

“THE BANE OF LIBERTY”: OPPOSITION TO STANDING ARMIES AS THE BASIS OF  
ANTIFEDERALIST THOUGHT

by

CHARLES B. BRAND  
B.A. Florida Atlantic University, 2008

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of History  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Fall Term  
2013

## ABSTRACT

The severely neglected subject of Antifederalism is the focal point of this project. As the framing ideology opposed to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, Antifederalism has not been treated with the same historical care as Federalism, the successful and currently operational ideology. This is both an intellectual and ethical mistake that ignores the role that Antifederalism played in procuring the Bill of Rights, and still plays in the sphere of political dissent. The de facto successors to the Revolutionary mentality, Antifederalists took it upon themselves to conclusively secure the American conception of liberty, already wrested from British hands, from a growing threat—those whom they deemed domestic imperialists. Even Thomas Jefferson, architect of the Declaration of Independence, espoused the principles behind Antifederalism, especially when confronted with those of Hamiltonian Federalism. Moreover, Jefferson's Revolution of 1800, which gave rise to the Democratic-Republicans, consisted of many former Antifederalists.

While wholly relevant and increasingly indispensable, the few studies that do examine Antifederalism fall short of finding or acknowledging its lasting significance, owing to supposed internal dissension, socioeconomic in nature. However, Antifederalists featured ideological unanimity in at least one area: opposition to standing armies. This opposition is evident in both the theoretical (why they were against standing armies) and practical (what to do about it) areas. The imperial legacy of hostility, a historical and lived experience for Americans of the time, drove Antifederalists to make their objections to ratification obvious, of which the standing army issue played the most elemental part. Informed and inspired by this lengthy history of distrust for military forces maintained in time of peace, which included their own Revolution, Antifederalists sought to safeguard their liberties from future encroachments, for future generations. By arguing

that Antifederalists, regardless of region or class, objected to standing armies, this thesis seeks to elevate Antifederalism to its rightful place in the contexts of political history and the encompassing American tale.

This thesis is dedicated to those who truly value peace. When will the war against war begin?

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this project would not have occurred without the expertise and dedication of my advisor, Dr. John Sacher. He faced the daunting task of pushing me, a brash idealist, to stay focused whenever it seemed I was falling back on old or bad habits. He did not have to put up with me, but he did. The rest of my committee did as well, thankfully. Dr. Richard Crepeau, who taught the first graduate course I took, helped me hone the skills needed to properly contextualize any historical topic, not just this one. Dr. Peter Larson's guidance, both in and out of the classroom, helped me pay attention to angles I would have otherwise neglected. On numerous occasions, Dr. Larson's personable nature allowed me to plead ignorance, without the threat of penalty or judgment, on departmental procedures that a better student would have been aware of. This gave me no excuse but to focus on my research and writing. I also appreciate the insight and kindness of Dr. Ezekiel Walker. His real-world perspective has been nothing short of eye-opening.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Stephen Engle, who oversaw the development of many undergraduate students, in history and many other fields, at Florida Atlantic University. Dr. Engle's knowledge is prodigious, but it is his passion, equal parts inspiring and rare, that truly stands out. During my time at FAU, I was lucky enough to have taken multiple classes with Dr. Engle at the helm. The overall experience has changed me only for the better, both as a student and a person.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: ANTIFEDERALISM PAST AND PRESENT.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: ANTIFEDERALIST OPINION ON STANDNG ARMIES .....	21
CHAPTER TWO: STANDING ARMIES IN <i>THE ANTIFEDERALIST PAPERS</i> .....	62
CHAPTER THREE: JEFFERSON’S PURSUIT OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY .....	81
CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF ANTIFEDERALISM IN HISTORY AND POLITICS.....	99
APPENDIX: ARMIES FOUND IN <i>THE ANTIFEDERALIST PAPERS</i> .....	104
REFERENCES .....	108

## INTRODUCTION: ANTIFEDERALISM PAST AND PRESENT

If ever there existed any doubt regarding the validity of the aged passage ‘to the victor go the spoils,’ the case of Antifederalism puts it to rest. Indeed, as the Federalist legacy endures in the form of the United States Constitution, the Antifederalist legacy of constitutional opposition is all but forgotten.<sup>1</sup> This dichotomy hinges on the post-ratification inapplicability of Antifederalist thought, in which structural template and national mythology are of equal import. Prior to 1788, the year when ratification became reality, the Antifederalist position—namely, the desire to severely limit the capabilities of the prospective central government or any similar energetic system—was officially (legally) embodied in the Articles of Confederation. A combination of state and local governmental bodies thus held the bulk of authority under the functioning confederated system; they answered to themselves in times of peace and were to work together when threatened, as had transpired during the *successful* Revolutionary ordeal. Constitutional ratification permanently altered this dynamic, extinguishing Antifederalism by rendering its theoretical components irrelevant, impotent, and obsolete. However, the payoff for the winners in policy and history, the Federalists, came in the write off—myth-making. Antifederalism was crushed by a narrow margin, an illogical fact that necessitated the deification of those who barely triumphed, because gods can not be disposed to weakness. It is no wonder, then, that successive generations, as Thomas Jefferson put it, look upon “constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem them like the ark of the covenant, too sacred to be touched. They ascribe to the men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human, and suppose what they did to be beyond amendment.” At least Jefferson, who has received tons of flack from modern

---

<sup>1</sup> Jackson Turner Main, *The Antifederalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961; reprint, 2004), xxiii-xxv.

historians for his faults, was humble.<sup>2</sup> The Federalists, on the other hand, had no problem with affording themselves this luxury and posterity has followed suit, but only at posterity's expense.

Switching to a model predicated upon dual federalism—the working relationship between a central government and its constituent states—cemented how the post-ratification political landscape would function forevermore. No longer could quasi-parties or factions discuss what style of centralized government to employ, or, as Antifederalists would approach the subject, *if* a central government should be employed at all, because the new system rested on, as it does to this day, how persons, places, and things would operate within the actual style of government that *was* employed. Essentially, theories shifted to practices.<sup>3</sup> In a major departure from the measures of unanimous consent sanctioned by the Articles of Confederation, only three-quarters of the states were required to ratify the Constitution for it to become the law of the land. Antifederalists of all stripes took exception to this makeshift push for consolidation, believing it to have been a cheap tactic—peer pressure—used by Federalists who were determined to instill the notion that the confederation was “in a state of the most grievous calamity.”<sup>4</sup>

This message surely appealed to exclusive individuals and collectivities composed of speculators, investors, and creditors since they stood to gain the most from an institutionalized concentration of wealth and political influence at the metropolitan level, but its absolute truth

---

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Kercheval, 12 July 1816, in Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 10 (New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1899), 41-42.

<sup>3</sup> Larry N. Gerston, *American Federalism: A Concise Introduction* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 7-9, 27-36; William H. Riker, *The Development of American Federalism* (Norwell: Kluwer Academic, 1987), ix, 104-106. Far from a concretely defined concept, structural federalism can be most easily understood as cooperation between distinct spheres of government within the same country. Dual federalism, for instance, indicates the simultaneous, cooperative jurisdiction of two governing bodies over a given area. In America's case, this means individual state governments and the federal government both preside over the inhabitants of a state.

<sup>4</sup> Plebian [Melancton Smith], *Antifederalist* No. 85, “Concluding Remarks: Evils Under Confederacy Exaggerated; Constitution Must Be Drastically Revised Before Adoption,” in Morton Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers* (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1965), 248. Furthermore, in *Antifederalist* No. 4, “Foreign Wars, Civil Wars, and Indian Wars—Three Bugbears,” in *Ibid.*, 8-12, the esteemed Patrick Henry objects to the notion of hasty ratification due to his belief that the option of improving the Articles of Confederation, which was the stated purpose of the Philadelphia Convention, went categorically dismissed, and in all likelihood, purposefully. Smith and Henry shared the same belief despite their dissimilar economic backgrounds.

was, at best, suspect. Antifederalists thought that proposing “untried” methods to solve real problems and looming threats hardly seemed a safer option than manipulating familiar processes.<sup>5</sup> After all, if the Articles of Confederation functioned well enough for the states to win their independence, a venture far from guaranteed until it actually materialized, they should have been adequate enough to either sustain or amend for the time being. Certain financial exigencies undoubtedly commanded deliberate resolution, namely the management of debt incurred by the wartime government, military compensation, and the stabilization of currency, but the same author who forwards the dire nature of these Federalist concerns also contradicts both matter and message by stating that “No external enemy threatened [America’s] shores, and no enemy agents conspired to destroy it from within.” Simply because Federalists forwarded these issues does not mean that the states were in a sink or swim position, especially if those same Federalists covertly desired to “conduct the business of government by interweaving its doings with those of private business and businessmen.”<sup>6</sup>

The economic message, disseminated and exaggerated within city centers, garnered support quickly enough to overcome what amounted to Antifederalist depth: the discussion of questions, ideas, or problems, how and why those questions, ideas, or problems interconnected, and the eventual development of logical, operative approaches with which to best address life’s

---

<sup>5</sup> The Federal Farmer [Richard Henry Lee], *Antifederalist* No. 41-43 (Part I), “The Quantity of Power the Union Must Possess Is One Thing; The Mode of Exercising the Powers Given Is Quite a Different Consideration,” in *Ibid*, 115.

