



Western Washington University  
**Western CEDAR**

---

WWU Honors Program Senior Projects

WWU Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship

---

Spring 2020

## Inventing America: National Politics in the New Republic

Stuart Medalen

*Western Washington University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://cedar.wvu.edu/wwu\\_honors](https://cedar.wvu.edu/wwu_honors)



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

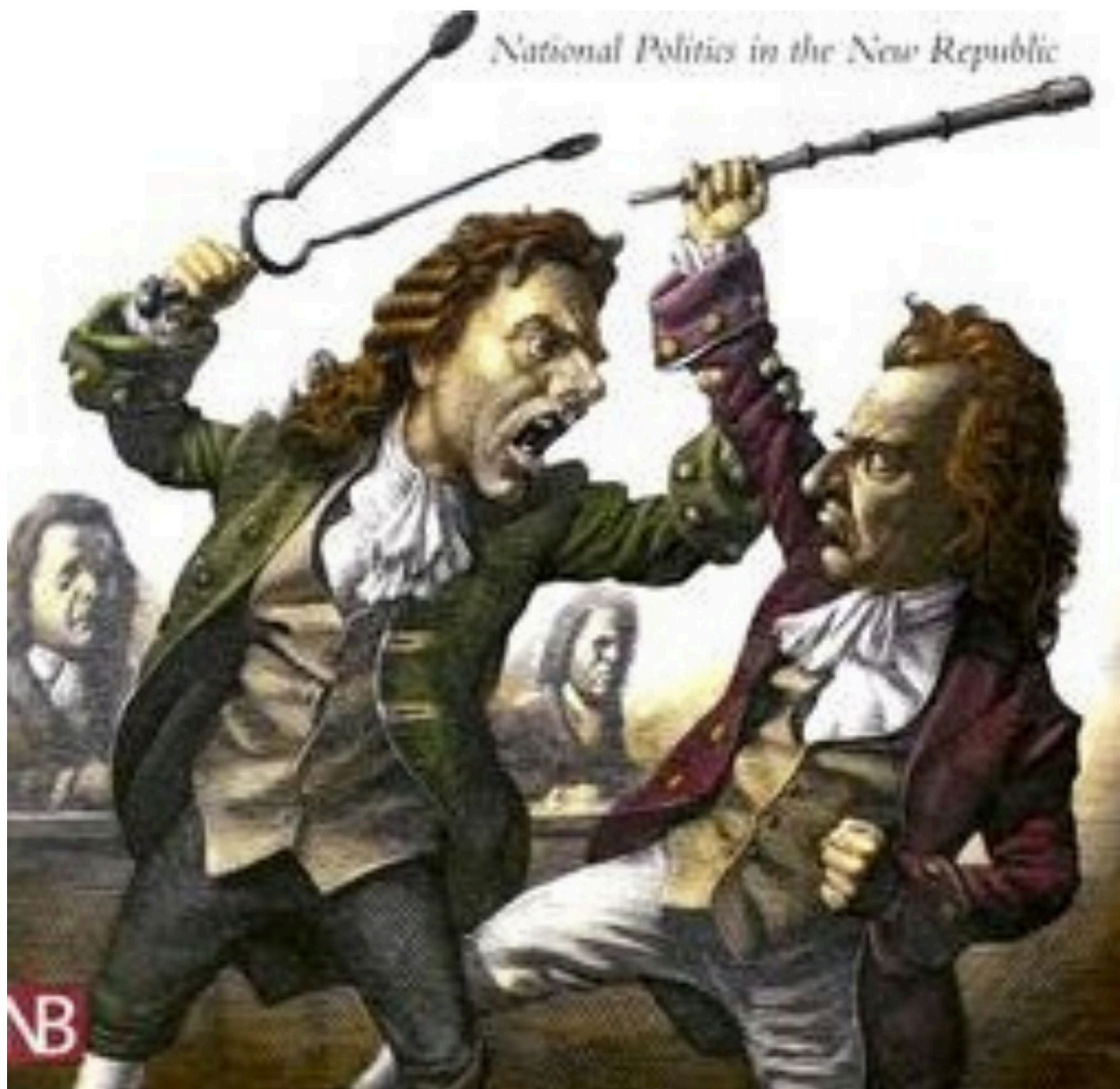
Medalen, Stuart, "Inventing America: National Politics in the New Republic" (2020). *WWU Honors Program Senior Projects*. 362.

[https://cedar.wvu.edu/wwu\\_honors/362](https://cedar.wvu.edu/wwu_honors/362)

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the WWU Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in WWU Honors Program Senior Projects by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact [westerncedar@wwu.edu](mailto:westerncedar@wwu.edu).

An Honors Project by Stuart Medalen  
Advised by Amanda Eurich, Professor of History  
Friday, May 29, 2020 4:00 PM

# Inventing America



## **Part I: Introductory Vignette**

### **Welcome to New York**

As you ascend the steps of Federal Hall you can't seem to shake a feeling of unease. It has steadily been growing stronger as you traveled farther from home and seems to have reached its apex as you entered New York City proper. The city is foul by your standards, the streets not being nearly as clean or as spacious as the ones at home. It isn't just physical corruption, however, that hangs in the air.

As you enter Federal Hall, the first thing you notice are your fellow Congressmen hanging around in isolated clusters near walls and in corners. These groups consist mostly of members from the same state delegations, if their dress and demeanor are anything to judge by. Each group of men seem more bizarre to you than the last. Some are dressed so flamboyantly and with such gaudy taste that they would not seem out of place in a European court. You take careful note of these gentlemen, committing their faces to memory. Others seem to have almost too much respect for the solemn occasion of the new Congress's first session. Their clothes, like their faces, betray absolutely no gaiety or joy in this event or life in general.

There is one common thread to all these wildly disparate cliques, however. Their members all hunch and whisper with their fellow statesmen, as if they do not trust the walls themselves in this place. The walls of Federal Hall do indeed seem to emanate mistrust and hostility, so perhaps this approach to conversation is justified.

None of this, you realize with a sigh, is how you imagined entering the heart of the new republic would feel like when you had first won this appointment. Indeed, you had been excited at the prospect of serving in this historic assembly, but this feeling had been gradually replaced

with unease as you grew nearer to your destination, and the reversal was total now that you had finally made it to Federal Hall itself. Oh well, nothing you can do about that now, you think to yourself. Perhaps you'll feel more at ease after the inauguration has concluded.

You see Thomas Jefferson milling around with the senators from Virginia. "Aha", you think, this is your chance to break into New York's foreign political climate. An in with a prominent man like Jefferson would do much for your credibility and influence. As you draw nearer to him, however, his body language and that of his compatriots becomes noticeably stiffer. Your eyes fall away from theirs as you pretend to have been walking past them along.

Finally, it is time to begin deliberation for the day. You trudge glumly to your seat in the Senate's chambers as the sergeant-at-arms' announcement dies away. The issue of the day is the president's inauguration ceremony.

"We should stand when he enters, we owe him that much respect." a handsomely dressed fellow with a New York accent says.

"Indeed, just like the House of Lords does for their king," replies a more garishly dressed southerner sarcastically.

"I have heard it said that the House of Lords sits while the House of Commons are obliged to stand." a third, more modestly dressed man offers.

"England is a country of classes. This is not news to us. Why would we expect their politics to be any different," the first man remarks.

"Yes, but this is not parliament and we are not Englishmen, no matter how much you might wish it sir," rejoins the southerner.

"I am simply trying to show respect to a great man sir, and take offense at you inferring anything more than that sir."

A fourth man intervenes in the escalating argument. “Excuse me gentlemen, but my wife’s brother attended a session of parliament once, and while the House of Commons does indeed stand to admit the king, this is simply for want of seats of their own. They are, after all, not in their normal place of assembly.”

Just then the door opens and a man, the clerk of the House you believe, meekly peeks his head in the chamber. “Excuse me honorable sirs, but we would like your opinion on a matter of contention. How should I be received from now on? Would you like me to enter the chamber fully?”

“Oh leave us be, man, can you not see we’re discussing matters of the highest importance here!” someone shouts.

“Wait a minute, why not just send the sergeant-at-arms to receive his message?” asks the New Yorker.

“What, are we too good for the presence of our fellow legislators?” asks the southerner in a huff.

After several hours of this a recess is finally called. You and the other senators file out of the room for some much-needed air. Again, the others cluster together according to regional familiarities. Just then there is a commotion at the door. The excitement level in the room rises considerably. You can't help from gaping as you realize its source. Not only has George Washington arrived, but he appears to be walking towards you! There is no doubt about it, the soon to be first president of the United States, the Hero of the Revolution himself, is, in his calm, respectful, but deliberate manner, making his way to where you are standing. As he draws nearer

you feel your knees shake. As you struggle to maintain your composure, he gives you an acknowledging nod. How will you respond?<sup>1</sup>



Federal Hall

<https://janos.nyc/2015/03/04/today-in-nyc-history-u-s-congress-meets-for-the-first-time-in-nyc-1789/>

---

<sup>1</sup> This vignette, and in many ways this entire project, was inspired by and based on the prologue through the first chapter of *Affairs of Honor* by historian Joanne B. Freeman. This book is a great reference for readers interested in a more comprehensive discussion of the topics covered in this game.

## **Part II: Historical Context**

### **Chronology of Events 1765-1789**

#### **1765**

- March 22<sup>nd</sup>: Parliament passes Stamp Act, which places an excise tax on most paper products sold within the British American colonies.

#### **1766**

- March 18<sup>th</sup>: After intense Colonial backlash, parliament repeals Stamp Act, but maintains that it has a right to tax the colonies.

