Chapter One: The Conservative Revolutionary


2. GW to George William Fairfax, 30 June 1785, Writings of George Washington, D.C., ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1931-1944), 28:183. I have relied primarily on two sources for the writings of George Washington. Until recently, the thirty-seven-volume Writings of George Washington, edited by John Fitzpatrick under the auspices of the Washington Bicentennial Commission, was the most complete and definitive collection. A few additional letters have emerged since the Fitzpatrick project began, but it remains a monumental work. Fitzpatrick's greatest service was in locating and transcribing the many Washington letters in private collections and in other libraries. In the last ten years scholars at the University of Virginia have embarked on an even more ambitious enterprise—the publication (with extensive annotations) of all of Washington's correspondence and state papers. This includes not only Washington's writings (the sole focus of the Fitzpatrick edition) but also the even more voluminous correspondence to him. Because this project is so enormous only a small portion of Washington's writings have so far been published in this series. (Some of the difficulties faced by the editors of The Papers of George Washington are discussed in Don Higginbotham, "The Washington Theme in Recent Historical Literature," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 114 [1990]: 423-437.) Wherever possible, I have used The Papers as the best available source for Washington's words. In all other cases I have relied on the Fitzpatrick Writings.


7. Washington was not above shading the bounds of ethics [and honorable behavior] in acquiring some of his lands. He pestered Virginia's government for years to pay him and his soldiers the land bounties they had been promised. Publicly, he always spoke on behalf of the "loyal soldiers," but as the commanding officer, his personal stake of fifteen thousand acres was considerably larger than that of any of his troops. Moreover, he assigned the best of these western lands to himself, arguing that he had borne most of the costs of the surveys and had taken up much of his own time in lobbying for and then administering the grants. Later, he sought to purchase additional tracts by employing a "stalking horse"—a third party who would seek to buy land as an agent of Washington. Washington feared that the asking price of land would rise significantly if he were revealed as the prospective buyer. Washington's land grabbing fell short of the behavior expected from a man of virtue, but in truth it was relatively benign compared to the activities of many of his gentry peers. For the most scathing treatment of Washington's dealings, see Bernhard Knollenberg, *George Washington: The Virginia Period, 1732-1775* [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964].


9. Jack Greene juxtaposes "metropolitan" interests with "peripheral" interests to help explain the growing division between a centralizing British state and independent-minded colonial legislatures resistant to that effort. He also uses the terms to describe a more intramural conflict being played out between Americans attached to centralized colonial governments and their neighbors in the hinterlands. It is this latter notion of "metropolitan" that is used here. Jack

10. The definitions of "realty" and "personalty" used here follow those made in Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* [New York: Macmillan, 1913], 19–51. Much of Beard's analysis of the founding period has been found wanting, but reality and personalty still accurately define the economic world as Washington and many in the Virginia gentry perceived it.


12. A more complete treatment of Washington's attempts to rise within the ranks of this landed gentry can be found in Paul K. Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988].


20. Ibid., 18.


22. GW to Robert Dinwiddie, 18 May 1754, ibid., 1:100.

23. GW to William Fitzhugh, 15 November 1754, ibid., 1:226.


28. The Resolves are generally considered the handiwork of George Mason with Washington as his most significant collaborator. Much of the language used in the resolutions reads like Mason, and he had been the most openly vocal of the Fairfax freeholders. Nettels argues for a more significant involvement by Washington while Sweig suggests that the circle of authorship was broader than Mason and Washington. See Curtis P. Nettels, George Washington and American Independence (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951), 90-92; Donald M. Sweig, “A New-Found Washington Letter of 1774 and the Fairfax Resolves,” William and Mary Quarterly 40 (1983): 285-289.

29. GW to Bryan Fairfax, 4 July 1774, Writings, 3:228.

30. Ibid., 229.


32. GW to Bryan Fairfax, 10 June 1774, ibid., 3:224.


35. GW to Bryan Fairfax, 20 July 1774, ibid., 3:233.

36. Ibid., 233; Many other Americans had similarly concluded that taxation was the fulcrum that divided British and American ideas of the Anglo-American constitution. Both sides placed other constitutional arguments on the scale, but in the end most Patriots simply could not accept the “new” constitution’s assertions about parliamentary control over taxation, nor could Parliament accept the American position of local sovereignty in such matters. See John Philip Reid, Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority to Tax (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

37. GW to Bryan Fairfax, 4 July 1774, ibid., 3:229.

38. In truth, few Americans advocated outright independence in 1774. But these were tumultuous times, and straw men of all shades were invoked by both sides to characterize their opponents’ positions. Then, as now, such characterizations often served to place an adversary in a defensive posture. Indeed, Washington’s conservative impulses made it difficult for him to completely discount Fairfax’s portrayal of some of the Patriots, hence his insistence on disavowing any support for such “independence-minded” men.


40. Ibid., 3:246.

Chapter Two. The Republican General

1. Washington perceived the military struggle as a war for independence rather than a revolution. Only toward the very end of the war does the word “revolution” appear in his letters, and only then because the term was being used widely (though subject to ambiguous and idiosyncratic meanings) by
many of his correspondents—state political leaders, members of Congress, fellow officers—as part of the regular discourse of the day.