<sup>6</sup> Forrest McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum: The Formation of the American Republic* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 18-23, 133, 6. Throughout his analysis, McDonald treats ‘need’ and ‘want’ as the same ends. The states did not necessarily *need* wholesale change, but the Federalists *wanted* their financial security guaranteed in writing. The author also mentions, exceedingly nimbly, another Federalist imperative on pages 22-27: their intent to encourage foreign investment by establishing a national line of credit. This departs from the financial binary—union and solvency—that informs his research. Such a feat would obviously be a boon for whoever got to write the new rules, the agents of change. Additionally, if Federalists as a group were so economically divergent that collective bargaining was needed to obtain ratification, which is McDonald’s major offering to early national studies, the now-or-never stance they took on ratification would not make sense. Antifederalists are who wished for more discussion before making a final decision. A better explanation, then, visible but not broadcasted on page 5, would be that the Federalists relied on voter exploitation rather than the maxims of honesty and transparency espoused by the Antifederalists. The quoted passages highlight McDonald’s willingness to sensationalize matters.

abstractions. The intellectual branch of early national historiography is therefore guilty of inverting the relationship between founding factions and the championing of ideas. As a competing ideology, Antifederalism accounted for the inherent conflict in affairs between the individual and the state, the same tediousness—necessary evil—that dictates the course of interpersonal relationships, but which Federalists cunningly reduced to talking points for the purpose of electoral blitzkrieg. Scenarios colored in black or white are simple to parse, the Federalists understood this and used it to their advantage during the constitutional ‘crisis.’ The more discerning Antifederalists were left clinging to dogmatic scraps, many of which blossomed only, and ironically, upon Jefferson’s return to the constitutionally bound states.

As exhausting as today’s political saturation may seem, at least it exists because of the ability (freedom) to instantly access an unprecedented amount of material through an equally impressive spate of media. This current arrangement serves a corollary purpose: it will not allow any subject, whether legitimate or dubious, to fade from existence. Inquisitive groups seem to keep afloat batches of critical information either ignored or obfuscated due to establishment aims, contemporary mores, or both. The study of Antifederalism is certainly bound by these constraints, as only a limited number of scholarly works have even mentioned the founding ideology within the last century; being on the losing end of history, the constitutional struggle in this particular instance, begets such treatment. During that century, the inclusive early national studies have evolved from offering cursory reviews of Antifederalism, to reconstructing its role as either the means or ends of research—that is, tracing the philosophy as it stood within the larger context of its time and place, or actively applying its legacy across time and space.

Interestingly, historian Charles A. Beard’s groundbreaking thesis, which holds that Federalist economic motivations can explain their pursuit of ratification, is as relevant as it is

aged. The Constitution was designed to be an economic document, a safety net through which all future dealings—all those favoring Federalist practices—would be authorized.<sup>7</sup> The Antifederalists wanted no, or severely circumscribed intervention by government in personal affairs, especially if it was to mimic imperial grandeur. Of course, to be certain, both the Federalists and Antifederalists wished to prosper and profit from their diverse occupations: Why exactly would Antifederalists champion the sovereignty of the state if not to harness any number of perceived economic or competitive advantages at the local level? It just so happens that Antifederalists believed prosperity for the many *could* transpire in a setting warmer to republican government and Federalists knew the few *would* be guaranteed a reasonable amount of benefits in the business sector by the consolidation of political power.<sup>8</sup> Considering these historical pieces have only been partially assembled by scholars, Antifederalist thought deserves the fairer shot—not to mention the wider audience that would come with one—that could be attained through the crafting of clearer, more accessible analyses. For how can an honest picture of the development of the Constitution, American exceptionalism, or early national political history in general, be painted if academics can simultaneously claim that Antifederalists believed “in the

---

<sup>7</sup> Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (reissue, New York: The Free Press, 1986). Seeking to explain the origin and necessity of the Constitution, Beard introduced a ‘radical’ thesis that drew upon the self-interested motivations of the constitutional framers—an act that critics both at the time and to come, such as McDonald, refuted in favor of those forwarding the framers’ altruistic reasoning for ratification. Scholarly consensus thus holds that the Federalists were the highest thinkers. This does not fit when considering the ruinous effect that abstract concepts, especially sacrificial ones, had on Antifederalism. The Federalists could not have simultaneously expounded on their beliefs while streamlining debate in order to strike when the ratification iron was hot. Beard’s thesis is treated favorably by constitutional historian Merrill Jensen. See his: *The New Nation: A History of the United States during Confederation, 1781-1789* (New York: Vintage, 1965).

<sup>8</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States* (paperback, New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), 684-685. Zinn contends that “it is pretended that [...] it is ‘we the people’ who wrote the Constitution, rather than the fifty-five privileged white males whose class interest required a strong central government.” On page 98, Zinn states that Beard “warned us that governments [...] represent the dominant economic interests, and that their constitutions are intended to serve those interests.” Questioning the intentions of unrepresentative representatives counters the prevailing historiography’s hero worship, but even Zinn’s work, a revisionist masterpiece, fails to properly credit the Antifederalists, the original dissenters. In Herbert J. Storing and Murray Dry, eds., *The Complete Antifederalist*, vol. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981), 143, 146n, it is evident that some Antifederalists were aware of the relationship between “the mercantile interests” and representation under the federal Constitution.

trustworthiness of the people,” but were also, as a major title in the field suggests, “Men of Little Faith?”<sup>9</sup> Antifederalists had little faith in intrusive, centrally-coordinated government; that is all. To them, that was everything.

To add insult to the injured Antifederalist narrative, the usage of the terms ‘Federalist’ and ‘Antifederalist’ is patently incorrect. By definition, actual Federalists are those who wish to adhere to the tenets of a confederated government, such as that which operated under the Articles of Confederation—an alliance, based in an agreed upon set of predetermined measures, of otherwise independent states. Likewise, *Antifederalists*, in theory, could be distinguished by their candid support of centralizing measures. In other words, a true Antifederalist would back a plan of structural consolidation due to practical or hypothetical differences with allied government. Scholars posit that this strategy—misrepresentation—was intentional, giving Federalists a leg up on their Antifederalist counterparts for the duration of the debates.<sup>10</sup> A major Antifederalist writer called The Federal Farmer, supposed to be the eminent Richard Henry Lee, expertly navigated the convolution, having reasoned “If any names are applicable to the parties” besides Federalist and Antifederalist, “they are those of republicans and anti-republicans.” According to this thinker, “the opposers [of ratification] are generally men who support the rights of the body

---

<sup>9</sup> McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum*, 6; Cecelia M. Kenyon, “Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists and the Nature of Representative Government,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 12, Third Series, no. 1 (January 1955), 4-43. These two authors manage to harp on Antifederalism in spite of conflicting statements and theses. While McDonald’s number-crunching is a worthy contribution to the historiography, his needless disparaging of Antifederalist thought, as evinced on pages 10, 79, 116, is not. Kenyon, ironically, seems to have little faith in the Antifederalists—her very objection to her understanding of their motives. Her article, as its title suggests, takes Antifederalism’s distrust of authority as distrust for humanity as a whole. McDonald’s research holds the opposite.

