemy, while others resented that the agreement still did not satisfy American demands supposedly won by the 1783 Treaty of Peace signed at Paris. Popular protests sprang up all around the country. John Jay was burned in effigy, and Alexander Hamilton was pelted with stones when he attempted to defend
the treaty at a meeting in New York. Oliver Wolcott described a protest in Philadelphia as composed of a “generally ignorant mob, of that class which is most dissatisfied and violent.” During the Revolutionary era, the men who later became Federalists accepted and even approved of crowd action. But in the 1790s, when such action was directed against their own authority, they viewed all crowds as mobs and saw any protest as illegitimate. Federalists believed that the people were capable of launching a violent, bloody, democratic insurrection in the United States on the model of the French Revolution.

Considering the activity of French officials in 1790s America, these fears seem less irrational. Between 1793 and 1797, France sent three ministers to the United States: Edmond Genet, Jean Fauchet, and Pierre Adet. Federalists accurately believed that each of them tried to mold American public opinion and influence its politics to pull the U.S. into the war against Great Britain. Genet arrived in America in April, 1793, greeted in Charleston, South Carolina by wild celebrations in favor of the establishment of a French Republic. Within a month he received a similar welcome in Philadelphia, but by June his actions cast him into disrepute with President Washington and his entire cabinet. In his “No Jacobin” essays, Hamilton publicly denounced Genet for “placing himself at the head of a political club.” He charged that Genet’s involvement in the Democratic-Republican Societies amounted to “direct violations of our sovereignty,” tended “to divide a free country,” and led to “dissent, commotion, and in the end, loss of liberty.” Hamilton and other Federalists (and indeed even Jefferson) were outraged at Genet’s attempts to outfit American vessels as privateers against British shipping, even after Washington issued his Proclamation of Neutrality on April 22, forbidding American citizens from taking part in any hostilities on the seas with or against any belligerent and denying France the use of American ports for attacking British shipping.

Early in July, while President Washington was at Mount Vernon, Genet arranged for the captured British vessel, the Little Sarah, to be outfitted in Philadelphia as the privateer Little Democrat. Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Mifflin sent his Secretary of State, Alexander James Dallas, to advise Genet not to put the Little Democrat to sea against the President’s proclamation. Genet angrily refused and declared that he would go over the President’s head and appeal his cause, and the cause of France, directly to the American people. An irate George Washington exclaimed, “Is the Minister of the French Republic to set the Acts of this Government at defiance, with impunity? and then threaten the Executive with an appeal to the People... What must the World think of such conduct, and of the Govermm. of the U. States in submitting to it?” The next day the President met with his cabinet and decided to request the French government to recall Genet. Neither they, nor Genet, yet knew
that only a month earlier the Girondins had fallen to the Jacobins, that the
guillotines were chopping away, and that one was waiting for Genet should he
ever return home. He never did.33

When the Jacobin Fauchet succeeded Genet in 1794, Hamilton declared,
"Twas a Meteor following a Comet," because Fauchet attended meetings of
Democratic-Republican societies like his Girondin predecessor, "swallowing
toasts full of sedition and hostility to the Government" in open defiance of
President Washington's condemnation of those clubs after the Whiskey Rebel-
lion. In another year, Pierre Adet replaced Fauchet, and he too mingled at
Republican meetings. But Adet's political machinations far surpassed those
of Genet and Fauchet. He arrived in Philadelphia while the Senate was con-
sidering ratification of Jay's Treaty, and he publicly supported congressional
Republican opposition to the treaty with Britain. Adet again overstepped the
bounds of diplomatic protocol just days before the Presidential election of
1796. He published two open letters to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering
in the Republican newspaper, the Philadelphia Aurora. On October 27, he
charged that the Washington administration had failed to respond to French
inquiries about Jay's Treaty. Then, on November 15, he criticized the Federa-
list policy of disallowing American trade with French privateers.34

An outraged Hamilton fired back his "Answer" in New York's Evening
Advertiser. Adet's "apparent intention," Hamilton charged, "is to influence
timid minds to vote agreeable to their wishes in election of the President," by
"the apprehension of War with France." The "agreeable" candidate to French
wishes was Thomas Jefferson, of whom Hamilton lamented, "we have ev-
erything to fear if this man comes in."35 While the ministers' attempts to
secure a Jeffersonian victory and to block Jay's Treaty failed, their political
activity and sway in the Republican party motivated Federalists' action to
stamp out French influence during the Quasi-War.

Time and again, the Federalists' fears of domestic insurrection and their
anxieties over French intervention in American politics intertwined. Hamilton
condemned Genet's recruitment of American privateers "in open defiance to
the government: between which and our own citizens he presently endeavors
to introduce jealousy and schism." But even more alarming to Hamilton
were Genet's "covert" acts to ensnare the U.S. in the French war against Brit-
ain and Spain. "He sets on foot intrigues with our Southern and Western
extremes," Hamilton warned, "and attempts to organize... and to carry on...
military expeditions against the territories of Spain in our neighborhood." Indeed, Genet attempted to outfit a military expedition among Kentuckians,
to have been led by George Rogers Clark, to mount an attack on Spanish
posts along the Mississippi River. Pickering wondered "whether some secret
French agent was not employed before Genet's arrival, to tamper with the
Western people relative to the conquest of Louisiana?" Even more shocking
was Fauchet’s behavior during the Whiskey Rebellion. He publicly applauded the insurrection. According to Hamilton, “he knew and approved of a conspiracy which was destined to overthrow the administration of our government.” Once again, however, “Mr. Adet has been more circumspect than either of his predecessors.” Adet conspired to regain North American territory for France through covert operations involving American citizens. In December of 1796, Timothy Pickering received a distressing letter informing him “that Mr. Adet is in some kind of improper negotiation with one or more of the citizens of Kentucky.” By spring, Pickering, Hamilton, and Secretary of War James McHenry all suspected that Adet intended to foment rebellion among Kentuckians and use the independent state as a base to invade Spanish Louisiana and create a Republic west of the Mississippi.

Soon after the Kentucky affair, Pickering learned of Adet’s attempt to stir a French-Canadian rebellion against the British. More alarming, Adet recruited Americans from New England to assist in the liberation. Before Adet left for France in April, Pickering learned that Adet had commissioned David McLean of Rhode Island and Thomas Butterfield of Vermont to raise American troops and march on Quebec. The British successfully thwarted the insurrection and subsequently hanged its leaders, including McLean and Butterfield, but to Hamiltonians the Canadian rebellion and the Kentucky affair posed dangerous precedents. McHenry worried that “it would seem as if nothing, short of a dismemberment of the Union, and having part of it under French protection, would satisfy the directory.” And “after gaining this point,” he warned General Washington, “France will then play for the whole.” Pickering had more precise ideas of how the French plotted to overrun the United States. The “designs of France to repossess Canada” and its “means to regain Louisiana” proved to him that the French schemed “to renew the ancient plan of her monarchs of circumscribing (sic.) and encircling what now constitutes the [United] States” and ultimately control the continent. In May, 1797, Hamilton noted the possibility of a French naval invasion of America, but emphasized that “an internal invasion” seemed more likely. Even before the Quasi-War began, Hamiltonian Federalists were convinced that the French intended to subvert American independence and republican government from within.

Providing National Security--Building the State

In these years of worsening Franco-American relations, the Hamiltonian Federalists definitely feared for the safety of the republic. By 1797, they had seen domestic insurrections. They had witnessed a French republican revolution turn democratic and violent during the 1793 “Reign of Terror.” They had seen the rise of a “French Party” contesting Federal authority inside the United States. And most horrifying, they had watched as French minis-
ters meddled in U.S. politics and attempted to turn Americans against their own government. The situation was already dangerous, but it became absolutely perilous after 1797. The French refusal to accept American minister Charles C. Pinckney in that year, followed by months of French depredations on American shipping and the tumultuous XYZ Affair, all seemed to hurdle the young republic toward war.