#### **1767**

- June 29<sup>th</sup>: Parliament passes the Townshend Acts, placing excise taxes on a host of non-paper products. Colonial assemblies condemn the acts as taxation without representation.

#### **1768**

- October 1<sup>st</sup>: British troops are sent to occupy Boston in order to quell civil unrest.

#### **1770**

- March 5<sup>th</sup>: A confrontation between a British patrol and a colonial mob leads to the death of 5 colonists, anti-British propaganda quickly dubs it the “Boston Massacre”.

#### **1773**

- May 10<sup>th</sup>: Parliament passes the Tea Act, exempting the tea sold by the East India Company from excise taxes.
- December 16<sup>th</sup>: In protest of the Tea Act, colonists dressed as Indians storm a ship carrying East India Company Tea and throw its cargo into Boston harbor. The event becomes known as the Boston Tea Party.

#### **1774**

- May to June: In retaliation to the Boston Tea Party, Parliament removes Massachusetts’ legislative and judicial independence. In solidarity with Massachusetts, people throughout the colonies boycott British goods.

#### **1775**

- April 19<sup>th</sup>: First battles of the Revolutionary War are fought between British regulars and Colonial militiamen in the Massachusetts towns of Lexington and Concord.

- June 16<sup>th</sup>: Continental Congress appoints George Washington, a wealthy Virginia plantation owner who fought in the French and Indian War, as commander-and-chief of the Continental Army.

### **1776**

- July 4<sup>th</sup>: Continental Congress issues Declaration of Independence.

### **1781**

- March 1<sup>st</sup>: Continental Congress ratifies Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union
- October 19<sup>th</sup>: Siege of Yorktown concludes with General Cornwallis's surrender, ending Britain's effective military presence in the colonies.

### **1783**

- March: Conspiracy at Newburgh.
- September 3<sup>rd</sup>: Great Britain and the United States sign the Treaty of Paris, officially ending the Revolutionary War.

### **1786**

- August 1786-January 1787: Shays' Rebellion.
- September 1786-Annapolis Convention.

### **1787**

- Northwest Ordinance of 1787 passed by Continental Congress.
- May 25<sup>th</sup>: Philadelphia Convention begins.

## **Articles of Confederation**

With this document, the 13 states in rebellion against Great Britain become a loose confederation of sovereign entities. Each state sends one representative to a national congress. This congress is empowered to control diplomatic relations with foreign powers, request military and financial assistance from the states, mint and borrow money, regulate Indian policy, and arbitrate inter-state disputes. Crucially, it does not have the power of taxation.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History*, (Toronto, Random House, 2002), 71-72.



## **Conspiracy at Newburgh**

Angry over its failure to deliver promised back pay, a group of officers of the Continental Army camp at Newburgh with the plan of overthrowing the Continental Congress. Only Washington's refusal to support the movement prevents the plot from being carried out.<sup>3</sup>

## **Shays' Rebellion**

About 2,000 debtor farmers, led by former militia captain Daniel Shays, carry out an armed revolt in Massachusetts. They succeed in closing the debt courts and nearly capture the Federal arsenal before the rebellion is put down. While the military action is a failure, the movement is not, as politicians sympathetic to Shays' cause are voted into the Massachusetts state legislature and begin enacting the debtor relief called for by the rebels.<sup>4</sup>

## **Northwest Ordinance of 1787**

Rather than simply granting westward territory to existing states, as previous divisions had done, or forming lesser, vassal states like those within the great European empires, this ordinance includes a process for creating new states. Once a territory reaches a certain population it is eligible to join the Union as state, one with equal legal standing with the original states.

Likewise, all settlers of these new areas will retain all of their political rights and liberties.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 147-148.

<sup>4</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 152.

<sup>5</sup> Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*, (New York, Oxford University Press, Inc., 2009), 122.

## **The Philadelphia Convention**

Faced with growing economic problems, several states meet at Annapolis to address them. It quickly becomes clear solving the economic issues will require a more general reform of the Articles of Confederation. The delegates agree that a larger conference with more states involved is necessary. They propose to meet in Philadelphia in May of the following year in order to amend the Articles.<sup>6</sup>

Every state but Rhode Island sends delegates. After a long summer of debate and compromise, the Convention finally agrees on a plan which goes far beyond merely modifying the existing Confederation. The delegates agree to completely replace the loose association of states with a unified national government with the states as subordinate entities.<sup>7</sup>

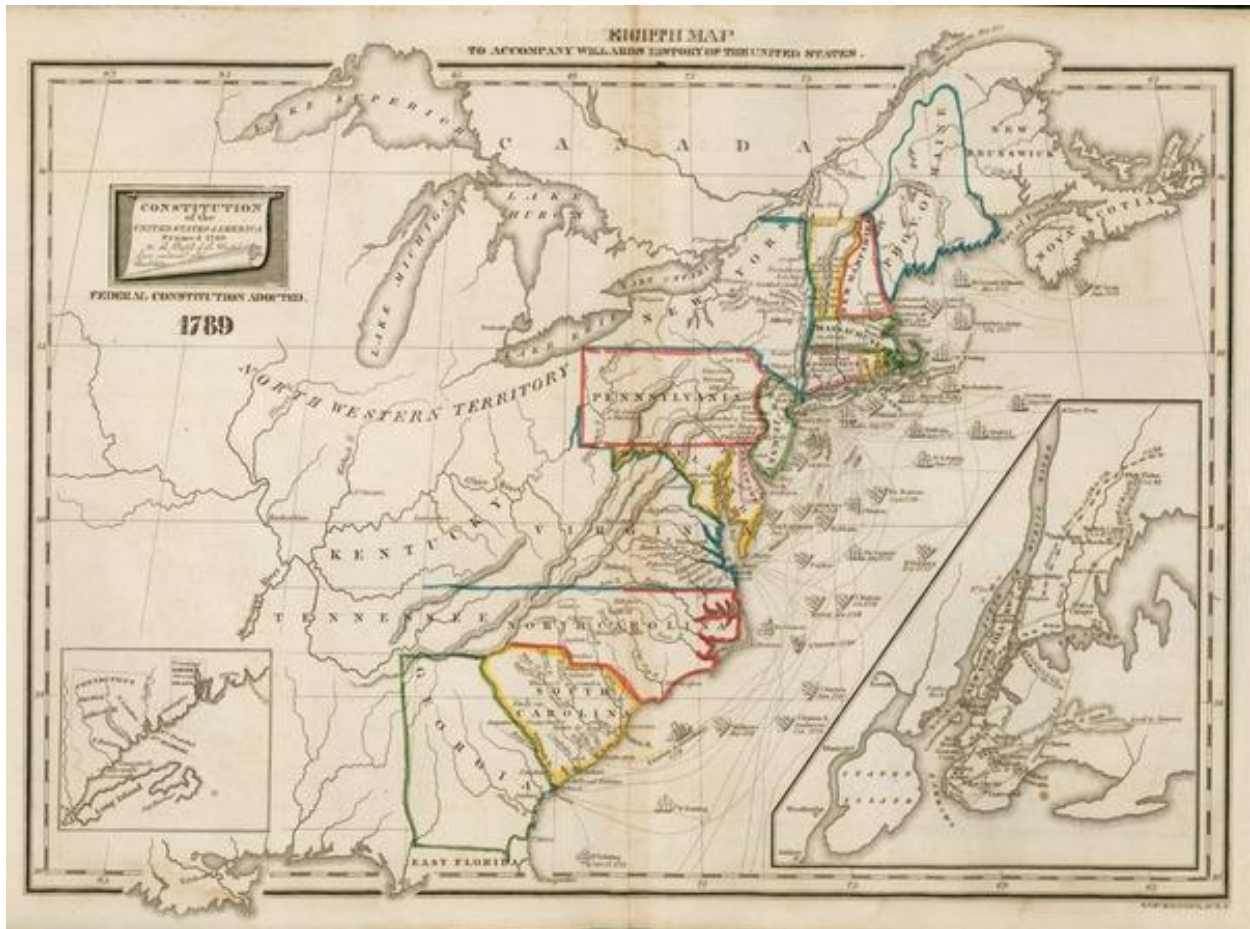
This government is a radical departure from the confederation of nearly completely autonomous states that waged the Revolutionary War. While the states retain some freedom to legislate, the power to wage war, issue currency, and make treaties, among others, are now the exclusive prerogative of the national government. This government is comprised of three branches. The legislature, known as Congress, is made up of two houses. The Senate's members are elected by and represent the individual states. The House of Representatives is elected by popular vote within respective districts and represent the people within said states. The president is elected independent of Congress and, as head of the executive branch, is responsible for enacting the laws passed by that body.<sup>8</sup> The Constitution also calls for the creation of a judicial branch but specifies little about its powers. The first session of Congress, as well as the term of the first president, is set to begin in April of 1789.

---

<sup>6</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 151.

<sup>7</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 154-155.

<sup>8</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 156.



United States, circa 1789  
<https://dcc.newberry.org/items/eighth-map-1789>

## **A Republic for a New Era**

Reacting to the Past is an academic game system that gives players the opportunity to explore historical events from the perspective of those who experienced them firsthand. This means you will not only be reading about history; you will be living it!

In this game you will take on the role of one of the politicians participating in the U.S. Congresses' inaugural session, which took place between 1789 to 1791. The revolution may be over, but the work of nation building has only just begun. A new constitution has legally unified the disparate states, but it is still untested. How will the new national government function in reality? Can it muster the support needed to avoid collapsing in on itself? Even now regional and ideological factions are beginning to develop, can a republic be founded on such contentious, uncertain ground?