<sup>10</sup> Main, *The Antifederalists*, x, xxi-xxiv; Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For: The Political Thought of the Opponents of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 9-10. The Federalists, as history recognizes them, made sure to appropriate such misleading nomenclature early in the debate proceedings because, psychologically, the prefix ‘anti’ does not appeal to and/or cannot represent the majority of a given body of people, communities in this case. Not to mention, the word ‘anti’ precludes initial inception since an entity must be sufficiently established, entrenched, or recognized in order for an opposing position to develop out of ideological disenchantment. The ‘antis’ inevitably play from behind and are smaller in scope until the risk of disrupting an established practice, or the establishment, outweighs the reward of remaining loyal to the status quo and, indeed, becomes a reward in and of itself.

of the people, and are properly republicans. The advocates are generally men not very friendly to those rights, and properly anti-republicans.” It is quite difficult to fathom how something as elemental as nomenclature can lead to such confusion, or smack of a sense of such indoctrination, but whether or not the fix was in, the fact is that Federalism clearly benefitted from it.<sup>11</sup>

The study of Antifederalism must clear yet another hurdle, one originating from the positive angle of the already stunted historiography: the scholars who undertake to sympathetically address Antifederalist thought, or its overlooked status in American history, still fall short of granting the philosophy credit for developing and maintaining ideological coherence. The best of these treatments, Jackson Turner Main’s *The Antifederalists*, is the one that initiated the turn toward positive reconstructions of Antifederalism. Main masterfully identifies the figures and issues that comprised the ideology while also delving into the factors that led to its demise. According to the author, a combination of the wealth and urban connections possessed by Federalists and the leadership void in the arena of polarizing figures within Antifederalism—considering George Washington’s casual endorsement of ratification—helped Federalism overcome opposition to ratification. The Antifederalists likely even held a slim majority in nationwide voters or adherents, though backwoods realities frustratingly kept them out of the loop. While better evidence has yet to surface, Main offers another, less evincible idea which holds that Antifederalist representatives were “somewhat less likely than the majority of the people to approve of popular rule” once certain political concessions were made.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps

---

<sup>11</sup> The Federal Farmer [Richard Henry Lee], Letter VI of An Additional Number of Letters to The Republican, 2 May 1788, in John P. Kaminski, Gaspare J. Saladino, et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, vol. XX (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1990), 979. The Federal Farmer saw nothing wrong with “the true federalists,” but pointed out that many in the party were “blind tools without any object.”

<sup>12</sup> Main, *The Antifederalists*, 173.

the submission thesis could be to blame for the Federalist victory if ever conclusively proven, but it is currently where early national studies, including Antifederalist sympathizers, lose track of the philosophy's importance, in both the historical and modern senses.

Of the most recent restorations of Antifederalism's role in American society, Saul Cornell's *The Other Founders* proves the boldest and most indispensable. Easily the most detailed account of Antifederalist intangibles, Cornell contends that socioeconomic differences hindered the growth of a fixed Antifederalist platform, particularly the opposing class attitudes involving any potential transition to pure (direct) democratic rule. Antifederalism's message and viability could never overcome, or recover, from this rotting from within. Therefore, the author posits that their ranks are better viewed as three distinct groupings: the elites, who sought to maintain an opposition committed to social ordering—loyal opposition—the middling or upwardly mobile, and the plebian. These supposed divisions opened the proverbial door for the much more unified Federalists because the Antifederalists professed an array of beliefs too divergent to generate anything other than extemporaneous allegiance, if that. However, while differences in class-rank certainly existed, a substantial amount of contradicting source material is readily available. As a result, the bulk of Cornell's thesis suffers the very fate that it attempts to convey—an irrevocable crumbling sourced in internal contradictions.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, Cornell opens his assessment by suggesting that even though Antifederalism was grounded in certain political principles and traditions, it was also “evolving and being constantly

---

<sup>13</sup> Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Antifederalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 34-41. Rife with intricate focuses, additional analyses provide the field of Antifederalist studies some needed variety. They include: William S. Fields and David T. Hardy, “The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 35, no. 4 (October 1991), 393-431; Christopher M. Duncan, *The Antifederalists and Early American Political Thought* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1995); Garry Wills, *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999); Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

reshaped.”<sup>14</sup> Attention might sway, moods could swing, and rhetoric would be altered to meet immediate events or demands, but an ongoing overhaul of Antifederalist precepts was highly unlikely. Taking into account the length of time it took for all news and correspondence to arrive at a given destination in the late-eighteenth century, as well as the generously estimated two year timeframe in which the topic of ratification was contested, it would make just as much sense for Antifederalism’s failure to be pinned on doctrinal dissonance than on a steady turnover in the prioritization of ideals. Neither scenario pans out, however, since neither accounts for the areas in which Antifederalists expressed uniformity in thought. The most widespread and transparent of those areas is their opposition to the idea of maintaining a standing army in times of peace, a concept not even unique to Antifederalism. Additional focuses, such as taxation and its burden on individual prosperity, the right and perceived honor of personally defending home and hearth, and the fear of encouraging another round of despotism, tie into why Antifederalists of all statuses shared common ground on this issue.

The unabashed consistency that characterized Antifederalist opposition to standing armies highlights two ancillary truisms: one being that the Federalist camp considered Antifederalism a formidable threat, largely due to valid contrarian points of view, the other being, and in a heretofore unseen turn, that ideological rigidity and commitment to message were responsible for the philosophy’s ultimate failure, not the formlessness or chaotic deviation so often attributed to it by scholars on each end of the spectrum, Cornell included. In other words, Antifederalism existed for at least one reason, perhaps even a few reasons when scrutinizing the source(s) the standing army issue itself—how it came to be—but none of them could stem the tide of the sly, metropolitan, financial behemoth that was Federalism. Claiming that Antifederalists could not agree on a particular platform after acknowledging that they upheld at

---

<sup>14</sup> Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 9.

least a few novel stances both marginalizes Antifederalist efforts and nullifies Federalist achievements.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, it can just as easily be argued that since the Antifederalists lost the ratification debates, they actually failed to modify their plans *enough* to emerge victorious. If public sentiment called for the transformation or clarification of particular ideals, the Antifederalists were at a disadvantage because they knew that in order to prevent the evils they foresaw, they could not afford to budge on principle. What is more, Antifederalism lacked the one key figure or mastermind that could have best performed those duties—damage control, rationale—in times when debate became exceptionally heated. The most logical candidate to fill that position would have been Thomas Jefferson, but his responsibility as Ambassador to France found him in continental Europe when his voice was needed most. He was the force that would have reshaped Antifederalism, regardless of what that shape would have constituted, had he been on the scene. And, fittingly, Jefferson was a lifelong critic of standing armies, going so far as to reduce the size of the military during his presidential terms and writing of their danger in the most drastic of tones.<sup>16</sup> Lacking a hero, a mixture of grassroots supporters and regional power-players came together in the spirit of the Articles of Confederation, which can be likened to the popular phrase ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend,’ in order to prevent the establishment of a

---

<sup>15</sup> Main, *The Antifederalists*, 219; McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum*, 79, 215-217. Despite the fact that McDonald has no problem denigrating the Antifederalists—perhaps for their economic diversity—his assertion that the Federalists were in a better position to emerge victorious from the ratification struggle is difficult to refute. Main corroborates this point, so even scholars who approach the subject from opposite ends agree on Federalist superiority in the game of politics. On the whole, the Federalists had better connections and resources, and indeed, at times, were the connections and resources themselves. Having greater access to the presses, the Federalist bloc had an easier time convincing ‘independent’ voters of their aims. Sometimes the other team just played the better game, so when Cornell states that intraspecific competition led to losses for Antifederalism, it is akin to the fragile psyche of a competitor who is attempting to rationalize his or her defeat. Federalists and Antifederalists were competing ideologies; infighting did not weaken the bite, so to speak, of either camp, at least not to the point of failure.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor of Caroline, 28 May 1816, in Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 10, 31. Though Jefferson wrote that “banking institutions [...] are more dangerous than standing armies,” he stressed the importance of both issues through juxtaposition. The course of the banking threat was still far from determined, whereas the peacetime army—always a threat—was already an entrenched institution. The mere mention of standing armies in 1816 shows how heavily their supposed danger weighed on Jefferson’s mind.

system that would harm their respective regional prerogatives. At the core of this widely held conception of constitutional opposition was the vociferous rejection of standing armies, for the Antifederalists considered them “the bane of liberty.”<sup>17</sup>

With the review of historiographical contributions and their oversights complete, it is now the Antifederalists’ time to shine. Throughout the remainder of this thesis, the use of secondary source material will be kept to a minimum in the hope that the Antifederalists will showcase their own ideological unanimity, a heretofore uncharted course within the early national field. Public opinion, private dialogue, and the debates and proceedings of each state’s constitutional convention, along with the documents compiled in Morton Borden’s *Antifederalist Papers*, will evince the passion that marked their collective objection to the prospect of maintaining a standing army on the national level. Additionally, the writings and private correspondence of Thomas Jefferson shall conclusively illuminate how seriously early national dissenters treated this topic. The Antifederalists’ philosophical stance will be shown to transcend economic brackets, regional boundaries, and retroactive speculations (hindsight), because it was the very sanctity of those borders that Antifederalists hoped to preserve from encroachments by threatening entities and, fittingly, historically infamous empire. The confederated system reached this end for a brief period at the onset of America’s independence; the Antifederalists wished to have it last for the duration of American history.