To meet these challenges and allay their fears for the safety of the young nation, Federalists sought to maintain order in the 1790s by flexing the muscles of federal authority. Ironically, Alexander Hamilton—the man who directed Federalist policymaking throughout the decade—stood outside of public office during the crisis years of 1797-1799, at the time serving as a general in the U.S. Army. Nevertheless, it is clear that Hamilton still guided the party. Through his daily correspondence with John Adams’s cabinet members, particularly Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, Secretary of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of War James McHenry, and influential Congressmen such as William Loughton Smith and Theodore Sedgwick, not to mention Presidents Washington and Adams, and a host of other Federalist politicians, Hamilton constantly shaped legislative and executive action. While Washington remained the party’s figurehead and Adams’s position as President made him its arms and legs, it was Hamilton to whom other Federalists looked for leadership. He was the party’s heart, the personification of Federalist energy, vigor, authority, and order. Between the Spring of 1797 and March 1799, General Hamilton and his allies led the Federalist party in constructing the nation’s first program of national security. Hamilton assumed roles not unlike those taken by National Security Advisors, CIA and FBI directors, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the twentieth-century. Well before the era of the long-range bomber, the nuclear missile, and the hysteria of anti-communism, Americans, at least Hamiltonians, doubted the security of oceanic buffers and sought to fortify them with protective legislation and institutions. Too, like his Cold War heirs who in the post-war crisis sought to burgeon the state and manipulate a “preponderance of power,” Hamilton used the perceived necessity of security measures to implement long held plans to enhance the power of the national government. Hamilton saw the coming crisis not only with a respectful amount of fear, but with an opportunistic eye as well.

Federalists, like Hamilton, had good reason to doubt the protection of the oceans in the 1790s. While the distance the Atlantic created between America and Europe proved advantageous to the U.S. during the Revolution and the War of 1812, it certainly did not prevent European attacks, as those two wars evidence. Indeed, by the 1790s the British, French, and Spanish had been warring with one another on and around the American continent for nearly two centuries. For most of the decade, Spain and Great Britain maintained armed forces on the American continent. Moreover, since 1793,
France and Britain had waged war against one another on the seas—with the help of the Dutch and the Spanish—not only on the Atlantic, but particularly in the West Indies, where the U.S. enjoyed substantial trading advantages during wartime. Meanwhile, American diplomatic relations with France had steadily deteriorated since the 1793 Proclamation of Neutrality and the 1795 Jay Treaty. Fauchet was so outraged by the Jay Treaty that he demanded that Americans be made to hear “the voice of France thundering against the treaty and demanding justice.” In 1796, French privateers in the Caribbean took advantage of the souring relations and began attacking American commercial shipping in the West Indies. The Directory then sanctioned the piracy with a decree of July 2, authorizing the condemnation of neutral ships trading with belligerents. In the summer and fall of 1796, American newspapers reported the loss of scores of commercial vessels to French privateers.39

In November, the United States dispatched Charles Cotesworth Pinckney as Minister Plenipotentiary to France. Pinckney arrived in Paris on December 5 to negotiate a settlement with France, but the Directory refused to formally receive him and, in fact, declined even to contact him for over a month. Pinckney left Paris in February, and Franco-American relations appeared to be at an impasse.40 Hamilton desperately wanted to avoid a war with France, and when John Adams came into office in March, the general fervently pressed cabinet members Pickering, Wolcott, and McHenry to impress upon the president the importance of an “Extraordinary Mission” of three to negotiate with France.41

On March 22, 1797, Hamilton wrote to the Secretary of State and presented him with a list of actions the government should take in response to the Pinckney rejection. Along with the creation of an extraordinary commission, Hamilton wanted Pinckney to prevail upon the President to declare a national day of humiliation and prayer, to call the fifth Congress into session, and to urge that Congress prepare defensive measures. Among those measures, Hamilton suggested the creation of a Navy and a Provisional Army of 25,000 in case of war, commissions for merchants to arm themselves, and a means for collecting the revenue to fund the military buildup. “The governing passion of the Rulers of France has been revenge...to force us into a greater dependence may be the plan,” Hamilton warned Pickering, and in “this time of general convulsion, in a state of things which threaten all civilization, 'tis a great folly to wrap ourselves up in a cloak of security.” Three days later, President Adams issued a proclamation calling for the convening of a special session of Congress on May 15, as “an extraordinary occasion exists...in order to consult and determine on such measures as in their wisdom shall be deemed meet for their safety and welfare of the said United States.”42

Within weeks, Hamilton got to work impressing his ideas on the coming Congress. He chose to operate through South Carolinian William
Loughton Smith, who chaired the Ways and Means Committee in the House of Representatives. On April 5, he wrote to Smith expressing concern over the situation with France, and on the 10th, he wrote again, this time with a detailed plan of action for the fifth Congress. Hamilton first insisted that a commission should be sent "to avoid...a rupture with France." He worried that if war erupted and "a sudden peace in Europe takes place," France could concentrate all her energies on America and then "what is to hinder an invasion?" Internally, Hamilton dreaded "the very large party infatuated by a blind devotion to France." He asked Smith, "In a contest so dangerous" who will guarantee that "these [Republicans] on considerations of ambition, fear, interest, and predilection would not absolutely join France?" Further distressing to Hamilton was "the vast body of blacks" in the South. Referring to the French alliance with Toussaint Louverture of St. Domingue against Britain, Hamilton reasoned "[w]e know how successful the French have been in inoculating this description of men and we ought to consider them the probable auxiliaries of France." Therefore, Hamilton urged "1 a further attempt to negotiate," and in case that should fail, "2 vigorous preparation for war." After quickly outlining his ideas for a commission Hamilton turned to defensive measures. He presented Smith with a detailed list of eight proposals for national security that Congress should pursue. He called for a new tax and for authorization for the executive to borrow five million dollars on the basis of that revenue; the completion of the U.S. frigates *United States*, *Constitution*, and *Constellation*; instructions to obtain more ships from Great Britain; commissions for merchant ships to arm and protect themselves; an embargo on trade with France and an order to force merchant vessels to sail armed or under convoy; and the fortification of principal ports. In addition, he demanded the establishment of a provisional army of twenty thousand infantry which would better defend the country than the militia in case of invasion. Hamilton expected stiff opposition to the creation of a professional army from the Republicans, who would deny the probability of a French invasion. He instructed Smith to answer that those "who may think an Invasion improbable ought to remember that it is not long since there was the general Opinion the U[nited] States was in no danger of War...the present opinion that there is no danger of invasion may be as chimerical as that other which experience proves to be false."

Besides, Hamilton reasoned in another letter, their arguments should be moot because he was offering a provisional army in substitute for a standing one, "the men to be regularly enlisted (sic.) upon condition not to be called into actual service except in case of Invasion." He further suggested raising additional artillery and augmenting the cavalry by two thousand, which "will be useful guards against the Insurrection of the Southern Negroes--and they will be a most precious arm in case of Invasion."
In winding up his letter to Smith, Hamilton made one final suggestion for mobilizing public opinion against France and in favor of the military measures. He was quite worried that should war break out, the people might view it as a failing of the Federalist party and not as a result of French outrages, and that they would then throw their support behind the Republicans (hence his desire to send the Commission). To counter the Republican influence, he recommended that “a day of humiliation and prayer besides being very proper would be extremely useful” as,

[a] philosopher may regard the present course of things in Europe as some great providential dispensation. A Christian can hardly view it in any other light. Both these descriptions of persons must approve a national appeal to Heaven for protection. The politician will consider this an important means of influencing Opinion, and will think it a valuable resource in a contest with France to set the Religious Ideas of his Countrymen in active Competition with the Atheistical tenets of their enemies.  

Not unlike the Cold Warriors who would follow him a century and a half later, Hamilton certainly doubted the security of oceanic barriers to the invasion of America by a foreign power whose core values were antithetical to America’s, and which held significant sway over a certain population of American citizens—some of whom held prominent positions in government. (Indeed, one was the vice-president!). He also called for the mobilization of public opinion, by appealing to the people’s religious sensibilities, to create a popular attitude that would allow the creation of a military establishment and the raising and expenditure of sums by Congress heretofore unheard of by the American people.

In April, President Adams issued a list of fourteen questions to his cabinet about the French situation. Secretary of War McHenry transmitted these to Hamilton, and Hamilton quickly fired back a set of responses that mirrored his letter to Smith. McHenry thanked Hamilton for the plans and promised to use them to help the President draft the speech he would deliver to Congress upon their assembling.  