5. Interestingly, one of the revolutionary transformations of the war was the dramatic change in the public's perception of the term "republican." Before 1776 most Americans, including most revolutionaries, avoided using the terms "republican" or "republicanism." Classical taxonomies of government usually characterized republics as "democracies." Since democracy was generally thought of as a depraved or corrupted form of government, no public figure seeking legitimacy for his ideas would refer to them as republican. After 1776 republicanism became *de rigueur*. No one knows exactly why, but the best speculation seems to be that Americans had long endorsed the substance of republican ideology even as they distanced themselves from republican rhetoric. Once independence separated the states from the old constitution (as well as the old language and old forms that went with it) Americans were free to unapologetically call themselves republicans. See Willi Paul Adams, "Republicanism in Political Rhetoric before 1776," *Political Science Quarterly* 85 (1970): 397–421; Adams, *The First American Constitutions: Republican Ideology and the Making of the State Constitutions in the Revolutionary Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 6–26 and 99–117; Cecelia Kenyon, "Republicanism and Radicalism in the American Revolution: An Old-Fashioned Interpretation," *William and Mary Quarterly* 19 (1962):166.


II. Ironically, the social character of the Continental Army was probably "better" in 1775-76 than later in the war. The initial fever of patriotism in the first year of the war attracted volunteers from a cross section of colonial society—merchants, farmers, artisans, clergymen, in short, men of "respectability." But the productive middle class could not be expected to enlist for the duration of the conflict, so the army more and more came to represent the underclass of America—the unemployed, convicts, indentured men, recruits who had been paid by "respectable" men to take their place, and bounty jumpers (men who would enlist for the cash bounty, desert, and then reenlist for another bounty in a new unit). James Kirby Martin, "A 'Most Undisciplined, Profligate Crew': Protest and Defiance in the Continental Ranks, 1776-1783," in Arms and Independence: The Military Character of the American Revolution, ed. Ronald Hoffmann and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984), 122-126. Charles Royster draws a much more favorable portrait of revolutionary soldiery, suggesting that they were not the ne'er-do-wells that Martin and others describe, nor were they devoid of patriotic motives for their service. See Royster, A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), esp. 373-378. But whatever the historical truth, Washington's perception of the social qualities of his enlisted troops was closer to Martin's assessment than Royster's.

12. GW to Jonathan Trumbull, 9 September 1776, Writings, 6:39; GW to Congress, 24 September 1776, ibidl, 6:110-111.

13. GW to Massachusetts Provincial Congress, 4 July 1775, Papers: Revolutionary War Series, 1:60.

14. GW to Congress, 24 September 1776, Writings, 6:108.


18. GW to Congress, 24 September 1776, Writings, 6:108.

19. GW to William Livingston, 12 July 1777, ibid., 8:442.


21. GW to Board of War, 9 January 1779, ibid., 13:498.

22. GW to Committee of Conference, 20 January 1779, ibid., 14:27.

23. GW to Congress, 10 April 1779, ibid., 11:237-238.

24. GW to William Maxwell, 10 May 1779, ibid., 15:33.

25. Military historians have generated a rich literature on the strategic character of the Revolutionary War. A particularly useful debate on the question of
whether the war was a traditional conflict or an irregular one can be found in Hoffmann and Albert, eds., *Arms and Independence*. See, especially, the contribution of Don Higginbotham, “Reflections on the War of Independence, Modern Guerilla Warfare, and the War in Vietnam,” 1–24.

28. Royster, *Revolutionary People at War*.

29. These fears, it seems, were not entirely unfounded. Richard Kohn and Kenneth Bowling both suggest that there were political factions within Congress, usually clustered around the ultranationalists Alexander Hamilton and Gouverneur Morris, who *did* use the threat of army insurrection as a means for manipulating Congress and the states for their own designs. See, Kohn, “The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy: America and the Coup d’Etat,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 27 (1970): 187–220; and Bowling, “New Light on the Philadelphia Mutiny of 1783: Federal-State Confrontation at the Close of the War for Independence,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101 (1977): 419–450.

30. Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 77. This was no abstract notion. During the army crisis of 1782–83 Washington was asked several times to overthrow the national government (it is unclear whether this effort was to extend to the states as well). These inducements, almost always emanating from his own officer corps, usually invited Washington to install himself as the head of a new government with the army's backing. Washington insisted with considerable passion that such an action would destroy the principles of the Revolution and all that the army had fought to preserve. For an interesting, if somewhat overly colorful, account of these events, see James Flexner, *George Washington* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965–1972) 2:487–508. Also, see below, pp. 40–47.

32. GW to Patrick Henry, 28 March 1778, ibid., 11:164.
36. GW to George Clinton, 8 October 1778, ibid., 13:50; GW to Charles Scott, 15 October 1778, ibid., 13:82; GW to William Livingston, 15 April 1778, ibid., 11:262–263.
37. GW to Joseph Reed, 8 May 1779, ibid., 15:23.
38. The first proclamation granting these extraordinary powers to Washington was issued on 12 December, 1776. Congress resolved: "That, until the Congress shall otherwise order, General Washington be possessed of full power to order and direct all things relative to the department, and to the operations of
This delegation of power was both open-ended (Congress did not set any time limit on its grant) and plenary. His powers were not merely executive, but legislative and judicial as well. The second proclamation, issued 17 September, 1777, was more time-specific and geographically confined. But within his area of jurisdiction Washington's powers were still clearly dictatorial. "Resolved, That General Washington be authorized and directed to suspend all officers who shall misbehave, and to fill up vacancies in the American army, under the rank of brigadiers, until the pleasure of Congress shall be communicated; to take, wherever he may be, all such provisions and other articles as may be necessary for the comfortable subsistence of the army under his command, paying or giving certificates for the same; to remove and secure, for the benefit of the owners, all goods and effects, which may be serviceable to the enemy; provided, that the powers hereby vested shall be exercised only in such parts of these states as may be within the circumference of 70 miles of the head quarters of the American army, and shall continue in force for the space of 60 days, unless sooner revoked by Congress." Writings, 9:237n.