It should be noted that Antifederalism, as well as this analysis of it, deal exclusively with the ability of central governments to corner the market on defense through the control of the armed forces. To Antifederalists, the term ‘defense’ could be bastardized to the point where it could mean different things—usually incorrect, incompatible, or morally wrong things—to

---

<sup>17</sup> Elbridge Gerry, 1<sup>st</sup> Congress, 17 August 1789, in *Annals of Congress*, vol. 1 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 750.

different people or sects, such as: the defense of those in power, the defense of the economic elite, the use of military force to encourage political compliance, and the use of preemptive tactics. These potential scenarios explain why the overwhelming majority of Antifederalists not only distrusted and feared centralization, but also supported localized alternatives such as the use of state militias, either independently or under collectively outlined measures. While rooted in more aspects of the anti-war or war as a last resort message than ideologies exhibiting imperialistic tendencies, Antifederalism was nonetheless not an anti-war philosophy. Rather, its followers aimed to specify the roles that each level of government should or would play in matters of defense, and why. Without strict guidelines, Antifederalists believed that the bureaucratic mismanagement of such institutions would leave liberty susceptible to erosion.<sup>18</sup>

The lessons of antiquity struck a chord with both American colonists who were starved of liberty during the pre-Revolutionary age and their Antifederalist descendents. Antifederalist principles thus acted as forewarnings as much as they did tangible political positions. Most significantly, the shift in the seat of political power that ratification entailed would be “destructive of the valuable principles of republican government.” To The Federal Farmer, consolidated change would mean that “posterity may reproach not only a few overbearing, unprincipled men, but those parties in the states which have misused their powers.” Such failings would not only tarnish the republican definition of representative government, but also prevent the tradition from reaching its peak anywhere in America.<sup>19</sup> Republicanism, according to Antifederalist theorists, was rooted in the spatial dimensions, the magnitude of the physical area in which the custom was to be attempted or introduced. The Roman experiment in republican government, one of extreme highs and lows, taught that republics featuring concurrent

---

<sup>18</sup> Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For*, 84.

<sup>19</sup> The Federal Farmer, *Antifederalist* No. 37, “Factions and the Constitution,” in Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers*, 98-100.

jurisdiction eventually falter because “a remote continental authority would not be able to impose its power on far-flung provinces of the empire without excessive recourse to military compulsion,” rendering local sovereignty ineffectual—merely a theory with little or no relationship to the reality of practices. Gaining insight through the interpretation of history, cautious Antifederalists knew that “The struggles of the people against a bad government, when it is once fixed,” the originally-proposed Constitution in this case, “afford but a gloomy picture in the annals of mankind.”<sup>20</sup>

Harboring contempt for standing armies is also a direct, perhaps innate Anglo-Saxon tradition that predates the Norman invasion and conquest of England in 1066. It is suggested that that momentous event exacerbated the trait; the displaced Saxon elite despised the military tactics—an early form of total war—that the Normans utilized, thereby instilling a sense of opposition to entities that wielded absolute power.<sup>21</sup> This air of resentment spanned generations and is a primary element in the broader Anglo-Saxon critique of centralized power, especially those which are deemed distant, foreign, or arbitrary. Even closer to the hearts of British nationals, either at home or abroad, was the experience, lived or learned, of political life under Oliver Cromwell. For American colonists, Cromwell’s “military dictatorship in the mid-seventeenth century [...] exerted a powerful influence over the political ideas” that eventually culminated in the movement for independence.<sup>22</sup> Communal bonds grew out of this long-standing objection to unjust militarism, forging a uniquely American conception of defense, one that Antifederalists fought to perpetuate.

---

<sup>20</sup> M.N.S. Sellers, *American Republicanism: Roman Ideology in the United States Constitution* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 161-164; An Old Whig, *Antifederalist* No. 18-20 (Part I), “What Does History Teach?,” in Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers*, 46.

<sup>21</sup> Fields and Hardy, “The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History,” 397-398.

<sup>22</sup> Richard W. Stewart, ed., *American Military History: United States Army and the Forging of a Nation, 1775-1917*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2005), 108.

Itself derivative of the finest aspects of Roman republicanism, the English republican tradition sought to reverse a long history of political struggle on the domestic front through the evocation of highly concentrated ideals. Individual adherents of this approach strove for qualities such as virtue, wisdom, and courage, which, if faithfully practiced on a collective scale, were to produce peace and prosperity. John Locke, himself influenced by the notion of the *common good* and bearing witness to rapid imperial expansion during the seventeenth century, infused the concept of natural rights to the discussion of the proper role of government in the individual's life. Personal protections, granted by nature, paved the way for the classical liberal thought that took the nineteenth century western world by storm. Most importantly, it was this exact interplay of civil goals, what can be described as the maintenance of the common good through the preservation of individual rights, that sparked and sustained the American conception of self-determination—the willingness of diverse colonists to rebel against what they considered despotism both for themselves and their colonial brethren. In kind, these American radicals, a bit less refined than enlightenment philosophers like Locke had envisioned, drew inspiration from a variety of charged sources. No source, however, was as crucial to the cultivation of the revolutionary mentality as the grassroots, strikingly daring *Cato's Letters* by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. These open writings and correspondence, on all topics relating to liberty, garnered not only “immense popularity in Britain and the American colonies,” but also “frequently served as the basis of the American response to the whole range of depredations under which the colonies suffered.”<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Ronald Hamowy, ed., *Cato's Letters: or, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), xxxvi-xxxvii. For additional scholarly commentary that ties *Cato's Letters* to the rousing of the colonial mind and spirit, see: Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 22, 35-38. Trenchard and Gordon's letters pay homage to Cato the Younger, an incorruptible luminary of republican ideals in the age of Julius Caesar.

As educated, yet self-made and uncompromising thinkers who came to prominence following England's Glorious Revolution, Trenchard and Gordon's messages resonated with the upwardly mobile, whose ingenuity both in the theoretical arena of enlightened thought and the practical world of economic health and independence had caught up to imperial exploitation. In fact, according to Revolutionary scholar Bernard Bailyn, not even the enactment of the British Bill of Rights in 1688, which granted Parliament ultimate authority over the standing army issue, was enough to convince contemporary radicals "that the individual would be protected from the power of the state."<sup>24</sup> In the present-day, the issue's relation to the soundness of representative government, interestingly enough, is virtually discounted. But to a British republican, like Trenchard, of the early 1700s, a period of time when common knowledge held that countless European "kingdoms had been enslaved" both historically and in recent memory, including their own, the most basic element noted to be detrimental to the cause of liberty was the fusion of government and military.<sup>25</sup> Inhibiting such an incontrovertible calamity would be the surest way of securing the foundation—indeed, the identity—of any nascent or aspiring polity. Fostered within this progressive frame of mind for approximately a century, the majority of American colonists were prepared to not only actively pursue their beliefs through interjection, but also, ultimately, realize their own glorious revolution.<sup>26</sup>

Arguments against standing armies were also founded upon the widespread abhorrence of the involuntary quartering of British soldiers. Though the act of quartering has been abandoned in recent times, it is argued that "its inclusion in the Bill of Rights marked the end of an 'ancient

---

<sup>24</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 47.