When Congress convened on May 16, President Adams delivered a speech that perfectly reflected Hamilton’s opinions in his letters to McHenry and Smith. Adams warned Congress that France evinces a disposition to separate the people of the U.S. from the Government; to persuade them that they have different affections, principles, and intents from those of their fellow citizens: and thus to produce divisions fatal to our peace... While we are endeavoring to adjust all of our differences with France by amicable negotiation, the progress of war in Europe, the depredations on our commerce, the personal injuries to our citizens, and general complexion of affairs, render it my indispensable duty to recom-
mend to your consideration effectual measures of defence...to guard against sudden and predatory incursions.  

Three weeks later, William Loughton Smith presented ten resolutions to the House which followed Hamilton’s plan nearly verbatim, with an additional call for a prohibition of the export of arms, ammunition, and military and naval stores. For the remaining four weeks of the first session, Congress debated Smith’s national defense resolutions and enacted some into law. Congress prohibited the exportation of arms, provided for the defense of ports and harbors, commissioned the completion of the three frigates along with appropriations to arm and man them, raised revenue by levying a stamp duty on legal papers and licenses, and authorized the President to borrow $800,000 on the credit of that tax. While a provisional army could not be agreed on during the short first session, Congress did pass “An Act authorizing a detachment of the Militia of the United States,” which ordered the states to place 80,000 men in readiness to be called by the President to defend the nation in case of invasion or war. Also during the special session, Adams, with the help of his cabinet, formed an “Extraordinary Commission” to be sent to Paris. Republican Elbridge Gerry would serve along with Federalists Pinckney and John Marshall. The three men sailed for Paris later that summer, while the President, the Congress, and the American people waited for events to unfold.

The nation’s most dangerous international crisis since the Revolution occurred in 1798. The commission arrived in Paris to discuss settlement for American commercial losses and to pursue an agreement that would secure American trading rights as a neutral nation and preclude further French attacks. Talleyrand, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, again refused to receive the American delegation, and after some months he sent a group of intermediaries to offer the three Americans a deal. In order to meet with Talleyrand and begin negotiations, they demanded an American payment of tribute to the French Directory. Pinckney and Marshall reported the incident to the President in March, and Federalists proclaimed their outrage. Timothy Pickering complained bitterly about the “apologies our internal enemies [the Republican party—Jefferson in particular] make for the French Government.” This generated the “XYZ Affair” in April, 1798 when the Republican Party demanded proof of French corruption and John Adams subsequently released the “XYZ Dispatches.” The insult of April’s XYZ Affair was compounded by the injury of more serious French depredations on American commercial shipping. French privateers had captured more than three hundred American vessels in the previous eighteen months, and by the Spring of 1798 they no longer confined their piracy to the Caribbean. They began patrolling America’s coastal waters, waiting outside its harbors and bays to pounce upon unarmed
ships. The three U.S. frigates were still under construction, and war between the former allies appeared imminent. The dispatches shocked the entire nation, and letters, memorials, petitions, declarations, and toasts of support poured into Adams's office from all corners of the nation, vowing "Not one cent for tribute!" and pledging to stand behind the President, even in the case of war, to protect the honor, integrity, and security of the republic. Many wore black ribbons or cockades on their hats to show their support for the President and their disapproval of France. Republicans took to wearing red, white, and blue cockades, and the ribbons became badges of party loyalty in the streets of Philadelphia.

Hamilton detected a sinister conspiracy. By May, he was convinced that the United States would most likely fall into a war, not only with France, but with a body of its own people as well. He wrote a distressing letter to George Washington:

There is certainly a great possibility that we may have to enter into a very serious struggle with France; and it is more and more evident that the powerful faction which has for years opposed the Government is determined to go every length with France. I am sincere in declaring my full conviction...that they are ready to new model our constitution under the influence or coercion of France—to form with her a perpetual alliance offensive and defensive—and to give her a monopoly of our Trade by peculiar and exclusive privileges. This would be in substance, whatever it might be in name, to make this Country a province of France.

He then called on Washington to abandon his retirement and to tour through Virginia to fan the flames of the "black cockade fever" by speaking out against the French and their American sympathizers. Finally, he regretfully informed the General that his services may again be necessary at the head of the army.

Other Federalists worried that the French were ready to invade the United States. On March 21, Timothy Pickering wrote to Robert Goodloe Harper, Federalist representative from South Carolina, and warned him that the French intended to foment a slave rebellion in the South and then launch an invasion from St. Domingue. In April, Harper declared to the House that 5000 French troops were prepared "to make a blow on the Southern country whenever the word of command shall be given." Former Secretary of War Henry Knox concurred with Pickering and Harper when he warned the President that the French would raise an army of "ten thousand blacks" and "land on the defenceless parts of South Carolina or Virginia." On May 8, the Speaker of the House, Jonathan Dayton, publicly announced that the troops France had been amassing in its ports were not bound for England, but for the United States.
The following day, President Adams proclaimed a national day of fasting and prayer. He agreed with Hamilton that an appeal to the people’s religious sensibilities would foster national unity. Moreover, Adams knew that much of the American clergy would directly assist the Federalists in the mobilization of popular opinion against the atheistic French revolutionary government. That morning, Jedediah Morse delivered a sermon in Boston’s Old North Church that sent shockwaves through New England and the Federalist party. Morse held forth a book written by John Robison, a Scottish professor of science at the University of Edinburgh, *Proofs of a Conspiracy against All the Religions and Governments of Europe*, which had recently been reprinted in New York. In it, Robison contended that in 1775, a Bavarian professor of Canon Law had founded a secret society, the Order of the Illuminati, dedicated to masterminding a world democratic revolution by undermining Christianity, fomenting class warfare, and overturning all of the governments of Europe, replacing them with anarchy and licentiousness. The Illuminati, Robison claimed, plotted the French Revolution and designed England’s social unrest during the Pitt administration of the 1790s. In his sermon, Morse gravely reported to his congregation and to America that the subversives of the Illuminati, under the influence and direction of France, had crossed the Atlantic and were busy with their work of fostering a godless, world democratic revolution in the United States, although at the time he had no conclusive evidence to prove it.

A few weeks later, Harvard divinity professor (and Morse associate) David Tappan delivered a sinister warning to Harvard’s graduating class. Like Robison, Tappan worried that the Illuminati’s radical, democratic ideas were deliberately engineered to contaminate the minds of the young—a belief strikingly similar to those held by twentieth century anti-communists. Tappan charged that “under the mask of universal philanthropy,” the Illuminati “has been aiming at complete dominion over the minds and bodies of mankind” by infiltrating the media and spreading their ideas “among young people with the help of young writers.”

A year after his sermon at the Old North Church, Jedediah Morse returned to the subject of the Illuminati in Charlestown, Massachusetts, this time with “complete and indubitable proof” of its operation in America. He began by reminding his congregation and readers that the Illuminati first targeted Christianity and that its destruction would topple government:

In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation...in the same proportion will the people of that nation recede from the blessings of genuine freedom, and approximate the miseries of completed despotism... If so, it follows that all efforts made to destroy the foundations of our holy religion, ultimately tend to the
subversion also of our political freedom and happiness. Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and all the blessings which flow from them, must fall with them.

Then, in a dramatic move that foreshadowed Senator Joseph McCarthy’s 1950 Charleston, West Virginia, speech, Morse drew from his pocket “an official, authenticated list of names, ages, places of nativity, professions, etc. of the officers and members of a Society of Illuminati... consisting of one hundred members, instituted in Virginia, by the Grand Orient of FRANCE.” Most were emigrants from France and St. Domingue, with only a few Americans. Nonetheless, Morse proclaimed that they were “enemies whose professed design is to subvert and overturn our holy religion and our free and excellent government” and whose actions had already born fruit with the Whiskey Rebellion, the creation of Democratic Societies, the formation of an opposition party, and infiltration of the media by Republican newspaper editors. Although Morse had an audience with Federalists such as Adams, Washington, Wolcott, and Pickering, it is unknown how much of his Illuminati theory they accepted. There has never appeared sufficient evidence to prove that the society was ever any more than a limited, shortlived philanthropical association. But Federalists certainly believed that there was a French conspiracy to undermine America’s republican government, Illuminati or no Illuminati.