39. See the discussion in Wills, Cincinnatus, 17-23.
40. GW to William Shippen, Jr., 27 January 1777, Writings, 7:71.
41. GW to William Livingston, 15 April 1778, ibid., 11:262-263.
42. Proclamation, 20 December 1777, ibid., 10:175.
43. Proclamation, 24 January 1777, ibid., 7:61-63.
44. GW to Gouverneur Morris, 29 May 1778, ibid., 11:485.
45. Royster, Revolutionary People at War, 255-330.
46. GW to Congress, 27 May 1980, Writings, 18:416-419.
49. Lewis Nicola to GW, 22 May 1782, ibid., 24:273n.
50. Louise Burnham Dunbar, A Study of "Monarchical" Tendencies in the United States from 1776 to 1801 (Urbana: University of Illinois Studies in Social Sciences, 1923); GW to J. G. Gebhard, 5 November 1783, Writings, 27:231.
51. Lewis Nicola to GW, 22 May 1782, ibid., 24:273n.
52. GW to Lewis Nicola, 22 May 1782, ibid., 24:272-273.
53. The best account by far of the Newburgh Conspiracy can be found in Kohn, "The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy."
55. General Orders, 11 March 1783, Writings, 26:208.
56. GW to the Officers of the Army, 15 March 1783, ibid., 26:224-225.
57. Ibid., 226-227.
58. There is some dispute about whether these words were spoken before or after Washington's main address. Most accounts place the remark after the speech. In addition, the precise wording of Washington's extemporaneous com-
ment varies slightly among the witnesses. This particular version seems to be the most widely accepted one. It appears in Writings, 26:222n.


60. Ironically, Washington’s idea was adopted, but without giving him the command he wanted. In fact, in this new joint colonial command he was made a subordinate of the governor of Maryland—hardly what Washington had had in mind! For a fuller accounting, see Freeman, George Washington, 2:125–168.


62. Most Patriots accepted the notion that military victory over the British was essential. But Patriots divided—fragmented is perhaps the more descriptive term—over other goals of the Revolution. As Carl Becker put it so cogently more than three-quarters of a century ago, the Revolution was not just to establish home rule; it was to determine who should rule at home. Becker, History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760–1776 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1909).

63. GW to Benjamin Harrison, 18 December 1778, Writings, 13:464.

64. GW to Benjamin Harrison, 30 December 1778, ibid., 13:466.

65. Ibid., 13:467.


67. GW to Benjamin Harrison, 21 March 1781, ibid., 21:342.

68. GW to William Duer, 14 January 1777, ibid., 7:13.

69. Behavior such as this was not unique to revolutionary state governments. This phenomenon, the “free rider” problem, characterizes many social interactions. Given the alternative of receiving a particular benefit by paying for it or receiving the same benefit without paying for it (or better yet, getting another party to pay for it!), a rational actor will consistently choose the latter two alternatives. See Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 9–36.

70. “The States are not behind hand in making application for assistance notwithstanding scarce any one of them, that I can find, is taking effectual measure to compleat its quota of Continental Troops, or have even power or energy enough to draw forth their Militia; each complains of neglect because it gets not what it asks; and conceives that no other suffers like itself because they are ignorant of what others experience, receiving the complaints of their own people only. I have a hard time of it and a disagreeable task. To please everybody is impossible; were I to undertake it I should probably please no body.” GW to John Armstrong, 18 May 1779, Writings, 15:97.

71. Illustrative of this problem is a letter to the Governor of New Jersey. “I am extremely apprehensive that very disagreeable consequences may result from an increase of the standing pay of the militia. It would create an additional cause of discontent to the Soldiery, who would naturally draw a comparison between their situation and that of the Militia and would think it very hard and unjust that these should receive for temporary services a greater reward
than they for permanent ones." GW to William Livingston, 4 May 1779, Writings, 14:489–490.

72. GW to John Armstrong, 18 May 1779, ibid., 15:97.


74. GW to John Sullivan, 27 December 1780, Writings, 20:488.

75. GW to James Varnum, 4 November 1777, ibid., 10:5.

76. GW to John Banister, 21 April 1778, ibid., 11:291–292.

77. An excellent summary of the dimensions of this debate from the perspectives of both the revolutionary generation and contemporary historians can be found in Jack N. Rakove, The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress (New York: Knopf, 1979), 163–191.


79. GW to Francis Lewis, 6 July 1780, Writings, 19:130–132.

80. Ibid.


82. GW to John Parke Custis, 28 February 1781, ibid., 21:320–321.

83. GW to Joseph Jones, 14 May 1780, ibid., 18:356–357.

84. Papers: Revolutionary War Series, 1:84.

Chapter Three: The Restive Correspondent


2. GW to John Augustine Washington, 15 June 1783, Writings, 27:12.

3. Farewell Orders to the Armies of the United States, 2 November 1783, ibid., 27:224.

4. GW to Thomas Johnson, 15 October 1784, ibid., 27:481.

6. As noted earlier (see Chapter 1), disinterestedness was a virtue in republican societies. Disinterested was not, as it is often used today, a synonym for uninterested. Rather, it suggested that one's virtue and independence were such that one could rise above narrow self-interest and act out of a sense of the public good.