<sup>25</sup> John Trenchard, *Cato* No. 95, "Further Reasons against Standing Armies," 22 September 1722, in Hamowy, ed., *Cato's Letters*, 682; Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 62-65.

<sup>26</sup> Lois G. Schwoerer, "*No Standing Armies!*:" *The Antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 5. For an invaluable research tool on opposition to standing armies in England after the Glorious Revolution, refer to: Lois G. Schwoerer, "The Literature of the Standing Army Controversy, 1697-1699," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 28 (1965), 189-212. Schwoerer remains the foremost expert on this particular subject, not to mention, and sadly, one of the only.

and troubled' chapter in Anglo-American legal history" and all but sealed the Federalist victory in the ratification struggle.<sup>27</sup> Colonial intolerance for the quartering of troops exploded during the French and Indian War (1754-1763), resulting in the expansion and entrenchment of British dominion over the North American continent. Food stores, munitions, and housing were major items that colonial Americans were coerced into providing the remaining (standing) British forces. Additionally, the successes that various colonial militia units had in warding off French and Native American forces during this conflict had been slighted by both the British soldiery stationed in the colonies and the Crown itself. This blatant lack of respect for the colonies' wartime efforts only hastened the breakdown of British jurisdiction over colonial concerns.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the colonies, it was taken as fact that British soldiers would eventually, on behalf of the Crown, monitor every facet of colonial life—a prospect that most colonial men feared worse than death. The famed Boston Massacre (1770) proved to most New Englanders that peace and prosperity either could or would not be achieved under what seemed to be martial law.<sup>29</sup> The Boston Tea Party protest and the passage of the Intolerable Acts, including the loathed Quartering Act, further fanned the flames of colonial objection to British tyranny; the key issue always remained the safeguarding of liberty, no matter how much of an abstraction that concept may have been. Outraged citizens had little or no recourse until the onset of rebellion, at which point most states enacted "bills of rights or new constitutions," the bulk of which

---

<sup>27</sup> Fields and Hardy, "The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History," 431.

<sup>28</sup> J. Revell Carr, *Seeds of Discontent: The Deep Roots of the American Revolution, 1650-1750* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008), 318-319, 323-327; Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 112-115.

<sup>29</sup> James Kendall Hosmer, *Samuel Adams* (reprint, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 324. On the fifth anniversary of the Massacre, Samuel Adams acted as chief architect of an oration that decried "the ruinous tendency of standing armies being placed in free and populous cities in times of peace." Adams lost much of his political clout in the years following ratification because he wavered between Federalism and Antifederalism. Two analyses that show how and why American colonials circumvented British laws and authority are: Thomas M. Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Knopf, 1972).

“contained provisions separately addressing the grievances against the involuntary quartering of soldiers and the maintenance of standing armies.”<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, those same objections were bluntly listed in the Declaration of Independence—altogether forming the literal center of the exalted document. Though penned mostly by Thomas Jefferson, the final form of the proclamation had to be approved by the Second Continental Congress. And it was, complete with the rejection of aggressive militarism. “Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment,” Jefferson stated, the men of Congress, of different economic, political, regional, and even spiritual persuasions, assented to a set of ideals which were “intended to be an expression of the American mind.”<sup>31</sup> While the Revolution, representing a mentality as much as an action, was more revolutionary than Jefferson’s modesty transmits, preventing the dilution of its essence in the ages to come would truly have been revolutionary. Knowing the gravity of the situation, Antifederalists endeavored to demonstrate that they best personified the spirit of 1776 by advocating the ideals, such as opposition to standing armies, which propelled the colonies to victory in the first place. Patrick Henry, Virginia’s leading Antifederalist, voiced their best mission statement: “The voice of tradition, I trust, will inform posterity of our struggles for freedom: if our descendants be worthy of the name ‘Americans,’ they will preserve and hand down to their latest posterity, the transactions of the present times.”<sup>32</sup>

Being that opposition to standing armies bordered on the cultural rather than political spectrum for the Revolutionary generation and their ancestors, it is crucial to report that there

---

<sup>30</sup> Fields and Hardy, “The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History,” 418-419. See also: Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 119.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, 8 May 1825, in Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 10, 343. Jefferson modeled his draft of Virginia’s Constitution, which arrived too late to be considered, almost exactly on the Declaration of Independence. See: Jefferson’s Drafts of the Virginia Constitution, June 1776, in Julian P. Boyd, et al., eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 337-365.

<sup>32</sup> Patrick Henry at the Virginia Convention, 5 June 1788, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. X, 961-962.

was little inconsistency in vouching for, or identifying with, Federalist objectives while remaining against the entrenchment of a national army. In fact, many custom-driven Federalists feared the notion as much as their constitutional opponents, a notion that could not have hurt the last ditch effort by the majority of Antifederalists to have a bill of rights accompany the inevitability of ratification. For every zealous Federalist spouting circular logic in order to minimize the necessity to analyze the standing army issue, there were Revolutionary Federalists who reflected Antifederalist concerns about the issue. A Federalist figure such as Henry Knox, also the first Secretary of War, for instance, preferred the formation of a “national militia” based on the belief that “every independent nation ought to possess within itself, the means for its defence.” Knox, according to historians, “feared the potential for military dictatorship posed by a standing army” or other questionably-derived forces.<sup>33</sup> Departing from this standard, Federalist Noah Webster opined: “Before a standing army can rule, the people must be disarmed; [...] The supreme power in America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword; because the whole body of the people are armed, and constitute a force superior to any bands of regular troop.” The former view is steeped in the republican tradition and knowledge of history, military tactics, and human nature, the latter simulates an article of faith—especially when considering that bearable arms were not as readily available in early national America as previously assumed.<sup>34</sup>

Even top Federalist James Madison, constitutional architect and political pragmatist, took time during the Philadelphia Convention to declare that “A standing military force, with an overgrown Executive will not long be safe companions to liberty. [...] Among the Romans it was

---

<sup>33</sup> Henry Knox, “A Plan for the General Arrangement of the Militia,” 1786, in David Brion Davis and Steven Mintz, eds., *The Boisterous Sea of Liberty: A Documentary History of America from Discovery through the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 231-232.

<sup>34</sup> A Citizen of America [Noah Webster], “An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution Proposed by the Late Convention Held at Philadelphia,” 17 October 1787, in Colleen A. Sheehan and Gary L. McDowell, eds., *Friends of the Constitution: Writings of the ‘Other’ Federalists, 1787-1788* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998), 398; Wills, *A Necessary Evil*, 27-33.

a standing maxim to excite a war, whenever a revolt was apprehended. Throughout all Europe, the armies kept under the pretext of defending, have enslaved the people.” On a separate occasion, Madison wrote “Of all the enemies to public liberty, war is perhaps the most to be dreaded.” This dread stemmed from the belief that “War is the parent of armies [...] and armies, debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few.” The standing army issue is one of the few that, during the hunt for ratification, Madison and Alexander Hamilton, the brainchild of Federalism, expressed dissimilar views about. Madison eventually aligned with fellow Virginian Thomas Jefferson, ideological foe to Hamilton and standing armies.<sup>35</sup>

The diversity in the Federalist view of standing armies was keenly identified by Pennsylvania Antifederalist William Findley, who figured since eminent figures like Washington and Franklin, themselves Federalists, barely had hands in, or insider knowledge of, the Constitution’s framing, the opposition he was part of had every reason to claim that “aristocracy was the design” of a growing, secretive sect of Federalists.<sup>36</sup> If these Federalists could simultaneously receive support for key constitutional initiatives from major American heroes and keep those same heroes at arms length, the Antifederalists had no realistic shot at preventing ratification, whether for the time being or permanently. What is significant, regardless of the outcome of the constitutional debates, is that the prospect of keeping peacetime armies drew

---

<sup>35</sup> James Madison, “Speech at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia,” 26 June 1787, in Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, vol. I (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911), 465; James Madison, “Political Observations,” 20 April 1795, in William C. Rives and Philip R. Fendall, eds., *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison: Fourth President of the United States*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1865), 491-492.