In his 1799 essay, “Laocoon,” Massachusetts Federalist Fisher Ames heeded Hamilton’s call to mobilize popular opinion for Federalist national security designs when he saw the hysteria over the Illuminati conspiracy as the perfect vehicle to that effect. Federalists were only just learning how to play the game of popular politics, and they did well by stealing the Republican tactic of using the issue of popular sovereignty to justify their actions. “[P]ublic opinion is the great auxiliary of good government,” Ames professed, and he asked “[w]here can its weight fall so properly as on the conspirators who disturb its tranquility.” Taking aim at the Republicans and their charges of Federalist monarchism, Ames continued,

Our government has not armies, nor a hierarchy, nor an extensive patronage. Instead of these auxiliaries of other governments, let it have the sword of public opinion drawn in its defence, and not only drawn but whetted by satire to an edge to hew its adversaries down.

Many Federalists in 1798—especially those from New England—began calling for a declaration of war against France, as public opinion seemed to support it. Theodore Sedgwick, George Cabot, Fisher Ames, and Timothy Pickering all clamored for war during the second session of the Fifth Congress
to assuage the national honor, attack the Republican party, and unify Americans under the Federal party. But many other Federalists, including Hamilton, Harper, Jay, and Marshall, still opposed it. Hamilton certainly expected war, but in the Spring of 1798 he did not believe it was America's best course. If war was to come, Hamilton and the moderates believed that France must initiate it to obviate any political capital the Republicans might try to gain from a Federalist declaration. Enough moderate Federalists in Congress agreed with Hamilton to prevent a vote on war. In that spring and summer of the second session, domestic party conflict, divisions among the Federalists, and military unpreparedness prevented the Adams administration from declaring an offensive war against France. The Federalists instead adopted a defensive strategy to guard against an overt French invasion or, more likely, covert stimulation of domestic insurrections. Their policy, as Fisher Ames described in a letter to Pickering, would be to "[w]age war and call it self-defence."63

Initially, the Fifth Congress began implementing that policy much in the way President Adams had hoped, by taking measures to protect American commercial shipping. In the second session, Congress appropriated over two million dollars to complete construction of the three warships, to refurbish and build new fortifications for America's ports and harbors, and to outfit the newly created Department of the Navy and Marine Corps with two dozen armed ships, a number of supporting vessels, and the arms, ammunition, and crews to man them. On May 28, the Federalists launched their unofficial war against the French by passing an act "to protect the commerce and coasts of the United States," which authorized the President to instruct American ships to seize any French vessel suspected of committing depredations on U.S. commerce or merely suspected of intending to commit such offenses by "hovering on the coasts of the U.S." In June, Congress authorized merchant vessels to defend themselves against French depredations, and in July, Congress expanded these laws further by ordering the commanders of public armed ships to capture any armed French vessels and authorizing the President to commission privateers to do the same. In the meantime, President Adams signed laws declaring an embargo on all trade with France and nullifying all previous treaties between the two quarreling nations. Although he would have preferred an official declaration of war to justify these augmentations, Adams was satisfied with the congressional plan of naval armament that followed his suggestions, and he thought it would sufficiently meet national security needs. Alexander Hamilton and the Fifth Congress were not so sure.

Along with naval provisions, Federalists and Republicans joined in Congress to augment the military establishment on land as well. Southern Republicans worked with Federalists on these measures to answer their constituents' fears of a French invasion from the West Indies, and it was their involvement that drastically cut the numbers of troops and the President's
discretion for using them desired by Hamilton and William Loughton Smith. Republicans, much more so than Federalists, held to the fear of professional "standing" armies inherited from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Country oppositionist thought, particularly because of their self-imposed role as the opposition party in America. They feared what they saw in the standing armies of Europe: mustered from the dregs of society, lorded by the aristocratic kin of governors, and used arbitrarily by tyrannical governments to impose their authority by squelching opposition, all the while wreaking havoc on the communities that hosted them. So, when they authorized the president to raise a Provisional Army of 10,000 volunteers—instead of Hamilton's 20,000—Republicans in the House would not allow him to do so “whenever he shall judge the public safety requires the measure,” as the original Federalist Senate bill stipulated. Instead, the House bill that passed on May 18 and became law ten days later, allowed the president to raise the force only “in the event of a declaration of war against the United States, or of an actual invasion of their territory by a foreign power, or of imminent danger of such invasion discovered in his opinion to exist, before the next session of Congress.” Not only was the law substantially weaker than Federalists had wished, it was scheduled to expire within seven months. Nevertheless, this was still a victory for Federalists who had sought to create an auxiliary reserve force during the 1794 crisis with Britain and in 1797 when hostilities erupted with France—both occasions to no avail. Their Provisional Army was more than just a protection against French invasion, however. Federalists hoped to use it as a precedent for strengthening the military during peacetime.

Some weeks later, as the nation prepared to celebrate the twenty-second anniversary of its Declaration of Independence, Robert Goodloe Harper presented a bill to the House that would vastly expand both the Provisional and the regular United States Armies. After years of military troubles on the frontiers of the Northwest Territory in the early 1790s, Congress had established a regular peacetime army of 3000 professional soldiers in 1796. By eighteenth-century European standards, this was a very small army, and it was primarily concerned with defensive operations (although certainly not from a Native American perspective) and relegated to frontier areas away from the centers of population. Harper's bill would change all of that. Out of the 50,000 men he proposed, over 12,000 would be immediately activated for service as regulars. But once again, Republicans substantially modified Federalist provisions. The bill that resulted let the Provisional Army Act stand and augmented the regular army by the addition of 12,000 troops, but not indefinitely; the auxiliaries would only serve for the duration of the current emergency. Nevertheless, as with the Provisional Army Act, this was still a Federalist victory. An elated Alexander Hamilton viewed the "New Army," although limited to the existing crisis, as an opportunity to extend the principle of a
peacetime standing army into the republic’s future—a plan he had deemed necessary for national power since he chaired the Continental Congress’s military committee in 1783. The state was indeed growing and strengthening under Hamilton’s prideful care.

The elements of the Hamiltonian system of national security seemed to be coming together. The President’s May 9 proclamation of a day of humiliation and prayer, combined with the popular outpouring of support for the President and the Federalist party after the XYZ Affair, seemed to evince a popular attitude of anti-Jacobinism. Although Congress did not officially declare war on France, anti-Jacobinism made possible the May 28 act to “protect the Commerce and Coasts of the United States,” a policy—as Fisher Ames described it—of waging war while calling it self-defense during peacetime “as if we were in war.” And Congress managed to establish institutions—the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, the Provisional Army, and the “New Army”—to meet the national security demands of that policy. But the Federalists in Congress were not prepared to stop here. Just as they had expanded Adams’s designs further than the President had wished with the Hamiltonian military establishment, they planned to extend Hamilton’s national security strategy further than even Hamilton had imagined with the various laws that comprised the Alien and Sedition Acts.

The Alien and Sedition Acts were a compilation of four laws: the 1798 Naturalization Act which extended the residency requirement for U.S. citizenship from five to fourteen years; the Alien Act which gave the President authority to deport “all such aliens as he shall judge dangerous...to the United States”; the Alien Enemies Act that provided the President with the power to deport alien men from nations with whom the United States was at war; and the infamous Sedition Act which outlawed “false, scandalous, or malicious writing or writings against the Government of the United States...either House of Congress...or the President.” While these measures were used by Federalists to suppress their political opposition, this was not the sole intention. More than the product of revenge, this legislation was born from an age of fear. In the spring and summer of 1798, Federalists and even some Republicans anticipated a French invasion of the United States. Both knew that for years French officials had meddled in American politics and had attempted to enlist more than just American support for French military causes. Moreover, they had both witnessed the immigration of thousands of Irish people and French refugees into America over the decade. While the Republicans enjoyed the political support of French and Irish immigrants, both Federalists and Republicans recognized that the French emigres could have obvious connections with an invading force and that the Irish had long supported the French as enemies of Great Britain. Considered in this context, the various alien laws were as much real national security measures in their intention, designed to
remove potential spies, collaborators, or instigators of domestic unrest, as they were elements of a repressive Federalist program to quash Republican dissent in their actual use. Hamilton, for his part, was none too happy about the Alien Act or the Sedition Act, but not because he disagreed with them in principle. He believed that the Alien bill placed too much power in the hands of the President during peacetime and he worried that this would provide political capital for the opposition. With the Sedition bill too, Hamilton lamented the possible political consequences of the actions of his overzealous friends in Congress. Federalist Representatives and Senators were also anxious to augment the power of the state, a bit too anxious in Hamilton's mind. Such rash and hasty measures could jeopardize the pro-Federalist, anti-Jacobin popular attitude the he and his followers had worked so hard to attain, and thereby dash this opportunity, if handled carefully, to significantly increase the power and authority of the national government. His worries were justified indeed as the numerous sedition trials and their backlash attested.