Like the Revolution itself, this republic will draw on the principles of the Enlightenment for inspiration. America is destined to become the embodiment of these principles, or so it feels in the excitement of the moment. As the leaders of this new nation, it is up to you to decide how to translate enlightened ideals like liberty and republican virtue into the customs and institutions of its government. Can you cut through the political quagmire that is quickly forming to ensure that your vision for the new nation is the one that reigns supreme? This is your moment; it is up to you to build a great nation and establish your legacy in its pantheon of founding fathers!

## **A Republic Undivided**

Strategic alliances and politics have always gone hand in hand, but during the founding of the American republic, this was seen as an anarchistic, corrupt way of running a government. This posed a problem. In a republic, politicians require the direct backing of the citizenry in

order to hold office. How could such a state function without parties to facilitate the election of officials and organize support for legislation?

It is important to remember that the men who created the American republic had no experience with running such a government. Monarchies were the norm at the time, and most of the great European powers were empires headed by kings. While some of these empires, like Great Britain, had representative legislatures, many Americans were understandably reluctant to model their new government on a system from which they had fought so hard to break away. The old colonial assemblies and later state legislatures could provide a rough template, but they were much smaller in scale. Furthermore, they were populated by elites who were familiar with each other through long association and had similar backgrounds and interests.<sup>9</sup> There was no way for the founders to know what to expect from national republican politics.

This context is important to keep in mind when trying to understand the mindset of the time. If America were to be a fresh start for politics, then it had to avoid the corruption of the old monarchies, of which partisanship was a key component. There was no obvious reason that republics could not function without factional divisions altogether. Political parties were soon “considered a symptom of disease in the body politic, signs of partiality and self-centeredness in opposition to the general good”.<sup>10</sup> Republics were dedicated to the common good, and therefore any party in opposition to the government was in opposition to the people themselves. Possibly even more reviled than political parties was backroom intrigue. Negotiating political deals in private was so frowned upon that Washington refused to even meet with foreign dignitaries

---

<sup>9</sup> Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*, (R. R. Donnelley & Sons, 2001), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 140.

privately.<sup>11</sup> Trading votes for political favors was seen tantamount to trading your virtue, a dangerous game in a community that valued reputation so highly.

Given these prevailing attitudes, it is not surprising that politicians were reluctant to be seen openly creating alliances with each other. Political deal making and association would not go away, of course, but they would necessarily be disguised as non-political in nature. Elaborate schemes of “accidentally” bumping into other legislators on walks and paying formalized social visits with ulterior motives pervaded political practice.<sup>12</sup> Social events, such as luncheons and dinners, were an especially popular way to skirt the appearance of factionalism and intrigue.<sup>13</sup> In the new republic, the line between private and public life would become increasingly blurry.

### **Your Reputation Precedes You Sir**

This overlap of the public and personal persona would be increased by the vital importance a politician’s reputation came to play in his political efficacy. In the absence of formalized parties to facilitate the operation of the new political system, a politician's reputation as a gentleman was vital for influencing and coordinating with his colleagues. Reputation was how one was perceived by those around them. It had many dimensions, including their socio-economic position, prestige for public service (often military), and moral character. To be a man of honor required not only a good reputation, but possession of traits such as bravery, self-

---

<sup>11</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 51-52.

<sup>13</sup> These functions’ importance, combined with the sexist assumption that women were incapable of being political actors, were ironically responsible for placing some women in a position of extreme political influence. The wives of the political elite would have been responsible for hosting the social gatherings that became so important for deal making and networking. Not only could they control who was invited and who was not, but they were also often trusted with sensitive political information due to their perceived inability to appreciate its importance. For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see “The Politics of Love: Dolly Madison Gained Influence Through Kindness” by Catherine Allgor, from the 2010 January/February issue of the magazine *Humanities*.

control, and integrity. These were the qualities of a leader and help explain why a man's honor was so vital to his effectiveness as a politician.<sup>14</sup>

The importance of reputation was increased by the fact that most national politicians were strangers to each other. Without the long-standing interpersonal connections of the state legislatures they were used to, personal honor was all these politicians had to establish trust between themselves and their fellow political actors. Maintaining one's reputation was therefore a number one priority. Without a reputation, or worse a tarnished one, a politician was doomed. How could a reputation be created and sustained? In the tense and uncertain atmosphere of the early republic, every aspect of a politician's life was in danger of being interpreted politically. Any action could help or hurt one's precious reputation. Self-presentation therefore became a top priority for anyone serious about their political career. There were several areas of personal display of which politicians were particularly self-conscious. These were dress, oratory ability, and, above all else, honor.

They say that the clothes make the man, and this was certainly true for the leaders of the early Republic. The problem was that there was no clear consensus on what type a man a public figure was supposed to be. Republican virtue demanded simplicity of dress, but this was in direct conflict with longstanding cultural traditions which bestowed dignity only on gentlemen, who wore clothes befitting their elevated rank in society.<sup>15</sup> Conventions such as wigs, stockings and knee breeches were borrowed from European high society. The level of ornateness in imitation of old-world courts could speak volumes about a politician's view of republicanism. The result therefore had to be a compromise between the two norms, dressing with elegance but not

---

<sup>14</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, xviii-xx.

<sup>15</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 45.

extravagance. The problem was that it was up to every individual to decide where the line should be drawn, and each tended to be suspicious when others failed to conform to his own standards.

Statesmen in the new republic had to distinguish themselves by words as well as dress. In an arena where gaining attention was vital, it is not surprising that “Congressional oratory was key ... each speaker attempting to shine brightest”.<sup>16</sup> A speech's quality was determined less by its content than the way it was delivered. For a speech to reflect well on its deliverer, it had to impress its audience with its rhetorical style.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately for any would-be orator, it was often impossible to gain and maintain the attention of either house of Congress. Rather than sitting still focused on the current speaker, legislators wrote letters, conversed, read, ate snacks, and wandered in and out at their own leisure.<sup>18</sup> That environment could give anyone anxiety over their speaking ability, much less a group of men primed to believe any failure to establish a national reputation could end their careers.

Something that no politician interested in having a future in national politics could ignore was an attack on his honor. Comments, whether verbal or in writing, that denied one's manhood or personal integrity could fatally undermine their reputation, the pillar of their career.<sup>19</sup> For a gentleman, the only proper response to such an attack on their character was to demand an affair of honor; a duel.

---

<sup>16</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 24.

<sup>17</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 24.

<sup>18</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Joanne B. Freeman, “History as Told by the Devil Incarnate: Gore Vidal's *Burr*,” in *Novel History: Historians and Novelists Confront America's Past (and Each Other)*, ed. Mark C. Carnes (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2001), 37.



## Affairs of Honor

Duels were the most extreme possible result of an affront to a man's honor and they followed a highly ritualized structure. After the initial incident, for example the use of a contemporary slur such as "rascal"<sup>20</sup>, the gentleman whose honor was questioned could then give "notice" of an insult. This was followed by a lengthy process of negotiation, during which each participant would select a second in order to represent them. These negotiations ended when the offended party had achieved "satisfaction" for the insult, either through a duel (usually via pistols) or a nonviolent option, such as an apology.<sup>21</sup>

These affairs were far from isolated personal disputes. Properly timed, an attack on an opponent's honor could damage their reputation and the credibility of their friends during a critical moment in a political event. As an added benefit, such an attack could also boost one's own standing. Dueling could therefore be used to promote specific agendas and interests in the absence of formalized factional competition. This is because the willingness to defend your honor, by risking your own life in a duel if necessary, was required to prove your worthiness to wield power as a political leader. By extension, this would also reflect on the worthiness of your allies and ideas. This does not mean that duels were only tools for cynical political gain. Rather, they were caused by a blend of private and public considerations. Many of the gentlemen politicians of the period sincerely cared about their reputation as a man of honor for its own sake. Even if they did not personally care, however, they could not hope to have successful careers in politics if their reputations suffered damage as a result of refusing a duel or ignoring a slight. To ignore affronts to your honor, or to refuse a challenge to duel, would see you labelled as a coward and not worthy of the status of a gentleman. Reputation was so essential to political

---

<sup>20</sup> Freeman, "History as Told by the Devil Incarnate" 37.

<sup>21</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 167.

efficacy that even those who were firmly morally opposed to dueling on moral grounds still tended to participate when their honor was on the line.<sup>22</sup>

There were several ways that an affair of honor could be precipitated. To cane someone was to beat them with a sturdy, walking stick. Unlike dueling, this act of violence did not symbolize equal status, but superior to inferior. This is also true of “nose tweaking” where one man tweaks the nose of another to display the former’s dominant status. Either of these offenses was severe enough to warrant a challenge from the victim, provided he was a gentleman as well. “Posting” was a response to those who refused a challenge, labeling them a coward in newspapers or pamphlets available to the public. The most common way to instigate a duel was the use of certain insults. Calling a man a coward, liar, rascal, scoundrel or puppy necessitated a challenge from the insulted party. Failure to do so would only prove the truth of the accusation.<sup>23</sup>

The negotiations that followed such an offense were complicated and veiled by euphemistic language. “Duels” became “interviews” and “seconds” were “particular friends”. Once these seconds were appointed, all further negotiations were expected to be done through them, since gentlemen would dishonor themselves by trying to negotiate themselves out of dueling. Likewise, while the goal of dueling was to defend one’s honor, not kill your opponent, both parties walking away unscathed cast doubt on the legitimacy of the duel. Therefore, most duels ended with one or both participants receiving minor injuries rather than being seriously wounded or killed.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 167-170.