<sup>36</sup> Hampden [William Findley], *Pittsburgh Gazette*, 16 February 1788. Franklin’s contribution to the Constitution was a crucial one. Known as the Great Compromise of 1787, his idea, along with Connecticut’s Roger Sherman, combined elements of the earlier Virginia Plan and New Jersey Plan, resulting in a proposal for proportional representation in the lower house and equal representation in the upper house of a bicameral legislature. Franklin, though, was on the threshold of death while the Constitution was being formulated. This kept him from being an integral part of the convoluted, laborious struggle for ratification.

criticism from what could be described as both sides of the aisle. However, only the Antifederalists remained consistent, unified, and open and honest about it, for the duration of the affair. “Of all governments, the Americans detest a military one the most,” argued an editorial in New York. The constitution in question, being “so nearly allied to it, and so likely in a short time to become an absolute one [...] cannot but strike the most cursory observer.”<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> *New York Morning Post*, 11 October 1787, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. XIX, 83.

## CHAPTER ONE: ANTIFEDERALIST OPINION ON STANDNG ARMIES

“The common talk is, *Well, what do you think of being surrounded with a standing army?*”<sup>38</sup>

Antifederalist opposition to the institutionalization of a standing army produced a glut of public, private, and official evidence. Of these subsets, and perhaps to no one’s surprise, public opinion proves to be the most impassioned. Moreover, despite whichever dichotomous relationship is presented—northern or southern, urban or rural, rich or poor—in an effort to undermine the credibility of Antifederalism, or Federalism for that matter, public Antifederalist sources can actually be seen to maintain remarkable degrees of unity, consistency, and clarity. It was their stance against standing armies that yielded these results. Antifederalist voices also sharply contrasted with the half-casual, half-indignant Federalist treatment of the subject of standing armies. Encapsulated by the words of lawyer James Wilson, a leading Federalist in the battleground state of Pennsylvania, hard-line Federalists advanced the argument that “The force of civil institutions will be adequate to” stave off military insurrection, so “the dread of military violence, which has been assiduously disseminated, must eventually prove the mere effusion of a wild imagination or a factious spirit.” Wilson was compelled to address the issue of peacetime armies because the Pennsylvania opposition, a rowdy bunch, thought the proposed constitution was “of a pernicious tendency, because it tolerates a standing army in time of peace.”<sup>39</sup>

Wilson’s appraisal was echoed by the growing number of Federalists who acted outside the customary barrier of disinterested politics, the place where leading figures respected the

---

<sup>38</sup> *Philadelphia Freeman’s Journal*, 2 January 1788, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. XX, 565.

<sup>39</sup> James Wilson, “Speech in the State House Yard,” 6 October 1787, in *Ibid.*, vol. II, 169-171. It is apropos that the Pennsylvanian Antifederalists offered such pointed commentary on the subject of the maintenance of standing armies since, as the editors of the *DHRC* explain in a note regarding arrangement on page 11, “the Philadelphia Press was for some time the principal source of material for public debate on the Constitution.”

axioms they inherited in an effort to justify others' deference to the socioeconomic hierarchy.<sup>40</sup> The partisan breed of Federalists, who saw no problem with maintaining a standing army, spun quite the web of justification. "No people can be more secure against tyranny and oppression in their rulers than you are at present," wrote Roger Sherman, a supporter of Federalism, not to mention standing armies. Prompt ratification was thus required, since "the only surety you could have for your liberties must be in the nature of your government; [...] you could derive no security from bills of rights, or stipulations, on the subject of a standing army." Federalist rhetoric even incorporated what appears to be a simple understanding of the modern field of public relations by attempting to steer public perception in psychological and sociological contexts—a practice dependent on sensory manipulation when lacking the benefit of supporting evidence. A Federalist believed, after all, "the power of a veteran army would not subdue a patriotic militia ten times its number. Besides, regular troops who are natives of a country, allied by friendship and blood to the other citizens [...] cannot be so generally corrupted as to turn their arms against those with whom they so long shared" the bonds of brotherhood. Clearly, a new sect of Federalists went to great lengths to encourage ratification, regardless and in spite of Antifederalist objections over military matters. To their credit, Antifederalists would not be fooled by a faction who advocated "a stretch of arbitrary power, that even Britain never attempted before the Revolution."<sup>41</sup>

Antifederalist integrity mattered. They knew they were going against the grain by opposing ratification, whatever the grounds. "Let it but appear that a HANCOCK, a

---

<sup>40</sup> Saul Cornell, "Reflections on 'The Late Remarkable Revolution in Government': Aedanus Burke and Samuel Bryan's Unpublished History of the Ratification of the Constitution," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 112, no. 1 (January 1988): 105. Cornell finds that almost as soon as the states won their independence, the realities of "Postwar politics struck many contemporary observers [...] as a particularly dangerous sign of a declining commitment to true republican Whig ideals."

<sup>41</sup> A Countryman III [Roger Sherman], *The New-Haven Gazette and Connecticut Magazine*, 29 November 1787; *Independent Gazetteer*, 4 October 1787; *Philadelphia Freeman's Journal*, 27 February 1788.

WASHINGTON, and a FRANKLIN approve the new government, and who will not embrace it,” asked One of the People. An Officer of the Late Continental Army, the Pennsylvanian William Findley, was another personality highly critical of the notion forwarded by Wilson. “Congress have the power of keeping up a STANDING ARMY in time of peace, and Mr. W[ilson] has told you THAT IT WAS NECESSARY,” Findley painfully illustrated. The necessity Wilson spoke of was seen by Antifederalists to indicate an effort to increase centralization, which a standing army could, conveniently, be available to enforce the policies thereof. The main problem involved the concept of the seat of power—its meaning and its future. Keeping a standing army, traditionally, was the first sign that a bureaucracy, or central government, operated outside or in spite of the will of the voting public. The external body in question replaces both the individual and community as the seat of power in this scenario; it is no longer representative *of the people*, but of the *system* itself. A skeptic from Connecticut, a Federalist stronghold, wanted people to realize the inevitability of self-sustaining power, stating “Tyrants [...] can rely upon nothing but standing armies of mercenary troops for the support of their power.”<sup>42</sup>

Every class and region of Antifederalism saw right through Federalist planning and pandering, even if it seemed to extend to ad hominem attacks.<sup>43</sup> These men believed that giving Congress “all the powers of raising and maintaining armies, of regulating and commanding militias,” were unconscionable missteps. The suspected society of “new federalists” were understood to be the driving force behind the movement to subvert the principles of a

---

<sup>42</sup> One of the People, *Massachusetts Centinel*, 17 October 1787, vol. IV, 84-85; An Officer of the Late Continental Army [William Findley], *Independent Gazetteer*, 6 November 1787, vol. II, 211; The Republican: To the People, *Connecticut Courant*, 7 January 1788, vol. III, 529 in Jensen, Kaminski, Saladino, et al, eds., *DHRC*. Findley and many of his Antifederalist colleagues across the land also had the habit of making their objections visually apparent, stylizing their written thoughts on the subject of standing armies. Likewise, a significant portion of the material used throughout this analysis can be noticed to have been fancifully transcribed.

<sup>43</sup> *Petersburg Virginia Gazette*, 13 March 1788. In this periodical, country Antifederalists are condemned for exhibiting the “grossest and most stupid ignorance.” The dissenting agenda struck a chord, and its adherents were not always treated with dignity—derision replaced dialogue.

confederation whose practically sovereign states were still attempting self-assertion following the celebration of their independence, won as one. Accordingly, Antifederalist thought held that only unscrupulous persons could support a constitution which controlled the very powers the former colonies fought to obtain.<sup>44</sup> As it was, “almost the whole of the *widows, orphans, soldiers, and other distressed public creditors* had been duped by speculators,” many of whom, at one point, had “been opponents of the independence of the United States.” Under the proposed system, this sect “could call upon a ‘standing army’ to enforce their wishes.” Short of stopping ratification in its tracks, the only protection against such egregious corruptions came in the form of constitutional amendments, which Antifederalists focused on securing once it was clear that their resistance was futile. They salvaged what they could.<sup>45</sup>

A leading Antifederalist writer of Massachusetts pointed out that the citizens of the states have been “requested to engraft into the component parts of your Constitution, a STANDING ARMY, without any qualifying restraints whatever.” The writer, under the name John DeWitt, could not grasp the logic that informed arguments in favor of keeping a peacetime force. Geographically, he assumed, “it would be impossible [...] for any nation whatever to subdue us.” America’s territory, even if only the original thirteen states, was too expansive, wild and hostile, and miraculously set out of reach “by an extensive ocean,” to effectively control from the outside. By defeating the British, “the most powerful people upon the globe,” DeWitt believed the case *against* using a standing army was made. The imperialistic excess DeWitt and most every Antifederalist condemned, which early national America was mostly free from, shapes the

---

<sup>44</sup> *Pennsylvania Herald*, 12 December 1787; One of the People, *Carlisle Gazette*, 9 January 1788; Philadelphiensis III, *Independent Gazetteer*, 5 December 1787, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. XIV, 349-352. Philadelphiensis tells readers how “the wealthy of your own country assisted you to expel the foreign tyrant only with a view to substitute themselves in his stead.” Fragments of this document are found in *Antifederalist* No. 40.