7. Washington often issued Circular Letters while acting as commander-in-chief. He communicated with Congress on an almost daily basis. But when he thought the message was important enough he wrote to the states directly. He would write a common letter and post it to each of the state chief executives, perhaps altering a few details to customize the letter or to address something applicable only to that state. Because of the length and importance of this final, farewell Circular Letter it took considerable time to produce thirteen copies. Thus, some states received their copies almost two weeks after the first posting.

9. Ibid., 26:486.
10. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 26:487.
13. Ibid., 26:488.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 26:487.
17. See the earlier discussion describing Washington's opposition to that part of the Fairfax Resolves that called for a moratorium on the payment of legal debts to British creditors, p. 20.

20. Ibid., 26:493.
21. Ibid., 26:494.
22. Ibid., 26:486.
23. Ibid., 26:491.
24. Ibid., 26:487.
25. GW to Charles Carter, 2 August 1754, Papers: Colonial Series, 1:197. There is some confusion over precisely when and to whom this letter was written. The Fitzpatrick Writings catalogued it as a letter to Thomas Lee, head of the Ohio Land Company, but Lee died in 1750. Washington had traveled down the Potomac in July and August of 1754 making the Papers' dating reasonable. However, Egnal points out that Washington's surveying duties took him into this area as early as 1749, when Lee was still alive, so it is not impossible that the idea of a Potomac Canal surfaced even earlier than 1754. See Egnal, "Origins of the Revolution in Virginia": 412n.
26. GW to Thomas Johnson, 20 July 1770, Writings, 3:19.
28. GW to James Duane, 7 September 1783, Writings, 27:133.
29. GW to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784, ibid., 27:374.
30. GW to Benjamin Harrison, 10 October 1784, ibid., 27:475.
32. GW to Congress, 17 June 1783, ibid., 27:16-18. Washington at this point had still another concern: seeing that the disbanded but still greatly disenchanted army was finally paid. Making good on those bounty lands would not only fulfill Congress's obligation, it would place a potential source of political disenchantment a safe distance from the centers of government.
33. GW to Francis Vanderkemp, 28 May 1788, Writings, 29:504-505.
34. GW to the Secretary for War (Henry Knox), 18 June 1785, ibid., 28:168.
35. GW to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784, ibid., 27:376.
36. GW to Edmund Randolph, 25 December 1786, ibid., 29:120.
37. GW to David Stuart, 30 November 1785, ibid., 28:328.
38. GW to James Wilson, 22 March 1782, ibid., 24:88. There are some interesting conjunctions in this relationship. Wilson became one of the most effective advocates at the Philadelphia Convention for just the sort of energetic national government that George Washington envisioned. Indeed, the presidency that Washington was later to occupy owed a sizable debt to Wilson's skills of persuasion. Wilson's student, Bushrod Washington, after being turned down for a federal judgeship by his uncle (out of the latter's desire to demonstrate his impartiality and lack of favoritism), was appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States by President John Adams. With John Marshall, Bushrod Washington interpreted the Constitution with such a sympathetic eye toward the defense of national prerogatives that the old man must surely have smiled just a bit. The two justices ardently defended Federalist policies and political theory on the bench well into the 1820s.
41. GW to Bushrod Washington, 30 September 1786, ibid., 29:22.
42. For much of his second term as president, George Washington complained bitterly about the activities of a group of organizations known as the Democratic-Republican societies. These organizations were critical of the policies of his administration, particularly its posture toward the revolution in France. Washington's occasionally vitriolic responses are often taken as a sign of his decline in his evenhandedness. That is certainly true up to a point, for the president was by then a thoroughgoing Federalist partisan. But his letters to Bushrod Washington indicate that his suspicions about extragovernmental factions appeared long before 1793 and extended even to groups whose views he was much more sympathetic to. See Eugene P. Link, Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800 [New York: Octagon, 1973].
43. GW to Philip Schuyler, 21 May 1776, Writings, 5:65-66.
44. GW to Henry Lee, 5 April 1786, ibid., 28:402.
46. GW to Bushrod Washington, 30 September 1786, ibid., 29:22.
47. GW to Benjamin Harrison, 18 January 1784, ibid., 27:306.

48. Burke's most memorable explication of these issues is found in a speech he made in 1780 while defending himself against the charge that he had not adequately represented the interests of his Bristol constituents: "Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but Parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole. . . . You choose a member, indeed; but when you have chosen him he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of Parliament."


49. This is certainly not all there is to say about representation theories in the founding period. A far more comprehensive discussion of these changes can be found in Wood, Creation of the American Republic; Donald S. Lutz, "Popular Consent and Popular Control, 1776-1789," in Founding Principles of American Government, ed. George J. Graham, Jr., and Scarlett G. Graham, rev. ed. [Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1984], 60-97; McDonald, Novus Ordo Seclorum, 143-184; and Lance Banning, The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978], 92-114.