In the third session, convening from November, 1798 to March, 1799, the Fifth Congress continued its national security preparations and spent over $6 million on defense. Congress apparently swallowed whole the 1798 slogan, "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute!" Besides appropriations, however, two other actions are worth noting. The first was a further attempt by the Federalists to enhance the military establishment, but with a markedly different tone than than the Provisional Army Act or the creation of the "New Army." With the convening of the third session, the Provisional Army Act expired. When the fifth Congress prepared to adjourn in March, 1799, with the Quasi War continuing, they still felt the need to give the President the authority during recess to raise an army to defend the nation against a foreign invading force. By 1799, the fact that the French had yet to attack American shores as expected heightened the Federalists' suspicion that the French policy was, as Hamilton surmised, "internal invasion." The "Eventual Army Act," signed into law on March 2, gave the President the authority to augment the regular army with a requisition of state militias, not only to meet an invasion of foreign armies while Congress was in recess, but to "suppress [domestic] insurrections."

The Federalists of the Fifth Congress thus did all they could to fulfill their national security policy of waging war while calling it self-defense. They worked to mobilize public opinion and to create a popular attitude of anti-Jacobinism. They created institutions of defense and domestic control: a Navy, a Marine Corps, Provisional, Eventual, and regular armies. They even passed the radical, anti-subversive legislation of the Alien and Sedition Acts.

Even more radical than standing armies, alien acts, or sedition bills in 1798 were the fiduciary decisions reached by the Fifth Congress to fund all of its national security measures on top of other expenses. In its first session, the
Fifth Congress allocated $454,000 for defense—a heavier defense allocation than usual for a single session, but not extraordinary. Then in the days that followed the XYZ Affair, the second session passed thirty-three pieces of national defense legislation, with a price tag of $3,887,971.81—more than the entire First Congress had appropriated for all government expenditures. The third session would later add over $6,000,000, making the total defense appropriation by the Fifth Congress a staggering $10,519,367.84, almost four million dollars more than the entire normal expenditure would have been for 1798.76 For most of the decade, the federal government was able to fund its domestic and foreign debt and pay for its operating expenses with the impost and tonnage duties and internal excise taxes on items such as liquor and salt. In fact, many years ended with a balanced budget or with a surplus, but not 1798, as the House Ways and Means Committee was learning in the second session.

On May 17, 1798, a Philadelphia newspaper reported on the Ways and Means Committee’s calculations for the annual budget. The income of $8 million would more than satisfy the normal expenditure of $6.9 million, but the government owed the Bank of the United States a payment of $400,000 on December 31, and Congress had to allocate an additional $1.4 million to meet the foreign debt. To this $700,000 shortfall, the Committee added the “Extraordinary costs” of the military preparations, which as of May 17 totaled nearly $2.5 million. The government was operating in a hole $3.2 million deep and growing deeper every day, and Congress realized that these “Extraordinary costs” would require some extraordinary measures to meet them in the form of two federal taxes and loans from the Bank of the United States.77 The first tax was extraordinary in name; the “Stamp Tax” eerily resembled the British Stamp Act of 1765. Congress began planning this measure in 1796 when the French stepped up their attacks on American commercial shipping, and, foreseeing high defense expenses, passed it in the summer of 1797. It required certain legal transactions to appear on government-issued stamped paper. Besides targeting documents used by the business classes, such as various licenses, bills of exchange, certificates of shares in banks and insurance companies, and insurance policies for the shipping industry, the stamp duty also affected average people. It placed a $5.00 duty on naturalization certificates, and it specifically taxed documents essential for the transfer of property: grants, deeds, wills, and receipts for probated legacies. The law took effect on July 1, 1798 and planned to amass at least $200,000. The other tax was extraordinary in nature; the “Direct Tax” or “House Tax” was the federal government’s first attempt to lay a direct levy on the people, a method previously the sole domain of state and local governments. Prior to 1798, the federal government used only indirect taxes, such as excises on consumer goods. One could avoid the tax, or at least control the amount paid, through one’s
purchasing habits. But the direct tax would levy a rate on every individual based on the value of his real estate. It was an unavoidable duty. Hamilton and Treasury Secretary Wolcott began working on the tax in 1796, and once more they used William Loughton Smith to guide it through Congress. In the meantime, Hamilton suggested that the government be authorized to borrow $5 million dollars to be repaid with the forthcoming tax dollars. By the winter of 1798, however, the direct tax was still in committee.

In March, Adams learned of the Directory's treatment of the American officials, the "XYZ Affair." When Hamilton found out he could no longer tolerate further delays on the direct tax. He warned Theodore Sedgwick that "eventual dangers of the most serious kind hang over us and that we ought to consider ourselves bound to provide with the utmost energy for the immediate security of our invaded rights & for the ultimate defence [sic.] of our liberty and Independence." The explosion of the XYZ Affair in April brought a new sense of urgency to the Ways and Means Committee for finishing the direct tax. By then, Hamilton had persuaded Smith of his plan, and the Ways and Means bill, introduced to the House on May 1, strongly reflected Hamilton's designs. Over sixty-five percent of the $2 million prescribed would come from a graduated tax on dwellings, the rest from slaves and land. When Congress passed "An Act to provide for the valuation of lands and dwelling-houses, and the enumeration of slaves, within the United States," on July 9, and the "Direct Tax Act" to collect it five days later, Hamilton thought he had corrected the error of his previous federal tax through careful attention to fairness in his graduated "House Tax" (also known as the "Window Tax" since one method of assessment entailed the measuring of windows). Surely the people would appreciate his efforts and show more respect for this national tax than they had for the excise of 1791. The duty was indeed fair in distributing the burden. Houses and lands valued at less than $500 owed only $.20 per $100 of value, or 0.2 percent, while those worth over $500 paid as much as five times that amount per $100 of value on a graduated scale, or 1 percent.

Since it required the assessment of every dwelling, piece of real estate, and slave in the nation, the Federalists' tax called for the formulation of an intricate web of bureaucracy. The law divided each state into several districts, each with its own commissioner. Each commissioner had several assessors, and, of course, each assessor had to have several of his own assistants. Not until October did the assessment teams make their way out into the country. To procure capital for the meantime, Congress authorized the President to borrow $2 million dollars against the prospective income of the House Tax and another $5 million to cover the massive costs incurred by the construction of national security institutions.
The Federal Hercules Flexes Its Muscles

When Congress levied the tax on “Lands and Dwelling Houses” to fund the defense build-up during the Quasi-War, it created the nation’s first direct tax—one laid directly on the capital of the people.84 Older citizens of Bucks, Montgomery, and Northampton counties, many of whom—including Fries—were Revolutionary War veterans, remembered the last direct tax imposed on them in 1765.85 Thus, in the autumn of 1798, they and their families verbally accosted assessors as “damned stamplers” and “Tory rascals,” donned tri-colored “liberty caps,” and danced around “liberty poles” in open defiance, just as they had done in contest over the Stamp Act. Resistance also entailed temporary detention of assessors and occasional dousings with hot water. More seriously, resisters held large town meetings in which they drafted petitions to Congress to repeal the Direct Tax and pledged to one another to resist assessment of their homes with signed “associations.” They believed that they had acted consistently and legally, and, as U. S. Marshall William Nichols’s testimony attests, they asserted that “they could not be punished” because the laws they opposed “were unconstitutional.” Though their constitutional logic certainly was flawed, their resistance was symptomatic of their acute revolutionary republican sensibilities. They soon learned they they indeed could be punished as William Nichols swept through the region in late February, 1799, arresting resisters for obstructing the tax assessment. On March 7, as the Marshall was completing his rounds and preparing to haul his prisoners to a Philadelphia federal court, militia units from Northampton and Bucks counties descended upon the Sun Tavern in Bethlehem where Nichols housed his prisoners. An aging Revolutionary War veteran and militia captain, John Fries, assumed command of the nearly 150 troops—some on horse, and about half of whom carried arms. Asserting his neighbors’ Sixth Amendment right to trial in the “district wherein the crime shall have been committed,” Fries offered to bail the dozen prisoners so that they could “be tried in their own courts, and by their own people.” Nichols refused as Fries made the offer time and again, but after several hours of failed negotiations, Nichols released the prisoners to Fries without accepting bail as the militia surrounding the tavern grew restless. While the crowd immediately dispersed and the entire incident was without violence, Nichols immediately reported the prisoners stolen by a riotous and rebelious mob.