<sup>45</sup> *Massachusetts Centinel*, 20 March 1790; Robert Allen Rutland, *The Ordeal of the Constitution: The Antifederalists and the Ratification Struggle of 1787-1788* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966; reprint, Boston: Northeastern University Press), 300.

meaning of Percy Bysshe Shelley's acclaimed poem of the time "Ozymandias" (1818)—empires inevitably collapse.<sup>46</sup>

Along the same lines, an Antifederalist from New Hampshire laid out the ethics behind his opposition to standing armies. Preemptive warfare seems to have been this Farmer's main concern, as the person wrote that "War is justifiable on no other principle than self-defence, it is at best a curse to any people." Though Antifederalists throughout America did not voice their pursuit of peace with as much fervor as their civil rights, Thomas Jefferson always couched his objections to standing armies with peace in mind. Perhaps it was taken as an obvious component of their stance, or a resultant goal. Jefferson simply may have even had more time to articulate the ethics of his philosophy, one that stretched over fifty years. But the New Hampshire Farmer made it known how military conflict "depopulates nations; lays waste the finest countries; destroys arts and sciences, [and] many times ruins the best men, and advance the worst." This writer's Antifederalist colors bleed through when exposing the source of standing armies, both abroad and at home—"designing men." Moral grounding, in the generalized sense, was important to Antifederalists. Perpetual warfare was not what drove their motivations or their economy.<sup>47</sup>

"*Precedent* is not *principle*," argued A Democratic Federalist. So, if a truly unique experiment in liberty was indeed the intention of the Revolution, any justification for the implementation of a standing army upon ratification of the Constitution was anathema, even "*wrong*." It is a fact that peacetime armies and true liberty, consistently defined in part as the

---

<sup>46</sup> John DeWitt V, *American Herald*, 3 December 1787, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. IV, 355; "Ozymandias," in Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Rosalind and Helen, A Modern Eclogue; with Other Poems* (London: C. and J. Ollier, 1819), 72.

<sup>47</sup> A Farmer I [New Hampshire], *Freeman's Oracle, and New Hampshire Advertiser*, 11 January 1788, in Storing and Dry, eds., *CA*, vol. 4, 207. This Antifederalist continued: "An army, either in peace or war, is like the locust and caterpillars of Egypt; they bear down all before them."

freedom of the dissemination of ideas and ideals, the uninhibited ability to participate in the economic marketplace, and the ownership of one's physical body, are mutually exclusive elements. It was indeed "The great art in this business [...] to regulate the militia in such a manner that neither agriculture, industry, commerce, nor the military spirit should suffer" due to a standing army, or so thought Denatus. This writer made it clear that almost any questionable venture was preferred over nationalizing the army—"That dead weight upon the heart of nations! That disgraceful and wicked instrument in the hands of conscious worthlessness and guilt!" This southerner was just as much against standing armies as his northern brethren were.<sup>48</sup>

A Ploughman, another southern Antifederalist, confirmed that liberty would erode once a standing army became an accepted institution. "The common people," he thought, "will be slaves to a numberless herd of creeping sycophants; those will be slaves to their employers; their employers will be slaves to Congress, and Congress will be slaves to the army." This chain of imbalance, with interactions and departments no longer favoring the majority of citizens, was linked by the prospective standing army. The fifth essay by a Maryland Antifederalist named A Farmer also highlighted the relationship between standing armies, liberty, and human nature when imagining if "any *prudent man* [...] would trust the whimsical inventions of the day, with that dangerous weapon *a standing army*." The free Swiss, this Antifederalist thought, should be emulated for their refusal to become the pawns of a military government. As "voluntary" soldiers, motivated to defend their community, "they have been the secure spectators of the constant and universal destruction of the human species." These Antifederalists cherished the binary of peace and prosperity, not the control of powers inimical to individual and collective

---

<sup>48</sup> A Democratic Federalist, *Pennsylvania Herald*, 17 October 1787, vol. II, 197; Denatus, *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 11 June 1788, vol. X, 1605, in Jensen, Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*. Portions of the source by A Democratic Federalist appear in *Antifederalist* No. 29.

rights.<sup>49</sup>

A Massachusetts Antifederalist dubbed Poplicola warned how England's mixed government allowed for "raising and keeping a standing army in a time of profound peace." The harassment and murder of "peaceable and quiet subjects" transpired as a result. The same idea behind that army came to strangle the life out of the American colonies. Shortsighted, ravenous, and ignoble oligarchs entrenched in London oversaw their controlling stake in the empire, and transfused their controlling ways, through the use of a standing army and imposing navy, thus "squandering away thirteen of their richest jewels." The history behind Poplicola's argument is irrefutable. The Antifederalists sought to learn from history while preserving the culture they sacrificed their lives and livelihoods to liberate.<sup>50</sup>

Poplicola's thoughts were seconded by the Antifederalists of Albany, New York. This group not only considered standing armies the "bane of republican government," but also recalled how it was through the use of a standing army that "Britain attempted to enforce her arbitrary measures." The militia, the sacred means of defense, lost its role as Britain's standing army dug in. Tamony of Virginia cited his own source on the matter. From Richard Price's *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, and the Means of Making it a Benefit to the World* (Boston 1784), Tamony quoted: "'God forbid that standing armies should ever find an establishment in America. They are every where the grand support of arbitrary power and the chief source of depression of mankind, no wise people will trust their defence out of their own hands, or consent to hold their rights at the mercy of armed slaves.'" Price and Tamony were not alone in sharing the belief that professional soldiers—mercenaries in every

---

<sup>49</sup> A Ploughman, *Winchester Virginia Gazette*, 19 March 1788, in *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, 509; A Farmer V [Maryland], *Maryland Gazette*, 25 March 1788-28 March 1788, in Storing and Dry, eds., *CA*, vol. 5, 42-46. A Farmer's third essay acts as *Antifederalist* No. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Poplicola, *Boston Gazette*, 24 December 1787, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. V, 510.

regard, historical and hypothetical—signaled the end, rather than the proliferation, of liberty. And all the while, the civil control of the militia, that “bulwark of defence,” was consistently espoused as the proper alternative.<sup>51</sup>

An anonymous Antifederalist of New Hampshire also used a “quotation from a celebrated author” regarding the army question. “In free states,” it was written, “the profession of a soldier taken merely, and singly as a profession, is justly an object of jealousy, and an army though they are voted yearly, soon get engrafted to, and become part of the Constitution.” Strict controls, whether provisions or amendments, were required in order to prevent this eventuality. Nothing more and nothing less than careful planning would suffice. A northern, antislavery, Antifederalist said it best: “A great deal of mischief can be done in two years, with *guns, swords,* and *bayonets,* and armies when once *raised,* it hath some times been found difficult to *disband.*” Avoiding or denying the reality of these truisms meant, according to a Pennsylvania Antifederalist, the introduction of a “Prussian militia” system.<sup>52</sup>

Even An Impartial Observer, a title which rang true, who believed “we ought not to wait the enemies attack” to prepare a federal force, did not support the maintenance of a peacetime army. To this nonpartisan, “When a standing army will be unnecessarily maintained in the United States, there will not be a particle of virtue in the people; they will be ripe for the most corrupt government.” At that point, there would be no more ideal to defend, the standing army would be indicative of the condition of the country’s citizens, a position of total intellectual, ethical, and political regression. An Impartial Observer put the onus on the citizens in this