50. For a reminder of how alien Massachusetts's social and political climate was to Washington, see above, pp. 27-28.


52. Each town in Massachusetts was entitled to representation in the General Court, but each town was also obliged to support its representative on the court. Many of the smaller towns in the interior had concluded that their one representative was not worth the taxes necessary to support him. By 1786, economic conditions had worsened to the point that few of these western towns could afford to send representatives, leaving them grossly underrepresented in the General Court. J. R. Pole, Political Representation in England and the Origins of the American Republic [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966], 227-244.

53. GW to David Humphreys, 22 October 1786, Writings, 29:27.

54. GW to David Humphreys, 26 December 1786, ibid., 29:125-126.

55. GW to Henry Lee, 31 October 1786, ibid., 29:34-35.

56. There was never a doubt that Washington supported the aims of the convention. But he hesitated to accept a position as delegate principally for two reasons. One concern was that he had already declined, for personal reasons, to attend the Society of the Cincinnati meeting, which was scheduled to convene in Philadelphia at about the same time as the constitutional convention. He worried that his personal honor might be compromised and that his former comrades would take personal offense that their organization was less deserv-
ing of the general's attentions. Second (and this is more speculative because Washington does not speak directly to this concern), Washington was worried about risking his personal reputation on a venture whose success was doubtful. The Annapolis Convention had already failed to achieve its aims—though Madison and Hamilton had used the forum as an opportunity to call for the Philadelphia meeting. Might the Philadelphia convention be equally unsuccessful? And might that failure carry away with it any possibility that Washington could exercise some influence on the course of political events?

57. The notion of constitutional decay was common to much of the British opposition ideology that had been absorbed by many American republicans. A useful discussion of decay can be found in Lance Banning, "Republican Ideology and the Triumph of the Constitution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (1974):167–188.


Chapter Four: The Framer as Partisan


3. Ibid., 72.

4. Negotiations between Maryland and Virginia to enter into a Potomac Canal compact came to include Pennsylvania because the best site for a connection to the Ohio River seemed to be through that state. With this tripartite compact under consideration, it became apparent to some that a whole range of interstate commerce and relations needed to be examined by all the states. Virginia took the lead in calling the Annapolis Convention of 1786 to consider these matters. But only five states sent delegates to the Convention and it concluded no substantive business. Washington saw the results of this low attendance as one more sign of the failure of the confederacy and, initially, used it as an excuse for not attending the Philadelphia Convention. Yet Hamilton and Madison had used the event as an opportunity to convince the few delegates in attendance to call for a constitutional convention to remedy defects in the federal form of government. Despite Washington’s belief that the Annapolis Convention was yet another failure for the forces of sound government, Madison and Hamilton came away genuinely hopeful that the tide of sentiment and events was moving their way. Richard Morris, *Witnesses at the Creation: Hamilton, Madison, Jay, and the Constitution* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985), 161–169.

FDR to Carter [New York: John Wiley, 1980], 44–79. Neustadt's emphasis on reputation appears throughout the book, but it is most clearly expressed in chapters 4 and 5.

9. Most accounts believe that the disingenuous first resolution was added to the Virginia Plan at the last minute as a concession to Randolph. See Irving Brant, James Madison: Father of the Constitution, 1787–1800 (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), 24.
14. Madison had already been working on his "Vices of the Political System," a scathing indictment of the weaknesses of government under the Articles of Confederation. In addition, he had suggested in earlier letters to Edmund Randolph and Thomas Jefferson most of the proposals for constitutional change that were to find their way into the Virginia Plan. Thus, Washington did not initiate Madison's thinking on this matter. Washington's support was probably indispensable to the success of the plan at the Convention, and the Plan certainly coincided with many of Washington's oft-repeated concerns of the previous decade, but its authorship must be attributed principally to Madison. See "Vices of the Political System," April 1787; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 19 March 1787; and Madison to Edmund Randolph, 8 April 1787, The Papers of James Madison, ed. Robert A. Rutland et al. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975], 9:317–319, 348–358, 368–371.
15. James Madison to G. W., 16 April 1787, Papers of James Madison, 9:382–383.
20. Ibid., 2:221.
21. Readers may be skeptical of the claim that Washington single-handedly moved the convention to adopt Gorham's proposal. Historians have long been aware that the records of the convention, even Madison's comprehensive retrospective notes, are incomplete. It is quite probable that there are aspects to the convention's business that will remain forever unknown to us. Thus my speculation is based on this admittedly partial record. Nevertheless, Washington appears to have been the only one to have spoken substantively on this issue, after which the delegates, perhaps taken by the force of his arguments or perhaps
merely expressing their respect for Washington, unanimously changed a provision they had unanimously supported a few weeks earlier.

22. For a more complete discussion of theories of representation in the founding period, see Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 162–181.

23. Washington’s fears seem well founded. Several antifederalists pointed out the insufficiency of representation in the national Congress. To many of them even a district composed of thirty thousand persons was rather large in the context of the 1780s. The city of New York, after all, had fewer than twenty-five thousand inhabitants. But the issue was not central to the antifederalist case, perhaps because of Washington’s judiciousness. See Speech of Melancton Smith, 20–21 June 1788, *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates*, ed. Ralph Ketcham [New York: New American Library, 1986], 341–347.