Following the “rebellion,” the participants returned to their everyday activities, apparently unaware that their actions would merit a government reprisal. Fries himself actually went back to work as a vendue crier, and was conducting a public auction when authorities apprehended him.87 At most, they were guilty of rioting and kidnapping federal prisoners. It hardly amounted to the “most unreasonable riot n’ rescue” that John Adams described fourteen years afterward.88
Yet the Federalists, especially Hamiltonians, perceived rebellion rather than riot in 1799. A number of factors, including their recent memory, produced this result. First there was the American "tradition" of violent response to taxation that weighed on Federalist minds--Daniel Shays's and the Whiskey "Rebellions" were only the most dramatic examples. Even more frightening to Hamiltonians, the Northampton Insurrection was Pennsylvania's fourth act of rebellion in thirteen years. In 1786 and 1787, Shays-like violence had erupted in York and Carlisle, and in 1794 the Whiskey Rebellion exploded in western Pennsylvania. And now in 1799, Pennsylvanians were at it again, this time within sixty miles of the nation's capital, less than a two day ride. Federalist newspapers also contributed greatly to the exaggerated notion of rebellion. Five days after the rescue, Philadelphia's Porcupine's Gazette warned that, "If the Provisional Army be not ratified without delay, a civil war or surrender of Independence, is not more than twelve month's difference." And if that was not enough, the reports of such organized resistance that so closely resembled the Whiskey Rebels offered by rebuffed assessors signalled that rebellion was either at hand or very nearby, perhaps with civil war close behind. These were valid reasons for the perception of rebellion rather than riot in 1799, but without them, the Federalists still would have sent Federal troops to the area, charged the rebels with treason, and pushed for executions. In the time since the XYZ Affair and the commencement of hostilities with France, the Hamiltonians had devised a rudimentary framework of national security to guard the nation against French-directed insurrections that could open the door to invasion and dependence. They reacted to the rescue as a rebellion because that was precisely what they had expected and had prepared to meet.

Hamiltonians learned of the resistance early in the Autumn of 1798. In October, Pickering fretted to George Washington over the "audacious lies... propagated by the partisans of France" in Pennsylvania. One worried him in particular. His friend, George Ball, had recently travelled through Northampton County and to court at Easton. While there, he learned that the local Germans "were displeased very much with the Government for making the Alliance and Sedition Bills." When Ball inquired of their meaning of the "Alliance" bill, they replied that had they learned that President Adams had betrothed his son, John Quincy, "to marry a daughter of the King of Great Britain," that "General Washington was to hold the United States in Trust for the King! And it is for these purposes," they surmised, "that an army is to be raised and window taxes levied." While this fantastic misunderstanding did not account for the true nature of the tax resistance, it alerted Hamiltonians to the trouble up the Delaware Valley and confirmed their suspicions of French or Republican intentions to incite discontent.
Their fear of a Jacobin inspired or directed rebellion heightened, the Federalists drafted another piece of national security legislation, the "Eventual Army Act." This law, passed on March 2, 1799, gave "authority to the President... to augment the Army" with the States' militia in the "event" of a necessity to "suppress insurrections." Five days later, John Fries marched his troops into Bethlehem and freed the federal prisoners of U.S. Marshall William Nichols. Hamiltonians believed the event that they had expected and prepared to meet had happened.

On March 11, President Adams activated the "Eventual Army," which Federalists had specifically created to counter French-directed insurrections. On the eighteenth, Hamilton advised McHenry that "w]henever the government appears in arms, it ought to appear like a Hercules and inspire respect by display of strength." McHenry hurried to assemble the force appointing General William MacPherson as commander, but recruiting and coordinating troops from as far away as Vermont required weeks of preparation. Wolcott worried that "an affair which ought to have been settled at once will cost much time and perhaps be so managed to encourage other and formidable rebellions." General MacPherson, who preceded his army to the disaffected region, complained of McHenry's perpetual delays and exclaimed to Hamilton that "the people... seem ripe for anything." McHenry completed preparations by April 4, and exactly four weeks after the rescue, the Eventual Army moved to quell the perceived insurrection. The mission consisted of 500 regulars who secured the counties and thousands of Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, and Delaware state militia that surrounded the periphery.

In less than a week, MacPherson returned to Philadelphia with thirty-one prisoners, while much of the armed forces remained in the tri-county area to prevent further uprisings. Despite the easy success and the Pennsylvania-Germans' complete compliance with the occupying force, Hamilton and McHenry still feared the explosiveness of the region and the possibility of French intrigue. Throughout the summer, letters between them and their field commanders hurried back and forth with orders for troop positioning and arguments over the size of the around the clock military guard necessary to prevent the rescue of Fries. In July, correspondence from the discontented counties warned Hamilton and McHenry that the people "would join the French if they invaded the country." To Hamiltonians, the suppression of Fries's Rebellion went far too smoothly, a second, more violent and organized attack had to be in the making.

The use of the Eventual Army to suppress Fries's Rebellion resulted from the ideology, experience, and institutions that comprised the Hamiltonian national security policy. The subsequent charges of treason and the Hamiltonian demand for Fries's execution, however, reveals that the squelching of Fries's Rebellion amounted to more than a defensive reaction. Hamilton con-
ceded that the incident was less than the French-directed rebellion he feared when he warned McHenry "of magnifying a riot into an insurrection, by employing in the first instance, an inadequate force." Wolcott too, questioned even the "ignorant" Germans' capability "of being influenced." Nevertheless, Federalists feared that if they failed to crush the Northampton Insurrection "it may... be nursed into something more formidable," or as Wolcott worried, "other and more formidable rebellions" would ensue. 9 Hamiltonians, therefore, suppressed the rebellion, tried the insurgents for treason, and demanded an execution in a deliberate attempt to make an example of Fries for the rest of the nation as a further deterrent to insurrection during the Quasi-War. And yet Hamiltonians, especially Timothy Pickering, intended the hanging of John Fries to be something more than just an additional element of their national security policy. The Fries Rebels, like the Whiskey Rebels, the Democratic Societies, or the anti-Jay Treaty mobs, represented direct popular opposition to government by their natural betters, and this was insufferable to Hamilton and High Federalists. To them, a republic based on popular sovereignty meant that the people had the right and obligation to exercise their voice on election day, and that from then on they must defer to the judgement of their governors. Hamilton, and his followers, still held to the beliefs that he had uttered a dozen years before in his grand speech before the Constitutional Convention:

[all] communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and the well born, the other the mass of the people. The voice of the people has been said to be the voice of God; and however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true in fact. The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second... 100

Hamilton had consistently and thoroughly distrusted the people; that they dared to challenge governmental decisions, let alone Federalist ones, was intolerable. Hamiltonians wanted to see John Fries hanged not simply to warn off future insurrections, but to affirm the power of the national government and their authority to operate it. And Federalists went to great lengths to assure an execution.