<sup>23</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 173.

<sup>24</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 177-179.

## **A Clash of Ideals**

### **New Rivalries**

There were no political parties as we understand them when Congress held its inaugural session. This does not mean that there were no ideological divides, but that these divides, as well as the political alliances and enemies created by them, were not openly recognized or celebrated. Politicians organized themselves in order to advance legislation and oppose ideas they disagreed with, but to openly declare themselves as part of a particular movement was taboo. Of the multiple coalitions to emerge in this time, the most prominent were the Federalists, who advocated for a stronger national government. They quickly met opposition from so-called Republicans, who favored a more decentralized system. The clash of these two groups and their respective ideologies would define the new republic for decades.

### **What Binds People Together**

Unlike traditional alliance based on kinship and patronage networks, these new parties were distinguished from one another by differing approaches to governing. These differences in the coalitions' policy objectives can be traced to their respective guiding philosophies. Each had a different belief about the source of human motivation, and their conclusions could hardly have been farther apart. The Federalists took what you might call a pessimistic view of human nature, believing in “only the ordinary individual’s selfish pursuit of his own private pursuits and happiness” and sought to harness this self-interest for the public good.<sup>25</sup> As one prominent Federalist said, “It is as easy to change human nature, as to oppose the strong current of the selfish passions. A wise legislator will gently divert the channel, and direct it, if possible, to the

---

<sup>25</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 104.

public good”<sup>26</sup>. In other words, the Federalists believed that society was primarily held together by the self-interested actions of individual people.

Pragmatically sacrificing ideals for the sake of effective politics goes back as far as Machiavelli in theory and the beginning of time in practice. Viewing the aggregate self-interest of an entire population as an independent societal force in its own right was, however, a relatively new concept. This idea was made popular by Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Adam Smith in his book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. This book was a 18th century primer on how modern economies, such as Great Britain’s, managed to be so incredibly efficient. In it, Smith famously declares that “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, society and the economy are not held together by man’s benevolence but by man’s greed and concern for his own self-interest. This may not be the point that Smith was trying to make in *The Wealth of Nations*, but it is one of the main concepts that stuck with the Federalists, who were eager to encourage the growth of a powerful, modern economy in their new country.

This approach seems cynical, but the Federalists themselves probably would have preferred the term realistic. The government cannot change who people are. Working with the world as it is for the best possible outcome seems preferable to relying on virtues that the general population does not seem to naturally possess. The Federalists could trust themselves, and potentially other gentlemen, to selflessly act in the public good. Everyone else would need to be

---

<sup>26</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 107.

<sup>27</sup> Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, (New York, Bantam Dell, 2003), 23-24.

incentivized to do what was right for the country. In this way the Federalists combined traditional elitist conceptions of social hierarchy with modern theories of human motivation.

Because of this conservative, hierarchical view of society, the Federalists focused their efforts on harnessing the support of the elite classes of the country, rich merchants and landowners “who lived off of rents from their tenants”.<sup>28</sup> These key elites would then use their networks of patronage to persuade the rest of the public to follow suit. Federalists therefore believed that the most efficient way to direct American society towards their desired outcomes (for its own good, of course) was to align the interests of these top men with Federalist plans and policy objectives. The rest of society would then naturally emulate their masters and patrons in both their attitudes and votes. Implicit in this mindset is the elitism of the Federalists, a carryover from Britain’s own system of distinct social classes, which told them that society was effectively run top down, with all the important decisions being made by the aristocratic classes.

This viewpoint affected Federalist strategy in many areas. For example, their response to the debt crisis created by the war was an elaborate plan to promote allegiance to the Federal government.<sup>29</sup> The Revolution had been incredibly expensive, leaving many of the states in deep debt to smaller farmers and shopkeepers, as well as foreign governments. Many of the smaller bonds were later bought for pennies on the dollar by wealthy debt speculators, who hoped to turn a quick profit when the bonds regained their value. The Federalists proposed that the Federal government assume responsibility for servicing this debt from the individual states. They believed that if the wealthy landowners and merchants suddenly found their self-interest tied up with that of the new central government, these elites would be much more supportive of said government. The elites would eventually identify more as citizens of the U.S., rather than their

---

<sup>28</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 104.

<sup>29</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 107.

respective home states. Consistent with Federalist theories of social hierarchies, the rest of the country would inevitably adopt the bond holder's new identity as Americans.

A cynical observer might attribute the Federalists' ardent support for hierarchies and the elite as nothing but unscrupulous self-interest, since most of them belonged to this class themselves. Was this true, or did they honestly think that this approach would lead to the best result for the entire country? Like most perspectives that favor a classes' own interest, it is impossible to tell exactly how conscious the bias is. There were likely some Federalists who would have held any ideology that supported their position on top of the new country's socio-economic ladder. Many others, however, honestly believed that a deeply hierarchical society, like the ones of Europe at the time, was the best model for a civilized nation to emulate. They believed 'that some were born to be "Philosophers, Legislators, and Statesmen" while others were "intended for working with their hands"'.<sup>30</sup> Those not born to their suited rank in society, would have the necessary talents to rise to it. If they did not, then they did not belong in the elevated position anyways. One would not have to look very far for a tangible example of this process. Alexander Hamilton, Washington's Secretary of the Treasury, had been born into extreme poverty on an island in the Caribbean, but this had not stopped him from rising to one of the highest positions in the new republic. The idea that some people were simply born to lead while others were born to follow was also extremely common at the time. This was an especially common opinion among those "born leaders". Human beings are susceptible to believe not only that they deserve whatever advantages they have, but that these advantages are beneficial to their community. It is very psychologically uncomfortable for someone to believe that they have not actually earned their advantages over others, and it is therefore important to adopt a worldview

---

<sup>30</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 105.

that assures them that they did. The Federalists were no exception, and no doubt convinced themselves that the positions of power and privilege that they enjoyed so much were not just acceptable within a republic, but downright patriotic.

The Federalists were not short of examples that suggested that radical democracy was in fact injurious to the public good. The unrestrained popular state legislatures that reigned between the Revolution and the new republic were, in their opinion, the cause of most of that period's problems. Faced with heavy pressure from their constituencies, not to mention the occasional armed uprising, state legislators heavily favored debtors over bond holders. They repeatably passed debtor relief bills, at the expense of those who held the debt. Legislatures also often refused to raise taxes high enough to service the public debt.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the refusal of the state legislatures to enforce the agreed payment on debt caused foreigners to be more and more reluctant to lend Americans goods on credit or invest much needed financial capital in the new country.<sup>32</sup> Why risk your wealth in a place whose own government is unlikely to protect your property rights? To the economically minded Federalists this situation was unacceptable.

This is not to say that economics was the only major driving force behind political rhetoric of the time. It was a commonly held belief that the Revolution was destined to fulfill the promises of the Enlightenment.<sup>33</sup> The American republic was not just another state, but a political experiment which would have global repercussions. America's lack of history and location in a "wilderness" allowed it to have a fresh start. Free from the corruption of Europe, it would initiate "a worldwide conversion to a representative, egalitarian regime".<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*, (New York, Hill and Wang, 2007), 96.

<sup>32</sup> Holton, *Unruly Americans*, 97.

<sup>33</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 37.

<sup>34</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 3.

The Republicans' own view of societal cohesion, in radical opposition to the Federalists', sprung from these lofty ambitions for the republic. They drew on the then contemporary intellectual belief that people were drawn together by principles of natural attraction and that "love and benevolence among people preserve 'order and harmony' in society".<sup>35</sup> Ironically enough, this view also drew heavily on the work of Adam Smith, specifically an earlier book by him entitled *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. It laid out a modern interpretation of the previously unacknowledged emotion of empathy and its role in society.<sup>36</sup> The Republican conclusion was that society did not function as a result of everyone following their own self-interest with little regard for their neighbors, but by everyone working and looking out for both themselves and those around them. This belief was made famous in *An Essay on Civil Society* by Adam Ferguson, another Scottish intellectual. Ferguson's work, like Smith's, was part of the Scottish Enlightenment, a movement that sought to understand, among other topics, the driving force behind human society. Selfishness and love are two possible answers to this question, but it is up to the reader to decide which view, if either, more plausibly aligns with their own experience.

Where the Federalists defended socioeconomic inequality, the Republicans tended towards egalitarianism, in principle, if not necessarily in practice. Even wealthy, slave holding southern Republicans admitted that "the principal difference between one people and another proceeds only from the differing opportunities of improvement." and "White, Red, or Black; polished or unpolished...Men are Men".<sup>37</sup> It is certainly strange how some of the most die-hard defenders of equality could practice such huge levels of hypocrisy by continuing to own slaves.

---

<sup>35</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 104.

<sup>36</sup> Holton, *Unruly Americans*, 116-117.

<sup>37</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 102.



Perhaps a better way to view the situation would be that the Republicans were so committed to equality of men, on paper at least, that even those with the most to lose from its realization were proponents of it. Believing in a principle and aligning your behavior with it are, after all, two very different things

Because of this aversion to social hierarchies, Republicans also strongly opposed centralized government. Centralized government, especially in Great Britain, was inextricably linked with social rank, corrupt business privileges, and patronage networks.<sup>38</sup> Republicans therefore saw the government as an unnatural prop designed to maintain the elites' place at the top of the social hierarchy. Instead, they preferred their ideal of a civil society; one composed of equals and held together by the fraternal love of its members. As Thomas Paine said of society, it "is produced by our wants", "promotes our happiness positively" through "uniting our affections", and "encourages intercourse".<sup>39</sup> He contrasted this with government, which is produced "by our wickedness", promotes happiness "negatively by restraining our vices", "and creates distinctions."<sup>40</sup> Government was at best a necessary evil and at worst a detriment to society and human progress. This skepticism of centralized political authority is why many congressmen were wary of Federalist attempts to strengthen the authority of the national government in relation to the states.