24. Again, it is difficult to assess the precise impact that Washington had on ratification. We know that his reputation was significant enough that Luther Martin and other Maryland antifederalists had an awkward time trying to explain why their fellow delegates to the state ratifying conventions should not support an effort so closely associated with Washington. See Farrand, *Records*, 3:178, 190, 294. In his home state of Virginia the general’s support in this closely divided state may have tipped the balance in favor of the federalists, or at least so some of the participants thought. As James Monroe commented to Thomas Jefferson, “Be assured [Washington’s] influence carried this government.” Cited in Freeman, *George Washington*, 6:140. For a useful one-volume source on the politics of the individual state ratifying conventions, see Michael A. Gillespie and Michael Lienesch, eds., *Ratifying the Constitution* [Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989].

25. His letter to Alexander Hamilton, pleading with the New Yorker to return to the Convention, is the most famous illustration of Washington’s trepidation about the outcome of the whole affair: “In a word, I almost despair of seeing a favourable issue to the proceedings of our Convention, and do therefore repent having had any agency in the business. . . . I am sorry you went away. I wish you were back. The crisis is equally important and alarming, and no opposition under such circumstances should discourage exertions till the signature is fixed.” GW to Alexander Hamilton, 10 July 1787, *Writings*, 29:245–246.


27. There have been many useful analyses of the voting behavior at the convention. But the most sophisticated analysis [and the one used here] is in Calvin C. Jillson, *Constitution Making: Conflict and Consensus in the Federal Convention of 1787* [New York: Agathon Press, 1988].


29. Ibid., 1:97.

30. Ibid., 2:33–36.


41. GW to Battaile Muse, 18 September 1785, ibid., 28:269.

42. GW to Jabez Bowen, 9 January 1787, ibid., 29:139.

43. GW to Thomas Stone, 16 February 1787, ibid., 29:164.

44. Ibid., 29:164–165.

45. GW to Jonathan Trumbull, 20 July 1788, ibid., 30:21.

46. Madison mentions only that he (Madison) was the swing vote within the state's delegation. Mason and Randolph spoke against the motion. Both of them, while stating their opposition in principle to paper money, were concerned that the omission would tie the hands of the legislature and prevent it from acting in the public interest. Given Washington's antipathy to paper money it seems fair to assume that he would have been one of three votes (with Madison) necessary to counter Mason and Randolph in support of the motion. Farrand, *Records*, 2:308–310.

47. Ibid., 2:641–649.


49. GW to Edmund Randolph, 8 January 1788, *Writings*, 29:358.

50. GW to David Stuart, 5 November 1787, ibid., 29:302.


52. The names used to describe particular political combinations in this period are always a bit confusing. When I use the term "federalists" it refers to those who supported ratification of the Constitution in 1787–88 or who stood for election in support of its principles in 1788. The "antifederalists" were those opposed to the Constitution of 1787. On the other hand, "Federalists" were the faction that began to coalesce around the specific policies of the Washington administration. The distinction between "federalists" and "Federalists" will become more apparent in chapters 5 and 6.

54. See GW to Patrick Henry, 24 September 1787, ibid., 29:278-279; to Edmund Randolph, 8 January 1788, 29:357-358.
55. GW to David Humphreys, 10 October 1787, ibid., 29:287; to David Stuart, 17 October 1787, 29:290; to David Stuart, 30 November 1787, 29:323-324; to James Madison, 7 December 1787, 29:331.
56. GW to James Madison, 10 January 1788, Writings, 29:372-373.
57. An interesting illustration of Washington's astute political sense is his advice to a couple of Maryland delegates not to allow their convention to adjourn without a vote on ratification. New Hampshire had already adjourned its convention, and Washington believed that two such adjournments in rapid succession would lend significant momentum to the antifederalists. Two months later, he encouraged New York to consider just such an adjournment. He correctly sensed that the New York delegates would defeat the Constitution if it were put to an immediate vote; thus, he now saw time as an ally rather than an adversary. He perceived that other states, principally Virginia, were prepared to ratify, a situation that would leave New York the only significant state outside of the Union. That circumstance would surely compel New Yorkers to support the Constitution. In short, Washington was very much involved in the politics of the ratification process. See GW to Thomas Johnson, 20 April 1788, Writings, 29:463; to James McHenry, 27 April 1788, 29:471-472; to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, 28 June 1788, 30:10.
58. GW to James Madison, 8 June 1788, Writings, 29:511.
59. GW to Lewis Morris, 13 December 1788, ibid., 30:157; to Charles Pettit, 16 August 1788, 30:41.
60. GW to Charles Pettit, 16 August 1788, ibid., 30:41.
61. GW to David Stuart, 1 July 1787, ibid., 29:238-239.
62. GW to Bushrod Washington, 10 November 1787, ibid., 29:312.
63. GW to James Madison, 2 March 1788, ibid., 29:431; to Richard Butler, 3 April 1788, 29:454; to Madison, 7 December 1787, 29:331; to Benjamin Lincoln, 26 October 1788, 30:118; to Henry Knox, 30 March 1788, 29:449-450; to Lincoln, 2 April 1788, 29:452; to John Armstrong, 25 April 1788, 29:466.
66. GW to Benjamin Fishbourne, 23 December 1788, ibid., 30:171; to Jonathan Trumbull, 4 December 1788, 30:149.
67. GW to David Stuart, 2 December 1788, ibid., 30:146-147; to Benjamin Lincoln, 14 November 1788, 30:125-126; to James Madison, 23 September 1788, 30:100-101; to Secretary at War, 1 January 1789, 30:173-174.
68. GW to Lafayette, 29 January 1789, ibid., 30:184.
69. Several biographers have noted that Washington usually accepted public offices according to a pattern in which he would first insist that he did not want
the office, then state that he lacked the qualifications or was in other ways undeserving, wait for a sign of broad support along the lines of "only George can do it," and, at last, insist that only his sense of public duty had convinced him to accept the office against his personal disinclination. Wills, in particular, points out that this was the pattern whereby good Roman republicans accepted office. See, Wills, Cincinnatus; Longmore, Invention of George Washington; Barry Schwartz, "George Washington and the Whig Conception of Heroic Leadership," American Sociological Review 48 (1983):18-33; and Schwartz, George Washington.