The trial of John Fries for treason commenced in the last days of April and immediately became a sensation. Republicans politicized the affair by supporting Fries, while Federalists, of course, cheered the prosecution. 101 Fearful of the political effects of the trial, Federalist Uriah Tracy begged of McHenry, "[w]hy in God's name is not the Alien law enforced?" Tracy asked a very astute question, one that no other Federalist had yet bothered to consider. Not until a week had passed after Fries's conviction for treason, did President
Adams wonder, “Is Fries a native or a foreigner?” And, not coincidentally, it was the President who had initiated the charges of treason with his March 12, 1799 Proclamation to the Eastern Pennsylvanians that their actions “amount[ed] to treason.”1 Adams, Pickering, Wolcott, McHenry, and Hamilton all knew from the beginning that nearly all of the Northampton insurgents were German, and these politicians all had suspected French involvement. Yet not once in the two months following the rescue had even one of them inquired of Fries’s citizenship, and the President actually believed that he might have been an alien!1 All of them had a hand in the Alien bill, and Adams had signed it into law, but when an opportunity arose to consider it they balked. They chose to ignore the possible utility of the Alien law, designed to peacefully defuse such situations with deportations, and instead charged Fries with treason in order to secure his execution. Even though the Alien law would not have applied to Fries, an American citizen of Welsh (and possibly German) descent, Adams and the Hamiltonians did not know this, and their failure even to consider it further attests to their intention to make an example of Fries through the charge of treason.

A conviction of treason would carry the death sentence, and a dead John Fries would serve as a significant deterrent to future insurrections and an affirmation of federal power. One anti-democratic Federalist newspaper demanded that “the principals of the insurrection must be eradicated, or anarchy must ensue.”1 Hamiltonians believed that Washington’s leniency with the Whiskey Rebels had allowed such a spirit of insurrection to survive in 1799. Another Hamiltonian sympathizer insisted that “if some executions are not had of the most notorious offenders--I shall regret the events of leniency in ’94 & ’99--as giving a fatal stroke to government.” And the day following Fries’s conviction, but before his sentencing, Pickering concurred in a letter to the President that exemplified the Hamiltonian position:

This conviction is of the highest importance to vindicate the violated laws and support the Government... an example or examples of conviction and punishment of such high handed offenders are essential to ensure future obedience to the laws... and to suppress future insurrections. The examples appear singularity important in Pennsylvania, where treason and rebellion have so repeatedly reared their heads. And painful as is the idea of taking the life of a man, I feel a calm and solid satisfaction that an opportunity is now presented in executing the just sentence of the law, to crush that spirit, which if not overthrown and destroyed, may proceed in its career and overthrow the Government.105

The trial itself provides further evidence that the Hamiltonians intended to execute Fries to supplement their national security program and enhance the power of the state. Fries’s defense, as presented by his counsel William Lewis and Alexander James Dallas, rested on the claim that his crime did not
constitute treason. Through eight days of testimony, the defense and prosecution, headed by Federalist William Rawle, grappled over Fries’s actions and the legal meaning of treason. The defense argued that Fries and his cohorts did not intend to “levy war against the United States.” The moment that they “effected the rescue,” Dallas pleaded, “did they not disperse?” They were guilty only of kidnapping federal prisoners. All of this testimony meant very little, however, because Pickering revealed to John Adams that before the trial commenced, “I knew that the two judges,” Federalists James Iredell and Richard Peters, “were perfectly agreed as to the treasonable matter, and the guilt of the prisoner.” Fries never had much of a chance, but he did have a good lawyer.

On May 17, defense attorney William Lewis pulled the rug from underneath the Hamiltonian designs. He presented evidence to Judge Iredell that one of the jurors “declared a prejudice against the prisoner after he was summoned,” by vowing that Fries ought to hang. Cornered, Iredell reluctantly declared a mistrial that spared Fries for the time being, and scheduled a new trial for the following spring. Some days later, Adams learned that Fries had mentioned to his jailor that “great men were at the bottom of this business.” To determine the origins of Fries’s Rebellion, Adams requested a full written account of the insurrection from William Lewis. During the year between trials, Adams read Lewis’s opinion, reviewed the evidence, and contentiously concluded that the offenders were not traitors, deserving of the rope, but merely “miserable Germans... as ignorant of our language as they were of our laws.” When a second jury convicted Fries of treason, and Judge Samuel Chase sentenced him to hang on May 23, 1800, it appeared that the Hamiltonians would have their example. But it was on the 21st, as “[p]reparations were making for the execution, When Lo!,” Pickering angrily exclaimed, “the pardon was issued.” Convinced that Fries was not guilty of treason, and eager to avoid the popular and political outcry that the execution threatened following the two sensational trials, Adams issued the pardon. He did so against the unanimous advice of his cabinet, his two recently dismissed Hamiltonian secretaries Pickering and McHenry, and General Hamilton.

The Hamiltonians were so outraged by the President’s latest deviation from “the straight road of Federalism,” that one by one, they withdrew their support from his reelection. In July, Hamilton began composing his “Letter from Alexander Hamilton, Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams,” designed to destroy Adams’s campaign for reelection. Hamilton noted a long list of offenses that the President had committed against his party and his country before he came to his condemnation of the pardon. “The last... and most inexplicable part of Mr. Adams’s conduct... is the pardon of Fries. It shews [sic] him so much at variance with... sound policy,” Hamilton charged, “that we are driven to seek a solution for it in some system
of concession to his political enemies." As well as resenting the scorn they received from their moderate President who also was seeking peace with the French, the Hamiltonians considered the execution of Fries so singularly important to insure the present and future security of the republic that they abandoned their President and clung to the slim hope that Charles Cotesworth Pinckney would capture enough votes to defeat both Adams and Jefferson. Such was the real importance of Fries's Rebellion to the men who put it down.

The suppression of the resistance, the trial, and the subsequent Hamiltonian reactions to the pardon all indicate that an "age of free security" did not exist for the Federalists of the 1790s. To Federalist eyes, the national fundamental core values of independence and republican government seemed to demand the infringement of individual liberties with the repressive Alien and Sedition laws, standing armies, and direct taxes. While their framework was lilliputian compared to the "national security state" that historians find in Cold War America, Hamiltonian policy attests to Federalists' fear of European invasion and subjection, and demonstrates the American government's domestic reaction to trans-Atlantic threats well before the nuclear age. Hamiltonian policy also bears witness to a pair of gross miscalculations. The Federalists' defeat in 1800, in part, can be attributed to their inability to convince a majority of the electorate, or their misreading of the existence of one, that the French threat demanded the sacrifice of their personal liberties, or the use of standing armies against them. Moreover, the Federalist equation was further skewed by their conception that the American fundamental core values included the creation of a powerful and energetic national government. The people were not willing to accept that either. This was certainly the case in Eastern Pennsylvania. Formerly a Federalist stronghold, that region voted Republican in 1798 in response to the Federalists' augmentation of the federal government, and in 1799 and 1800 in reaction to the Federalist handling of the Fries Rebellion. The Hamiltonians may have been able to salvage popular respect for their party if they had not pressed so vehemently for Fries's execution. During the course of the suppression, Republicans criticized the Federalist use of force but they never conceded the legality of Fries's rescue, nor did they challenge the government's right to suppress domestic insurrections. But Fries's two sensational trials for treason exposed to the public the drastic measures that the Federalists were prepared to take to "protect" Americans. Even without the push for execution, it is doubtful that the Federalists could have reversed the negative effects of their national security state. While Jefferson and Madison spearheaded the drive against Federalist repression with the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, by 1798, the Pennsylvania Germans were not unique among the American people in requiring governing elites to advise them of their political and constitutional rights.
Notes
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7.Melvyn Leffler correctly points out that the “national security model can and should serve as a framework for studying the history of American foreign policy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,” in “National Security,” Journal of American History (hereafter JAH) 77 (June 1990): 143-152, quote on p. 151. For one such treatment, see James Chace and Caleb Carr, America Invulnerable: The Quest for Absolute Security from 1812 to Star Wars (New York: Summit Books, 1988).


Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party perception of a British conspiracy against lib-

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ties, they viewed the Hamiltonian economic program and subsequent Federalist "pro-Brit-

ish" policies together as a monarchical conspira-

eign policy of Jeffersonian republicanism. For the evolution of Jeffersonian-republican, op-


17. Hamilton feared British military might. In addition, his domestic programs, court style politics, and commercial republican ideology depended on stable economic and political relations with the British. The agrarian republicanism of Jefferson and Madison, on the other hand, demanded freer trade and wide access to foreign markets, and they feared the opportunities for corruption that Hamilton's economic programs could create. While they did not advocate literal adherence to the 1778 Franco-American Treaty of Alliance to assist the French in their own war with England in 1793, they scorned attachments to Great Britain as corrosive to liberty and republican vir-
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rable remark is on p. 3.