It would be hard to overstate the philosophical gulf that existed between the two factions. One thought love held the world together, the other greed. One advocated for a radical form of egalitarianism reform, the other in recreating the hierarchies of the Old World. One put their trust in the power of fraternal love to hold society together, the other government. Still, despite their

---

<sup>38</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 105.

<sup>40</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 105-106.

differences, the respective members of each faction were initially drawn from the same elite circles, especially in the more aristocratically composed Senate. Despite their similar backgrounds and class interests, each group would take radically different positions on the issues facing the fledgling American republic.

### **Credit Where Credit is Due<sup>41</sup>**

As noted above, the Federalists planned to use the debt accumulated from the Revolution, now mostly transferred from their original owners to a smaller number of “debt speculators”, to strengthen the position of the Federal government. If the states no longer needed to tax their citizens to pay off their respective debts, then those citizens would become more and more linked to the national government instead. As Wood writes, this would not only weaken the state governments in relation to the federal government, but also “strengthen America in the same way the British national debt had strengthened Great Britain.”<sup>42</sup> Since its creation in the previous century, Britain’s debt had accomplished two ends.

The first was allowing the British government to spend in excess of their tax income. This meant that the government was less dependent on its citizens willingness to contribute when it constructed a national budget. Taxpayer resistance can be an especially powerful budgetary constraint in a country with elected legislatures, like Great Britain or the nascent U.S. republic. With a national debt alleviating this restriction, the British government was more independent.

---

<sup>41</sup> This title was inspired by "Credit Where It's Due: The Factory & Marketplace Revolution", episode six of “The Day the Universe Changed”, written and presented by historian James Burke. This series is a great resource for learning more about the ideas discussed in this section, and history in general.

<sup>42</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 96.

The increased budget available dramatically increased the government's ability to wage war, enhancing its power on the world stage.<sup>43</sup>

The second accomplishment of Britain's public debt was less obvious than the first but no less important. By establishing the necessary institutional framework and public trust in financial markets, the public debt led to and facilitated the creation of a private debt market.<sup>44</sup> Now that there was access to business loans, entrepreneurs were able to invest in new capital like technological innovations and factories. This in turn jump started the process eventually known as the Industrial Revolution. By 1789 Britain's economy was one of the most powerful in the world, thanks to this revolution. Private debt markets were arguably one of the most crucial institutions to achieving this.

While industrialization was not a well understood process at the time, the Federalists were certainly no strangers to new economic theories. This is evident from their familiarity with *The Wealth of Nations*, which was first and foremost a manual of how modern economies worked. This knowledge was reflected in the Federalists' detailed plan for modernizing America's economy in order "to create a more diversified and prosperous economy that would be more self-reliant and less dependent on European supplies."<sup>45</sup> The hope was that large manufacturing operations would produce the goods typically imported from abroad. At the same time, the new factory working class would form a consumer base for the America's agricultural surplus. The end result was intended to be a militarily powerful, commercially independent state that could hold its own against the European powers.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Douglass C. North; Barry R. Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutional Governing Public Choice Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (Dec., 1989): 823.

<sup>44</sup> North and Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment," 825.

<sup>45</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 100.

<sup>46</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 101.

It is therefore no surprise that the Federalists, who wanted a powerful, central government, would wish to create a national debt for this new government. A debt would give the central government greater budgetary independence, as well as facilitate economic development. The plan's proponents also hoped that the consolidated national debt would help the country attract outside investors. If they could show that America was a safe place to invest capital, then its burgeoning economy would get the kickstart necessary to modernize. Like in many other areas, the Federalists wished to emulate their former ruler, Great Britain. The plan for the government to assume responsibility for payment of state debts was simply one step in this process.

Debt assumption did not enjoy unanimous support. Many Congressmen wanted to distinguish between original and secondary holders of the debt when making payments.<sup>47</sup> Many of the original veterans, war widows, and merchants who received the bonds in payment for their service to the patriot cause had since been forced by hardship to sell them at a steep discount to speculators. These legislators were naturally reluctant to give the speculators, who from their perspective had taken advantage of desperate patriots, the full benefit of the bonds while their original holders would get nothing. Hamilton, however, was relying both on the bonds' dependability strengthening the credit of the new country and the bonds themselves circulating as a form of non-species backed currency. Neither of those things was possible if the bonds' value was not consistent from holder to holder.

Much of the resistance to debt assumption also came from states who had already paid off most of their debts, such as Virginia, Maryland, and Georgia. They were therefore understandably very reluctant to contribute more tax revenue to the Federal government in order

---

<sup>47</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 141.

to cover their less-solvent neighbors, such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, and South Carolina.<sup>48</sup>

The representatives of the former states argued that it was unjust to force their more productive economies to perpetually prop up the unproductive financial scheming of the Northern states.

Thus, the debate over debt assumption began to take on a regional character, despite the status of South Carolina among the debtor states.

### **Regional Divisions**

The Federalist plan to charter a national bank also highlighted this growing regional divide in the fledgling republic. Southerners in particular believed that the notion of a federally operated bank clashed with their view of America as a primarily agricultural society.

Republicans did not see these “stock jobbers” as important to the national economy, because what they did produced nothing of tangible value. Stocks and bonds are not physical products with a clear use to society. This was an age in which the process of industrialization, and its requirement of stable credit, was not yet widely appreciated. From the Republicans’ perspective, banks could only create artificial money out of thin air.<sup>49</sup> Banks, credit, and speculation were all suspect practices, and characteristic of a corrupt and tyrannical monarchy, not a virtuous and honest republic.

The characteristics of Republicans also varied by region. The most prominent of the group were Southern landed gentry who, despite their wealth and elite status ‘condemned the privileges of rich speculators and moneyed men and celebrated the character of ordinary yeoman farmers, whose economic independence made them incorruptible and therefore “the best citizens

---

<sup>48</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 141.

<sup>49</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 144.

for a republic".<sup>50</sup> The Southerners had a romantic ideal of what a republican citizen looked like. They argued that one's land gave one independence and thus ensured that their votes were free from corrupting influences. Individual ownership of property was consequently an essential component to republicanism. This was the underlying reason for Republican opposition to industrialization in general and the chartering of a national bank specifically. The British style commercial society the Federalists were trying to create was the polar opposite of the virtuous, independent farmer-based republic favored by the Republicans.

Likewise, the belief that a republic should rely on the support of its average citizens was incompatible with the worldview of the hierarchically minded Federalists. They believed that tying the interest of the common people to the elites was essential for societal stability, which left no room for a class of politically powerful but small scale farmers.<sup>51</sup> Although the Southern view seems much more compatible with modern day values, it is important to remember that these southern aristocrats were also heavily dependent on slave labor. This suggests that protecting the institution of slavery was likely a large factor in their desire for individual states to be on more equal terms with the federal government, an important tenet of the Republican agenda.

Northern Republicans were distinct in nature from their southern allies. In the North, most Republican support came from the new "middling" class of successful farmers, artisans, manufacturers, tradesmen and smaller scale merchants.<sup>52</sup> They tended to resent the Federalist elites who traditionally dominated society and wished to advance their own interests instead. This new class was disappointed by the failure of Federalists to pass higher protective tariffs.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 94.

<sup>51</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 150.

<sup>52</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 168.

<sup>53</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 170.

Tariffs would have protected the farmers, artisans, and manufacturers from competing with cheaper, imported goods from Europe. Tariffs would have hurt the wealthier merchants who made their living by importing these foreign goods. Since the wealthier merchants tended to be Federalists, the dominant party in the north, the tariffs were blocked. The Federalists in these states favored alternative revenue sources such as excise taxes on domestically produced goods, possibly because these would have less of an impact on wealthy merchants. Of course, this just did even more to hurt the type of small manufacturer and farmer already likely to become a Republican. To the middling class of people in these states, the Federalists appeared to be recreating the “inflated executive authority, high taxes, standing armies, and perpetual debts” that they had fought so recently to overthrow during the Revolution.<sup>54</sup>

### **Farther than Just a Kind Word**

In order to deal with the many external and internal threats to the Republic, the Federalists advocated for a professional standing army controlled by the Federal government.<sup>55</sup> This proposal was no small controversy in a country with fiercely localist loyalties and deep memories of suffering occupation by the British army less than a decade earlier. Even during the Revolution, local militias enjoyed the moral and material support of their respective populations while the Continental Army was viewed disdainfully and forced to beg for their supplies and reinforcements.<sup>56</sup> Despite these impediments, Shays’ Rebellion had convinced the drafters of the Constitution that a permanent military force was necessary to ensure the government’s ability to

---

<sup>54</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 172.

<sup>55</sup> Saul Cornell, *A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America*, (New York, Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006), 40.