Chapter Five: The Framer as Interpreter

3. GW to John Adams, 10 May 1789, The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series, ed. Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987– ), 2:246–247. This letter was intended to solicit views on a number of issues related to the organization of the new presidency and was also sent to Hamilton, Madison, John Jay, and Robert Livingston.
4. V. O. Key coined this term to explain, particularly, the development and "persistence" of the two-party system in the United States. But the phrase could equally apply to many other constitutional customs that have become entrenched by persistent practice. Key, Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups (New York: Crowell, 1969).
5. One only needs to recall the pitifully absurd picture of Michael Dukakis "commanding" an M1 tank in the 1988 presidential campaign to see how wise John Adams and other presidents were in not following Washington's example. George Washington looked good on a horse; subsequent presidents might have cut a less imposing figure.
6. See Wills, Cincinnatus; and Schwartz, George Washington, 1–103.
7. It should be remembered that in 1788 electors cast two ballots for president. To guarantee a truly national presidency at least one vote had to be cast for a candidate not from the elector's home state. No provision existed for ordering the two votes, so we cannot be certain that Washington was every elector's first choice. Unanimity meant that every elector placed Washington on his "two-choice" ballot.
9. First Inaugural Address, 30 April 1789, ibid., 2:175.
10. Thad Tate has pointed out that some of the domestic unrest of the Confederation period can be attributed to the feeling among many citizens that their state constitutions were not, in fact, genuinely republican constitutions. Most had been established by rump legislatures with little or no consent by

12. GW to Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., 4 December 1788, Papers: Presidential Series, 1:150.
16. GW to John Hancock, 26 October 1789, Writings, 30:433.
18. For an interesting account of the public response to one of these trips, see Archibald Henderson, Washington's Southern Tour, 1791 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923).
19. There is some debate over how significant distilled whiskey was as a "cash crop" in the West. Forrest McDonald has suggested that whiskey was an insignificant commodity and that, therefore, the rebels' behavior must be explained on other grounds. But Thomas Slaughter and David O. Whiten, though not necessarily insisting that the economic impact of the excise was the sole causative factor motivating the rebels, offer evidence to the contrary. For a useful discussion of this and other historiographical disputes regarding the Whiskey Rebellion, see Thomas P. Slaughter, "The Friends of Liberty, the Friends of Order, and the Whiskey Rebellion: A Historiographical Essay," in The Whiskey Rebellion: Past and Present Perspectives, ed. Steven R. Boyd, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 9–30.
20. GW to [Alexander Hamilton], 17 September 1792, Writings, 32:154.
21. GW to Henry Lee, 31 October 1786, ibid., 29:34.
22. GW to [Alexander Hamilton], 16 September 1792, ibid., 32:153.
26. GW to Charles Mynn Thurston, 10 August 1794, Writings, 33:465.


31. GW to the Senate, 28 February 1793, ibid., 32:362.

32. The Supreme Court was not the "jewel" appointment that it has today become. The justices heard few cases, had no permanent offices or courtroom, and often had to travel long distances to perform inconsequential duties. State judicial positions (or even federal district judgeships, which rarely required travel from their home state) were far more attractive to most political aspirants than the federal Supreme Court. Thus, it is no reflection on Washington that many of the people he asked to serve on the Court turned him down. The proportion of refusals became so embarrassing that he took to inquiring of a potential nominee's friends whether the person might be interested. For a useful history of the early Court, see David M. O'Brien, _Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics_, 2d ed. (New York: Norton, 1990), 135-140.


34. The reference here is not to the federal Constitution, but to the law of the land, in general, and to the Pennsylvania constitution, in particular. GW to Thomas Smith, 22 September 1786, _Writings_, 29:13.

35. Wills, _Cincinnatus_, 17-25.

36. First Annual Address to Congress, 8 January 1790, _Writings_, 30:491-494.

37. At one point he asked his secretary to review the progress of his previous "recommendations" to Congress. But his purpose does not seem to have been motivated by any concern with holding Congress accountable. Rather, it appears he merely wanted to avoid the embarrassment of making recommendations in his next annual address on matters Congress had already dealt with. GW to Tobias Lear, 7 October 1791, _Writings_, 31:384-385.

38. This address was initially drafted by David Humphreys, but Madison persuaded Washington to substitute a shorter, less stilted version that became the core of the first Inaugural Address. Unfortunately, Tobias Lear later cut up pieces of the Humphreys version to distribute as mementoes to the president's friends, the attraction being that the draft was in Washington's handwriting! Thus, there are only fragments of this address extant. See, _Papers: Presidential Series_, 2:152-173; Nathaniel E. Stein, "The Discarded Inaugural Address of George Washington," _Manuscripts_ 10 [1958]:2-17.