20. Eugene P. Link, The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 16. Aside from Link, the most modern and sophisticated inter-

pretation of the Democratic-Republican soci-
cies, which treats them within the scope of the history of voluntary associations in America is Elkins and McKitrick, Age of Federalism, 451-461. Much of my analysis flows from their argument. Philip S. Foner, The Demo-

cratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Decla-


21. See Thomas P. Slaughter, The Whiskey Re-

bellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revo-
sylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1994); Dorothy E. Fennel, "From Rebellion-

ness to Insurrection: A Social History of the Whiskey Rebellion," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1991); Mary K. Bonsteel Tachau, "The Whiskey Rebellion in Ken-

22. Elkins and McKitrick, Age of Federalism, 226; Hamilton to George Washington, Au-

23. Marco M. Sidi, "The Democratic-Republi-
can Societies at the End of the Eighteenth Century: The Western Pennsylvania Experi-


25. Madison to James Monroe, December 4, 1794, PJM 15: 406. On the Federalists' ma-
nipulation of the symbols and images of George Washington for political advantage, see Simon P. Newman, "American Popular


32. Ibid., 33:4.


38. Pickering to Rufus King, June 20, 1797, Pickering Papers, 37: 190; Pickering to Andrew Ellicott, July 28, 1797, ibid., 222; McHenry to George Washington, July 9, 1797, LCJM, 256-257; Pickering to Rufus King, June 20, 1797, Pickering Papers, 37: 190, emphasis in the original; Hamilton to McHenry, May 15, 1797, LCJM, 212.

39. Elkins and McKitrick, Age of Federalism, 643-653. On French depredations on American commercial shipping, see: Bowman, Struggle for Neutrality, 179-182, 193, 200, 203-204, 248; Clarefield, Timothy Pickering and American Diplomacy, 76; DeConde, En-


42. Hamilton to Pickering, March 22, 1797, PAH 20: 545-547; Annals, 5th Cong., 1st sess., March 25, 1797, 49. Wolcott also agreed with Hamilton's ideas for defense, agreeing on the need to raise revenue, arm merchant vessels, defend the coast, fortify ports, enroll an army, and empower the executive to arrest vessels and persons intending to raid American commercial ships; Woclott to Hamilton, March 31, 1797, PAH 20: 569-574.

43. Hamilton to Smith, April 5, 1797, PAH 21: 20-21; Hamilton to Smith, April 10, 1797, ibid., 29-41; quotes on pp. 30-33, 40.

44. Hamilton to Pickering, May 11, 1797, ibid., 81-84, emphasis in the original. For Hamilton's defensive plans, see ibid., 38-41; quoted material on pp. 39-40.

45. Ibid., 41.

46. McHenry to Hamilton, April 19, 1797, ibid., 51-52; Hamilton to McHenry, April 29, 1797, ibid., 61-68.


51. DeConde, Quasi War, 25-30.


53. For accounts of the XYZ Affair, see: Bowman, Struggle for Neutrality, Hill, William Vans Murray, William Stinchcombe, The XYZ Affair (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980). For the increased French attacks on American shipping following the incident, see Elkins and McKitrick, Age of Federalism, 645.


55. Hamilton to Washington, May 19, 1798, PAH 21: 466-467, emphasis in the original.

56. Pickering to Harper, March 21, 1798, cited in DeConde, Quasi War, 84; Annals, 5th Cong., 2nd sess., April 28, 1798, 1531; Knox to Adams, June 26, 1798, cited in Elkins and McKitrick, Age of Federalism, 647; Annals 5th Cong., 2nd sess., May 8, 1798, 1640-1641.


61. DeConde, Quasi War, 103-108.


70. Ames to Pickering, July 10, 1798, WFA, 1: 233-234.


72. Hamilton to Pickering, June 7, 1798, PAH 21: 495.

73. Hamilton to Wolcott, June 29, 1798, PAH
were in reality the enemies of America, and which Lloyd maintained that the crime of treason as well as sedition, in being more extreme. It contained a section as proposed by James Lloyd of Maryland, had been more extreme. It contained a section dealing with treason as well as sedition, in which Lloyd maintained that the crime of treason could be committed during peacetime. He suggested that although the United States was not officially at war with France, the French were in reality the enemies of America, and that Americans who gave aid and comfort to the French should be considered traitors and summarily executed. Lloyd's presumption that the French should be considered traitors and Americans who gave aid and comfort to the French were outraged, and Congress prepared the "Logan Act" to prohibit any private United States citizen from conferring with any foreign government "with an intent to influence the measures or conduct of any foreign government...in relation to any disputes or controversies with the United States." Frederick B. Tolles, George Logan of Philadelphia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 153-204; Adams to Pickering, November 2, 1798, in Charles Francis Adams, ed., The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States (hereafter WJA) (Boston: Little and Brown, 1851, 10 vols.), 6: 615; Statutes, "An Act for the punishment of certain Crimes therein specified," January 30, 1799, I: 613.


83.*MAWA*, 2: 66; *Statutes*, "An Act to enable the President of the United States to borrow money for the public service," July 16, 1798, I: 607-608; "An Act making certain appropriations; and to authorize the President to obtain a Loan on the credit of the direct tax," July 16, 1798, I: 609-610.
84.*Statutes*, I: 580-591, July 9, 1798.
85. In reality, both the resistance to the direct tax on houses and the rescue of the resistors did not amount to "overt acts of levying war against the United States." Rather, the Germans' action, to their minds, embodied legitimate opposition to an unconstitutional tax and direct redress to Federalist violation of their sixth amendment right to a local trial by a jury of their peers. They resisted specific laws, not the government or constitution in general, and they needed no French or Republican prod- ding to take action. Indeed, they were Federalists themselves, and it is doubtful if they would have listened to Republicans. Actually they strove to preserve the constitution, and their tactics reveal the extent of their political education since the beginning of the imperial crisis three decades before. For a more extensive treatment of the Fries Rebellion, see Paul Douglas Newman, "Fries's Rebellion and American Political Culture, 1798-1800," *PMHB* 119 (January/April 1995): 38-73.
91.*Porcupine's Gazette*, March 12, 1799, emphasis in the original. On March 23, the *New York Daily Advertiser* alerted its subscribers that the rebels remained at large, and that "some of them [are] now on the way to this city!"
92.For an account of the organization of resistance see Levine, "The Fries Rebellion," 247-251; and Newman, "Fries Rebellion and American Political Culture." For an excellent account of the "Federalist hysteria" of 1798-1799 due to their belief in the possibility of the outbreak of civil war throughout the nation, see Richard Kohn's *Eagle and Sword*, 239-255. In particular, Kohn remarks that the outbreak of Fries' Rebellion "gave credence to the Federalists' worries" of civil war, especially those of Alexander Hamilton (351).
94."An Act giving eventual authority to the President of the United States to augment the Army," I *Statutes*, 726, March 2, 1799.
96.*Philadelphia Aurora*, April 11, 1799, reported the arrest of 15 men on charges of treason and 16 charge with misdemeanors, some of whom travelled to Philadelphia and surrendered themselves.
Hamilton to McHenry, May 25, 1799, \textit{PAH}, 23:148; McHenry to Hamilton, May 28, ibid., 152-153; McHenry to Hamilton, June 4, ibid., 164; Hamilton to McHenry, June 6, ibid., 171; McHenry to Hamilton, June 6, ibid., 172; Hamilton to David A. Ogden, June 7, ibid., 175; Ogden to Hamilton, June 7, ibid., 176; Hamilton to Capt. John Adlum, June 8, ibid., 178; McHenry to Hamilton, July 2, ibid., 236; Adlum to Hamilton, July 22, ibid., 280; Hamilton to Adlum, August 23, ibid., 343; Richard Peters to Timothy Pickering September 12, ibid., 411; McHenry to Hamilton, September 13, ibid.; Hamilton to Lloyd Moore, September 16, ibid., 412; McHenry to Hamilton, September 20, ibid., 445-446.


For accounts of the trial's sensational appeal, see Wolcott to Adams, May 11, 1799, \textit{WJA}, 8:644-645; and Adams to Pickering, May 17, 1799, ibid., 8:649.


He was second generation Welsh. Though his mother may have been German, John Fries was definitely a native American.


Wharton, \textit{State Trials}, 542.