<sup>56</sup> Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution and the Fate of the Empire*, (Yale University Press, 2014).

enforce its will. The Federalists firmly believed that the capacity for military coercion, potentially against its own citizens, was essential for a nation-state's survival and ability to enforce the rule of law.<sup>57</sup>

This view was not shared by their opponents. To the Republicans, the creation of a permanent standing army stank of British style monarchical tyranny and provided further proof of the sinister intentions behind all the Federalist programs.<sup>58</sup> Why would a republic, which is founded for the public good and run by the will of the people, have need to enforce its edicts with a standing army? The Republicans held less power in the executive branch specifically and in the national government generally than their Federalist opponents. Furthermore, as the Newburg Conspiracy and Shays' Rebellion demonstrate, America had not yet stabilized to such a degree that the use of violence to achieve political goals was out of the question. Combined with the Federalists' monopoly on Federal power, this unstable situation suggests that the fear they would use a standing army to suppress opposition was not unwarranted.

The Republicans favored continued reliance on the beloved state militia for national security. They reasoned "that an armed citizenry organized as a well-regulated militia controlled by the states could take up arms against the federal government and thereby act as the final check against government tyranny".<sup>59</sup> As in other areas of policy, the Republicans were more concerned with the possibility of government abuse of power than disorder from the population. For this reason, they also fought against Federal control of the existing state militias. They feared that this control, combined with the existence of a standing army, would allow the national government to impose its will on the now defenseless states.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 111.

<sup>58</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 172.

<sup>59</sup> Cornell, *A Well-Regulated Militia*, 41.

<sup>60</sup> Cornell, *A Well-Regulated Militia*, 40.



Even if the Federalists did not use the army to silence dissent or encroach on states' rights, they were certainly not afraid of politicizing military service. The 'Society of the Cincinnati, for example, was an organization composed of former officers of the Continental Army. Members of the society were overwhelmingly favored for lucrative government positions, drawing charges that the Federalists were attempting to create a patronage system with deep loyalty to their own party within the national government.<sup>61</sup> To the Republicans, mobilizing patronage smacked of aristocratic practice and the danger of creating a permanent class of elite men favored for public advancement due to their military service. Such a class would essentially be an American version of a titled nobility. This was far from the only aspect of Federalist policy that uncomfortably resembled the British political system of which the Americans had recently fought so hard to rid themselves.

### **An American Monarchy?**

The unsettled question of executive authority was another area where British political institutions began to influence the Federalists' objectives. While nominally a republic, the exact form of government for the new nation was still undefined on the eve of Congress's inaugural session. The role of the president in this new system was therefore a hotly debated topic.

To the Republicans, every elaborate, court-like ceremony of government, especially when involving the president, was a sure sign that the republic was being influenced by "old world corruption".<sup>62</sup> Even details as seemingly insignificant as President Washington's clothes were closely scrutinized, lest their extravagance refute the republican virtue of his office and elevate him to the position of an American monarch.

---

<sup>61</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 108.

<sup>62</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 14.

It was not only the president's actions that fell under suspicion. His integrity, after all, was beyond dispute. Much like King George in the turmoil preceding the Revolution, however, any undesirable action by Washington could be attributed to the bad counsel of those around him. The actions of the Federalists were therefore closely observed by their political adversaries, with the suspicion that ostentatious displays of wealth and rank, coupled with their strong push for ever more aristocratic titles, were signs of an attempt to form a corrupt "court party" around the president.<sup>63</sup> The executive branch was not the only apparent center of monarchism, however. The Senate regarded themselves as the superior house of Congress. As such, Senators were consistently more obsessed with noble-like titles than their counterparts in the House of Representatives. They also opted to keep their meetings closed to the general public. Observers from within and without the Senate saw these actions and attitudes as attempts to ape the House of Lords, parliament's aristocratic upper house.

Republicans' fears may seem like mere political paranoia, except they were correct about Federalist intentions, at least where the presidency was concerned. One advisor even suggested in writing that 'the president ought to follow the practice of "European Courts" as closely as he could'.<sup>64</sup> Why? Washington was perhaps the only universally respected and trusted public figure in the entire country, and the Federalists were eager to borrow his credibility to legitimize the national government.<sup>65</sup> They therefore attempted to make Washington into a monarchical figure through ritualized celebrations of his birthday, weekly presidential levees, king style inaugural addresses to Congress, and modelling his official portraits on those of European monarchs. Despite many Americans viewing the Revolution as an outright rejection of monarchy, the

---

<sup>63</sup> Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*, 22.

<sup>64</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 76.

<sup>65</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 80.

Federalists thought that the stability and authority provided by a king was just what the chaotic and troubled nation needed.

### **The Preservation of our most Precious Liberty**

The political situation during the earliest years of the U.S. republic was contentious to say the least. Rather than viewing the adherents of the opposing viewpoint as well-meaning but misguided fellow patriots, each faction believed that the other wanted nothing less than the total destruction of the nation itself.

To the Republicans, all the Federalists' objectives, the permanent national debt, patronage based bureaucracy, large standing army, presidential "court", calls for titles, the attempt to make the Senators into nobility and Washington into a king, were sure signs that they meant to turn the new republic into replica of monarchical Britain.<sup>66</sup>

Conversely, the Federalists believed themselves to be defenders of the Constitution and societal order in general. In their eyes this made them the legitimate administration, not just a mere political faction. If this were true, then the Republicans were not legitimate opposition but a rebellious, even traitorous sect within the government, one bent on its downfall and a general anarchy throughout society.<sup>67</sup>

Neither of these viewpoints allowed for compromise with the opposing side. Because of this irresolvable conflict, the debate between the adherents of the two ideologies was not a mere disagreement over the details of the country's governance, but an all or nothing struggle for the soul of the nation itself.

---

<sup>66</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 172.

<sup>67</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 161.

## **Part III: Game Play and Set-up**

### **Setting a National Agenda**

As members of the U.S.'s government's first session, you have the historic opportunity to lay the foundation for a new nation. In doing so, you will (hopefully) be immortalized like the great classical founders of old, such as Solon, Cato, Cicero, and Cincinnatus. The eyes of history are on you, for the choices you make now, for both the government's policy and procedures, will set the precedent for generations of Americans to come. What form will the new republic take? Will the states retain any of their sovereignty or become wholly subject to the federal government? Can societal order be preserved, or will this come at the expense of liberty? Will the new America drift back into old monarchic habits, or will something entirely new emerge?

### **Schedule of Game Sessions**

#### **Session 1**

- Opens with inauguration of George Washington as first president of the United States.
- Suggested debate:
  - Titles, ceremonies, and etiquette of the new government.

#### **Session 2**

- Suggested debates:
  - Amendments to the Constitution, pre-set list introduced by the House of Representatives, others can be player generated.
  - Patronage system.

### **Session 3**

- Suggested debates:
  - Assumption of states' debts.
  - Location of national capital.
  - Excise taxes.

### **Session 4**

- Suggested debates:
  - Chartering a national bank.
  - Establishment of a standing army.
  - Conflict between western settlers and Indians.<sup>68</sup>

## **Objectives and Victory Conditions**

### **Who is Playing?**

The Senate will be represented by characters in this game, as will the President and his cabinet. The first Senate had 26 members at its height. In smaller classes, only one senator from each state will be represented, but each senator will have two votes, to represent influence over the other senator of their state. In such a situation, a vote of 12-14 will count as a tie, in which case the vice president will exercise his right to cast the deciding vote.

Each character has their own set of victory objectives, although some individual objectives may be shared by several characters. As members of Congress, most characters will have reelection to Congress first and foremost on their mind. You cannot enact your policy goals if you are no longer in office, after all. To this end, all senators will try to do as much as they can to represent the interests of their respective constituencies, although they will find it to their

---

<sup>68</sup> This topic, along with several others, is not adequately explained in the historical background of the current version but would be in any future versions that may be produced.

advantage to do this without it being noticed by others. Politicians should act disinterestedly for the public good as a whole, not particular parts of it.

Besides remaining in office, each character will have specific policy goals that they need to get passed into law. Legislation is a slow game, however, and the new constitution is specifically designed to limit frivolous law making. Passing each policy goal is a victory objective, and there will be a bonus to reelection roles for each policy successfully signed into law. Some characters, such as president George Washington and his cabinet, do not have to worry about reelection. They will still have policy goals, as well as more abstract objectives.

To get laws passed, each senator will have to speak in support of their proposals, as well court the support of other players. While passage of laws is the ultimate goal, it is possible for a player to achieve recognition for their efforts if their hard work is well documented. A player who keeps a diary of their actions in Congress will receive a bonus to their reelection roles.

## **Victory Determined at End of Game**

While it is difficult to repeal a law once it is passed, it is not impossible. For this reason, no victory objectives can be claimed until the close of the final game session.

## **Rules and Procedures**

### **The Honor System**

A gentleman's reputation is the only real political currency in circulation in this world. To represent this, this game employs the "Honor System". Every character (except George Washington, whose honor is above all doubt) starts the game with a certain honor score. Think of it like an 18th century credit score. Actions you take throughout the game have the potential to raise or decrease your honor score, at the Game Master's discretion. Not every character begins

the game with the same score. Those with a preexisting national reputation will naturally have higher prestige and influence in the new government.

Not every character is affected by their honor score in the same way. Senators rely on a high honor score to improve their chances at reelection. Senators begin the game with two votes, representing influence over the other senator of their respective states. While a senator will always have at least one vote while in office, his extra vote can be lost if his honor score dips sufficiently. Likewise, he may find himself in possession of more votes than he started with if his honor score becomes high enough. The total number of votes in circulation will not change. Extra votes should be kept track of by some sort of physical representation, such as poker chips, that the Game Master will provide.

Members of Washington's cabinet do not have votes on legislation, but they can earn prestige points. These are also earned from an increase in a character's honors score and can be lost if it decreases. These points can be spent in order to try and sway Washington's decision on whether to sign or veto legislation. The more points used, the greater the odds are that Washington will side with that cabinet member. Prestige points used this way are exhausted and cannot be reused. Poker chips are also a good way to keep track of these points, but another color should be used to differentiate them from the voting chips.