42. _Papers: Revolutionary War Series_, 1:84.


47. Forrest McDonald never openly claims this, but it is curious that his book on Washington's presidency contains a far more detailed analysis of Hamilton's plans for the national government than of the purposes and accomplishments of the president! See McDonald, *Presidency of George Washington*.


49. Washington's leadership style, in fact, looks very much like the sort of "hidden-hand presidency" that Fred Greenstein so effectively ascribes to Dwight Eisenhower. The "hidden hand" refers generally to the practice of remaining in control of the political agenda through the use of surrogates, while the president preserves his public stature by appearing to be above the partisan political fray. Greenstein's approach led him to a much more favorable assessment of Eisenhower [that is, to a conclusion that Eisenhower accomplished many more of his policy goals—usually the characteristic of activist presidents] than many other presidential scholars. The same sort of analysis would, I believe, lead many to reassess the Washington-Hamilton relationship in light of the resultant achievement of Washington's longtime political goals. See Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).


54. Washington wrote often about the sorts of qualities he looked for in nominees. In addition to the dimension of personal and political compatibility with the president, he preferred men with experience in government [especially elective], men of general competence and public integrity, and men with proven loyalty to the Union [often defined as service in the Revolution or in writing or ratifying the Constitution]. In addition, Washington was concerned with maintaining geographical balance among his appointments. For a useful summary of his appointment criteria and how they were used, see Leonard D. White, *The Federalists: A Study in Administrative History* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 257–266.


Chapter Six: The Unintentions of a Framer

3. See above, pp. 112-116.
9. See my earlier comments on p. 73.
15. GW to [John Jay], 4 September 1791, ibid., 31:354. Jay took Washington up on his offer. A few months later Jay offered his opinion that the Senate was acting improperly and that the president should resist that body's encroachments on his executive power. John Jay to GW, 27 January 1792, ibid., 31:500n.
18. Jay never returned to the Supreme Court after his diplomatic mission. He was elected governor of New York and submitted his resignation to Washington shortly after his return to the United States. But he was the sitting chief justice at the time of his appointment and service to the president.
22. The secretary of state would have been a more appropriate adviser than
the secretary of war, but Jefferson had not yet arrived from France to assume his duties.

27. See, for example, his letter to the Senate regarding a boundary dispute with Britain (9 February 1790) and his letter asking for preapproval of treaties with the Barbary pirates (8 May 1792), Writings, 31:7–8, 32:41–42.
29. GW to Congress, 12 August 1790, Writings, 31:91.
32. GW to the Secretary of State, 22 July 1795, Writings, 34:244.
33. GW to Gouverneur Morris, 22 December 1795, ibid., 34:403.
34. Farewell Address, 19 September 1796, ibid., 35:227.
35. Ibid., 227–228.
36. Smelser, "The Federalist Period as an Age of Passion."
38. Ralph Ketcham maintains that the first American presidents consciously modeled their administrations on the image of the "patriot king" espoused by Bolingbroke. Patriot kings represented the authentic national interest against the partisan maneuverings of self-interested parliamentary factions. A patriot president would fill a similar role in the new republic, safeguarding the national interest against the interests of the several states or against coali-
tions of political convenience in the Congress. Ketcham, Presidents above Party.
39. First Inaugural Address, 30 April 1789, Papers: Presidential Series, 2:175.
40. GW to James Wilson, 9 May 1789, Writings, 30:314.
41. Federalist no.10.
42. Circular Letter to the States, 8 June 1783, Writings, 26:487.
43. GW to David Humphreys, 26 December 1786, ibid., 29:126.
44. GW to Governor Fenner, 4 June 1790, ibid., 31:48.
46. GW to David Stuart, 28 March 1790, Writings, 31:28–30.
47. See above, p. 152 and Thomson, “First Presidential Vetoes.”
50. GW to Edward Carrington, 9 October 1795, Writings, 34:331–332; GW to Patrick Henry, 9 October 1795, 34:335.
51. Madison was not a formal member of the cabinet. As a member of the House of Representatives he could not constitutionally hold any executive office. Madison served as Washington’s eyes and ears in the Congress and as an important political adviser; Washington communicated with him regularly during the first years of his administration. This was a tacit violation of the separation principle, but presidents ever since Washington have similarly utilized “old friends” in the legislature as key advisers.
52. GW to Thomas Jefferson, 23 August 1792, Writings, 32:130–131; Washington expressed similar views in his letter to Hamilton three days later, 32:132–133.
56. GW to Alexander Hamilton, 29 July 1795, Writings, 34:264.

Epilogue: George Washington and the Constitutional Tradition

1. This personal criticism was particularly nettlesome for Washington because it was a challenge to his reputation. In contemporary American politics a “thick skin” is thought to be a prerequisite to the pursuit of public office. Liberalism presumes a relatively unconstrained arena of conflict in which diverse interests (and the candidates who represent those interests) are considered fair
game for public criticism. (See New York Times v. Sullivan, 376 U.S. 254, 1964, for an explication of this "checking" theory cast in constitutional terms.) But to a classical republican like Washington one's public reputation was the mark of his standing as a citizen. He could not ignore or set aside such personal criticism so easily.

2. See GW to Patrick Henry, 15 January 1799, Writings, 37:87–90.

3. First Annual Address to Congress, 8 January 1790, ibid., 30:491.
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