Remember, other characters are unknown to you, so anything that you say, do, or write inside or outside of class has the potential of making its way back to the Game Master. For example, an ill-advised comment to the wrong person could affect your honor score, or an attack on another man's honor in a newspaper could spark an affair of honor.

## **Meeting Places**

The Senate will meet as a body in a room that represents the Senate chamber of Federal Hall. For the sake of participation, the president and his cabinet will be present for most proceedings, although they are free to break away and meet privately as a group, at the president's discretion. Washington is also free to hold ceremonial presidential dinners as often as he so chooses. These can be held wherever is convenient but should be scheduled outside of regular session time. The guest lists for such affairs are completely up to Washington and can include as many or as few of the other characters as he chooses.

## **Procedures**

The United States Congress is a brand-new institution. As such, it is up to the players to determine any procedures not explicitly described in the constitution, such as how to receive other government officials, the proper terms of addressing one another and the members of other branches of government, and how voting is organized. These may seem like trivial matters, but they are incredibly important! How the government chooses to display its power says everything about its relationship to the rest of the country. Modesty and simplicity could either be seen as republican virtue or weakness and poverty on the part of the Federal government. Likewise, elaborate titles could denote the strength and dignity of the United States, lending authority to its officials, or reveal the corrupt aspirations of its leaders to rule over the governed. This is especially true for any precedents involving the president.

It is important to note that rules of order, such as how debate is organized and how speakers are recognized, are among the procedures that players are responsible for creating. While it is technically possible to have no rules of order, the likely result would be nothing but chaos and gridlock, benefitting no one. It is therefore in every player's best interest that some



system of rules formalizing speaking, debate, and voting be agreed upon. This could take the form of a “podium rule”, allowing players to form a line to a podium at the front of the room in order to guarantee themselves a chance to speak.<sup>69</sup> Alternatively, an official house speaker could be elected. These are just suggestions; it really is they players’ job to decide how to organize meetings.

## **Legislation**

There are some rules that are laid down in the Constitution itself and are therefore not under the control of the players. There are two ways for a bill to be introduced into the game. Before anything else is decided, the Senate should determine the process for introducing a bill. How exactly does a legislator introduce a bill? Do bills require a majority vote to even be considered? The Senate can then debate the bill, modify it and finally vote on it. Bills historically introduced and passed by the House of Representatives will automatically be introduced into the game during the appropriate session. The Senate will then debate and modify it the same way they do with internally generated bills. When a bill is passed by the Senate, it is given to the president. After consulting with his cabinet, the president can either sign the bill into law or veto it. The Senate can override a veto with a two thirds’ majority vote to do so (it is assumed that the House of Representatives does so as well).

Amending the Constitution is a special process. Like with bills, amendments can be generated internally (from the Senate) or externally (from the House of Representatives). Either way, the Senate must approve of the amendment with a two thirds’ majority. If this occurs, an amendment must still be approved by at least three fourths of the state legislatures. This game

---

<sup>69</sup> Jennifer Popiel et al, *Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791: Reacting to the Past*, (New York, W. W. Norton and Company, 2015).

does not have a mechanism for state legislatures, however, and any amendments would not go into effect until later than the scope of this game anyways, so for the purposes of victory objectives, an amendment counts as successfully passed if approved of by the Senate and not later repealed. The president's signature is not required for the passing of amendments.

### **Decorum**

Members of Congress are not required to sit still and quiet when in session. Side talk, snacking, taunting the speaker, writing and passing humorous ditties about the speaker, and even leaving the room are not only acceptable but expected behaviors of Congressmen. Members of Washington's cabinet are expected to be a little more restrained but are free to argue with each other all they wish, encouraged actually.

### **Affairs of Honor**

Although players are free to make all the open attacks on their political opponents as they wish, there are repercussions for doing so. Attacks on another gentleman's honor can take the form of writing, such as in a newspaper, or verbally. Either way, when a comment is intended to denigrate a man's honor (as determined by the Game Master), the offended party must demand satisfaction in the form of a duel or suffer a severe penalty to his honor score. Refusing a duel will also cause the offending party a severe penalty to his honor score.

To carry out a duel, each participant must choose a second to negotiate a time and place on their behalf. Once this is decided the duelists will put on safety glasses and load rubber band guns provided by the Game Master. Another player will count to ten and the duelists, beginning back to back, will take one pace away from each other (two steps) for each numbered count. At ten each duelist can turn around and fire. If either duelist is hit anywhere on their body, a die roll

will determine if they are out of the game and if so for how long (representing either their death or disablement). It is important to note that to clear one's name and save their reputation, a player need only participate in the duel, they do not need to try to hit their opponents (they could fire into the air, for example). There is no guarantee, however, that their opponent will do the same.

### **Standing Out**

As a prominent political player on the national stage, it is imperative that you make a name for yourself. No one will support your policies or want you representing them if they do not know who you are. It is therefore crucial that you speak often and well. Merely supporting legislation may not be enough to win over the people, however. Concrete results are needed, so you must do all in your power to have your policy goals passed as actual laws.

Not all forms of fame are desirable. While legislation requires coordination and negotiation with other legislators, doing so too openly will damage your reputation. Remember, there is no room in a republic for factionalism. You would be well advised to find ways to disguise your outreach to other players, such as a friendly lunch between colleagues or some other social gathering. It goes without saying that you will have to reach out to and meet with others outside of class. Failure to disguise your negotiations properly will result in penalties to your honor score.

## **Counterfactuals<sup>70</sup>**

### **It is April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1789.**

What happens in America after this date may be very different from what actually happened in history. Players should behave in ways consistent, but not necessarily identical to, the historical characters they are representing. The intention of the game is not to recreate history. Events happening outside of the United States, in Europe for example, are less likely to be affected by player's actions and so will continue as they did in history.

### **Time Passes Swiftly.**

Time elapsed "in the real world" between and during sessions does not correspond to time elapsed in game. Several months or more could have passed in game between one session and another. While you will not know exactly what date it is while playing the game, you will get a rough idea via Game Master News Service announcements at the beginning of each session which report current events from other parts of the world.

### **All States Have Ratified the Constitution by Start of Game.**

North Carolina and Rhode Island did not historically ratify the Constitution and join the Union until well into Congress's first session. For simplicity's sake, and to give all players an equal chance to participate, these states will be treated as having ratified the Constitution before the first game session takes place.

---

<sup>70</sup> This section draws heavily on the counterfactual section of the RTTP gamebook *Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791* for guidance.

**President's Cabinet Created by Start of Game.**

Although many of the departments headed by cabinet members were not created until the summer of 1789, this game will treat all cabinet members being present and in their official roles at the beginning of the game.

**All Senators Face Elections After Two Years in Office.**

Senators' terms were staggered so some had terms of two years, others four, and others six. For the sake of fairness in evaluating players' performance, all senators will face reelection at the end of the game.

## **Appendix I: Primary Sources for Players**

- *An Essay on Civil Society* by Adam Ferguson
- *Notes on the State of Virginia* by Thomas Jefferson
- “Rights of Man” by Thomas Paine
- *The Federalist Papers* by Publius
- *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith
- *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* by Adam Smith
- The U.S. Constitution (The Bill of Rights had not yet been passed and therefore should not be read) (<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>)

## **Appendix II: Sample Role Sheets**

### **George Washington**

You are George Washington, former commander-and-chief of the Continental Army, hero of the Revolution, and now unanimously elected first president of the United States. You were born in 1732 into a wealthy Virginia planter family. Your first command was at the age of 21, as a provincial officer serving the British in the French and Indian War. Between then and the Revolution you served in both the Virginia legislature and the Continental Congress. Your implacable and determined, yet humble demeanor won the respect of your fellow delegates and made you a natural choice for commander of the newly raised Continental Army. These traits served you well throughout the war, which was fraught with danger and nearly calamitous defeats. In the end, however, it was you and the army that you created that emerged victorious and won America its independence from the British.

With this stint of public service under your belt, you had been content to retire to your beloved home, Mount Vernon, and wife, Martha. It was not to be, unfortunately, as a sharply divided America again needed your leadership. As the most universally respected public figure in America, you are in a unique position to unite the troubled country as it attempts to stabilize into a new nation. Like the Revolution before it, this is a task you have accepted with great reluctance. More now than ever you are a tired man, not as young as you once were, and would much rather spend your final years adding improvements to Mount Vernon's architecture and landscaping, your chief passion. This and other pastimes will have to wait though. Your country needs you and your sense of duty demands that you answer its call one last time.

## Victory Objectives

- Through years of diligent public service, you have gained a reputation as your country's greatest leader, one who always saw it through its darkest hours with your signature calm, steadfast attitude. Your primary goal for your term as president is to maintain your hard-won reputation and secure your legacy in America's founding pantheon. To this end, you must comport yourself with dignity and grace at all times.
- You are seen as above the petty squabbles and infighting endemic to politics. As president you will be expected to make political decisions, but you cannot afford to be seen as too partisan. Make decisions that will further your other goals, but if asked to speak, use language that is as general and unifying in tone as possible.
- How you present yourself will set the tone for the entire American presidency. All aspects of your behavior, from your interactions with other characters to how you dress, will be heavily scrutinized by other politicians and the public in general. In this you walk a fine line between public servant and would-be monarch. It is up to you to decide how best to present yourself as humble yet dignified.
- It is not clear what role president will play in this new government. It is up to you to ensure the independence and dominance of the role.
- You wish to unite a country that is sharply divided across several ideological lines. You believe that this will be best accomplished by strengthening the national government. Support the Federalist program but be careful to avoid any speech that makes you appear too biased or power hungry.
- You cannot expect the country to unify around you when your own cabinet fails to do so. Get Jefferson and Hamilton to stop their bickering during cabinet meetings.



## Alexander Hamilton

You are the one and only Alexander Hamilton. Ever since your birth to poor parents in the West Indies in 1755, you have been fighting. Orphaned at an early age, you had to fight for your very survival. Even then, however, you knew you were destined for more in life than impoverished toil. Later, through your brilliant writing skills, you managed to gain sponsorship to attend college on the mainland. You soon became involved in the Revolutionary movement and did not hesitate to take up arms when war broke out. You were fearless in battle, but most observers would point to your work as General Washington's secretary as your most vital contribution to the war effort, a role to which you brought your characteristic brilliance and sheer determination. You were indispensable, handling all of Washington's correspondence, including the vital communications to the Continental Congress. While your loyalty to Washington and the Revolution were unquestionable, your brash, hotheaded attitude often brought you into conflict with your peers. Furthermore, your desire for social climbing and love of refinement, then and now, have not gone unnoticed.

After the war ended you settled into a comfortable law practice in New York, where you raised a family with Elizabeth Schuyler, the daughter of a wealthy patriot and politician. You soon felt the draw of national politics, however, and contributed a majority of essays to *The Federalist Papers*, which laid out in detail what a national government in America should look like and how such an institution would function. You argued that for the American republic to survive it needed a strong national government and a modernized economy. In many ways the federal government is your creation. Like America itself, you believe it is your destiny to rise from your humble beginnings to greatness. As President Washington's Secretary of the Treasury,

a department he has given special discretionary powers to, you will ensure that this destiny will be fulfilled.

### **Victory Objectives**

- You have a legacy to create, and the work is only half done. None of your accomplishments thus far will mean anything if America fails to live up to its potential. The Federalist program is your program, its establishment your responsibility. It is your duty to do whatever it takes to pass as much Federalist legislation as possible. The fate of the national government, and therefore the nation itself, is in your hands! You must ensure that it gains the strength to stand on its own.
- You cannot accomplish such a task single handedly. You must recruit allies from the Senate to join your cause. You are leader of the Federalists, even if they do not realize it yet.
- In order to support your ambitions for the nation's economy, research and submit reports to Congress on the following topics: credit, national banks, national mints, and manufactures.
- Your plan for the national government to assume state debts is the crown jewel of your program: get it passed at all costs!
- Second in importance to the economy is chartering a national bank.
- National excise taxes could be an important independent source of revenue for the Federal government but may encounter stiff resistance from Congress. Do what you can.
- Reputation is everything in national politics. You cannot, under any circumstances, allow a slight against your honor to go unanswered. It is not just your credibility, but the credibility of the national government at stake.

- The enemies of the government are everywhere. Be wary! When you identify one, feel free to attack them in newspapers or pamphlet form, but write anonymously to minimize retaliation.

## **Thomas Jefferson**

You are Thomas Jefferson, statesman, philosopher, a man of the people (and class). You were born 1743 into the Virginia planter class. You have a lifelong passion of politics and justice. Many of your peers dismiss your ideas as “utopian” and “unrealistic” but you know the importance of not letting the current limitations of governing cause you to lose sight of what you know is right. As a delegate from the Virginia Legislature to the Continental Congress, you made your ideas official by drafting the Declaration of Independence. You have served Virginia in many other capacities, including legislator and governor. You served as the Minister of France for the Union while it was still governed by the Articles of Confederation. There you developed a love for the refinements and sophistication of French society and incorporated many of the philosophical ideas of French salons into your own worldview.

Now you have returned to serve as president Washington’s Secretary of State. To your horror, your beloved America is under siege by anti-republican forces. The Federalists would betray everything the Revolution stood for. The strength of America’s republicanism stems from its small, independent, land owning citizens, not commerce or the landed gentry. To stifle the voice of the people is to stifle republicanism itself! The Federalists wish only to consolidate their power and turn America into a monarchy, to mirror the Britain true patriots fought so hard to break away from. You cannot allow that to happen!

## **Victory Objectives**

- You are the republic's last defense against monarchism and corruption. You must stop Federalist plots wherever they appear!
- To do this you will have to organize resistance among the Senators. Be careful though, opposing the government, even for the sake of the nation, is viewed by some as treason.
- The Federalists won the ratification debates because they dominated the press. You must not let them pull the same trick again. Start a newspaper friendly to the Republican cause, although take care to keep its origins secret.
- Hamilton seems to have influence over Washington. You must use your position on the cabinet to expose him for the monarchist that he is.

## **William Maclay**

You are William Maclay. Born in 1737, you have accomplished much in your life. You are trained in law, surveying, and hold large amounts of land in the Pennsylvania back country. You have 25 years of experience in Pennsylvanian state politics. You are described by your peers as rigid, uncompromising, and even dour. While it is true you are not as fond of raucous dinner parties and personal politicking as they are, your conviction and dedication to public service is unquestionable. When it came time for the Pennsylvania state assembly to elect senators to the first session of Congress, you were a natural choice.

You are deeply troubled by what you have seen of national politics thus far. Not only does no one seem in the mood to let you into your confidence but there appears to be plots against republicanism everywhere. The delegations from the northern states seem to be the most in favor of corrupt back room dealings or, worse still, monarchism! Many southerners are very

vocally supportive of republican ideals, but their aristocratic lifestyles and opulent dress and mannerisms cause you to doubt their conviction. You have tried to bring your concerns to men of more national repute such as James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, but they have been cold and unreceptive. Jefferson has spent too much time in French courts to be a reliable friend of republicanism anyways. In general, you have found your fellow politicians to be guarded and exclusive, as if they are reluctant to trust anyone but themselves. Despite these many obstacles, you must do what you can to preserve republican virtue in the government and somehow convince your constituency of what you are up against.

### **Victory Objectives**

- You cannot accomplish any of your political objectives if you are not in office. Therefore, your first and foremost objective must be your reelection.
- This will not be an easy task. You are unknown on the national stage and your ability to enact and pass legislation within your two-year term is consequently limited. To remedy this, you must record your efforts, conversations, and observations of your fellow politicians in a diary. Additionally, you cannot trust the official Senate minutes to be accurate, so include your own. You can then present the Pennsylvania state assembly with proof of both your efforts and any anti-republican plots you manage to uncover.
- You must gain a national reputation. It is therefore imperative that you address the Senate regularly. Unfortunately, this alone will not be enough. In addition to speaking before them, it is paramount that you gain and maintain your fellow senators' attention and respect. Being ignored or heckled is worse than not speaking at all.
- Likewise, do what you can, in person and in print, to expose the folly of your opponents. Be careful, and make sure to be able to back up any accusation with evidence, or you may become engaged in an affair of honor.

- It will be difficult, but make efforts to pass legislation that will benefit Pennsylvania. Philadelphia has served as America's capital during the country's most glorious achievements. It would be fitting for it to do so again.
- Avoid backroom deals as much as possible, they are unrepublican and unseemly. Still, do what you must for the good of the nation.
- Federalist plots are everywhere! Recognize them for what they are and oppose them as much as your position allows.
- Monarchism lurks everywhere, just beneath the surface. Do not let extravagant titles and airs turn the president into a king, or the Senate into a House of Lords.

## **Other Characters**

### **Washington's Cabinet**

- Henry Knox, Secretary of War
- Edmund Randolph, Attorney General

### **The Senate**

- Oliver Ellsworth (Connecticut)
- Richard Bassett (Delaware)
- William Few (Georgia)
- Charles Carroll (Maryland)
- Tristram Dalton (Massachusetts)
- Paine Wingate (New Hampshire)
- Jonathan Elmer (New Jersey)
- Philip Schuyler (New York)
- Samuel Johnston (North Carolina)

- Joseph Stanton (Rhode Island)
- Ralph Izard (South Carolina)
- Richard Henry Lee (Virginia)

## **Bibliography**

### **Historical References**

“A Timeline of the American Revolution from 1763 - 1787.” *The British Library*, The British Library, 8 June 2016, [www.bl.uk/the-american-revolution/articles/american-revolution-timeline](http://www.bl.uk/the-american-revolution/articles/american-revolution-timeline).

“Cabinet Members.” George Washington's Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon Ladies Association. Accessed May 26, 2020. <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/cabinet-members/>.

Cornell, Saul. *A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Freeman, Joanne B. *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*. R. R. Donnelley & Sons, 2002.

Freeman, Joanne B. “History as Told by the Devil Incarnate: Gore Vidal’s *Burr*,” in Carnes, Mark C. *Novel History: Historians and Novelists Confront Americas Past (and Each Other)*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.

Holton, Woody. *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*. New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 2008.

McCullough, David G. *1776*. New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.



North, Douglass C., and Barry R. Weingast. "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England." *The Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (December 1989): 803–32.

O'Shaughnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*. Yale University Press, 2014.

Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*. New York, New York: Bantam Dell, 2003.

Wood, Gordon S. *The American Revolution: A History*. New York, New York: Random House, 2002.

Wood, Gordon S. *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2009.

## **Game Design Resources**

Popiel, Jennifer, et al. *Rousseau, Burke, and Revolution in France, 1791: Reacting to the Past*. 2nd ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2015.

Proctor, Nicolas W. *Reacting to the Past: Game Designer's Handbook*. 4th ed. Simpson College, 2018.