---

<sup>51</sup> Albany Anti-Federal Committee Circular, 10 April 1788, vol. XXI, 1381-1382; Tamony, *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 9 January 1788, vol. VIII, 287; Editors’ Note on A Columbian Patriot [Mercy Otis Warren], “Observations on the Constitution,” February 1788, vol. VII, 1720, in *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> A Farmer II, *Freeman’s Oracle, and New Hampshire Advertiser*, 1 February 1788, vol. 4, 211; A Letter from a Gentleman in a Neighboring State, to a Gentleman in this City, *Connecticut Journal*, 17 October 1787, vol. 4, 11, in Storing and Dry, eds., *CA*; *Independent Gazetteer*, 6 October 1787, in Jensen, Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. II, 172.

scenario. This writer was not unfounded in making such a case since, as Shelley Burt points out in her intellectual history *Virtue Transformed*, the culture of eighteenth century England was realizing that the traditionally public conception of virtue “may also be privately oriented.” The issues most responsible for this transition were the rise of public credit and the expansion of “government bureaucracy and the professional army” after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Ideas regarding virtue unavoidably underwent major changes when faced with the subsequent amalgam of statist, religious, and upwardly mobile (independent) influences. Yet, while unstable in this period, virtue was certainly a recognizable phenomenon. Thomas Jefferson thought as much. It was assumed that early national Americans and even future generations of Americans were in charge of their own destinies—the course that the country would follow—when it came issues of public morality like whether a standing army should be maintained.<sup>53</sup>

Was “it for the sake of the *poor* and *common* people, that the *rich* and *well born* are so indefatigable?” The Albany Antifederalists asked questions they knew the answers to. There was no other reason that Federalists and their “connections” would support the Constitution, or its vessel of enforcement, unless they were actually chasing “some of the many lucrative offices under the New Government.” A Tenant, another Antifederalist from Albany, objected to the theory behind standing armies. Allowing a standing army, already a horrid entity, to be controlled by “the will of one man,” was akin to signing one’s life away. Additionally, the militia would be meddled with in this potential quagmire. Support ratification “If you will subject yourselves as militiamen to be called abroad to any state in the union, under the command of continental officers,” A Tenant preached. Antifederalists, from varying places and economic

---

<sup>53</sup> An Impartial Observer VI, *Petersburg Virginia Gazette*, 13 March 1788, in *Ibid*, vol. VIII, 489; Shelley Burt, *Virtue Transformed: Political Argument in England, 1688-1740* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 9, 30; Jean M. Yarbrough, *American Virtues: Thomas Jefferson on the Character of a Free People* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1998).

strata, took the issue of local defense seriously; the practice was an important aspect of personal liberty. It was “a capital circumstance in favor of our liberty,” wrote *The Republican* “that the people themselves are the military power of our country.”<sup>54</sup>

Every aspect of civic life seemed to be at stake when it came to the possibility of a standing army, but even private life was endangered. Having written about the future of religion in a constitutional America, A Baptist asked citizens to ponder “whether the general legislature can exercise the power to [...] organize and govern the militia, and call them out *to execute the laws of the union*, and suppress insurrections, without grievously oppressing the people.” Around the same time, another A Countryman, of New York and thought to be Hugh Hughes, even accused high-ranking Federalists of the time—for instance, Robert R. Livingston, who later became a Democratic-Republican—of having “long been endeavouring to reconcile this Country to a standing Army, and, I think, an Episcopal Hierarchy also.” Whether such an argument was a scare tactic or not, is unclear. What is clear is the most passionate Antifederalists fought fire with fire.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, William Findley did not approve of the militia being “under the immediate command of Congress,” in which individuals “*conscientiously scrupulous of bearing arms* may be compelled to perform military duty.” The personal side of the standing army issue is often overlooked even by studies focusing on military theory and history. Yet people like Samuel of Massachusetts were concerned when they noticed nothing that prevented the new government from “keeping a standing army, at all times, peace or war.” This put too much power, such as the

---

<sup>54</sup> *Albany Anti-Federal Committee Circular*, 10 April 1788, vol. XXI, 1382-1383; A Tenant To the Tenants of the County of Albany, *New York Journal*, 29 April 1788, vol. XX, 967; *The Republican: To the People*, Connecticut Courant, 7 January 1788, vol. III, 529, in *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> A Baptist, *New York Journal*, 30 November 1787, vol. XIX, 337; A Countryman III [Hugh Hughes], *New York Journal*, 3 December 1787, vol. XIX, 347, in *Ibid.* For further reading on the interplay between freedom of religion and standing armies, see: Rutland, *The Ordeal of the Constitution*, 54.

lives of productive, righteous citizens, in the hands of men who could potentially be “of no principle or property.” For good reason, Antifederalists wanted no part of immoral institutions, and certainly not ones authorized by a central government. They made it clear that their boiling point would be the acceptance of a “STANDING ARMY IN TIME OF PEACE, that grand engine of oppression.”<sup>56</sup>

One Antifederalist was even more explicit. A Massachusetts Antifederalist offered a particularly poignant estimation of the detrimental effects that would be brought forth by an American standing army, if or when institutionalized:

You will be liable to be continually and perpetually saddled with a standing army, composed not only of the refuse of your own country, but of the sweepings of Newgate, and the off-scouring of the territories of all the mercenary *Nabobs* of Europe; who if they commit the most atrocious outrages, the grossest violations of all laws, the vilest acts of rapine, robbery, ravishment and murder, will well know who has the sole right of pardon, while you may have this consolation, that ‘tis out of your *hard earnings*, they are to receive the reward of their services.

Even after the ordeal over ratification was said and done, Pennsylvania Antifederalists remained opposed. Of their few enumerations, the standing army issue was fully addressed. In their estimation “standing armies in times of peace are not only expensive but dangerous to liberty.” Continuing their appeal, only a militia of free men could “be the proper security for” the defense of a free state or republic. The fear and distrust was palpable.<sup>57</sup>

The Society of the Cincinnati, a hereditary fellowship of officers from the Continental Army founded in 1783, never aided the Federalist cause in the area of public perception. Its very existence, in fact, lent credence not only to Antifederalist opposition to professional armies, but also to any republican-themed objection in general. “Composed of officers drawn from the ranks

---

<sup>56</sup> An Officer of the Late Continental Army, *Independent Gazetteer*, 6 Nov, 1787, vol. II, 212; Samuel, *Independent Chronicle*, 10 January 1788, vol. V, 680; Centinel I, *Independent Gazetteer*, 5 October 1787, vol. II, 162, in Jensen, Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*.

<sup>57</sup> *American Herald*, 14 January 1788, vol. V, 711; Petition Against Confirmation of the Ratification of the Constitution, January 1788, vol. II, 711, in *Ibid*.

of the Continental Army,” the Society conducted its secretive proceedings, well, secretly. The fraternal aspect of the collective was not what most took issue with; it was the fact that “few of its members actually emulated the Roman leader [Cincinnatus] by retiring” from either politics or army posts once their tasks were accomplished.<sup>58</sup> The republican way of conducting business was a multifaceted, yet simplified way: live freely when it is possible and lead (defend) when it is a must. The misuse and abuse of this concept attracted vivid criticisms.

A remarkably bipartisan newspaper of the day, for instance, captures the disdain that some Rhode Islanders held for the Society: “O Lord have mercy upon us...and deliver us, we pray thee, from STANDING ARMIES, and CINCINNATI OFFICERS.” Others opposed standing armies in more detail by warning of the Society’s constitutional convention ties because “by the sword being once more put in their hands [...] they will not be easy Untill Some Order of military Knighthood is established.” While certainly driven by fear, the language that was used to describe the Society of the Cincinnati had plenty of grounding in reality. Revolutionary figures as highly regarded as Elbridge Gerry loathed the aristocratic leanings of the Society. As a die-hard Antifederalist, Gerry, in true republican fashion, thought those involved in the Society were “seeking lucrative employment, civil & military.” Antifederalists understood that the funding of a permanent national army would debilitate their conception—the Revolutionary conception—of proper government. Even Thomas Jefferson got in on the action, which is not at all shocking considering his firm and consistent opposition to standing armies. Jefferson, after withdrawing from his term in office as Secretary of State (1790-1793), wished to somehow prevent the Cincinnati from “lowering over our constitution eternally.” The Society of the

---

<sup>58</sup> Cornell, “Reflections on ‘The Late Remarkable Revolution in Government’: Aedanus Burke and Samuel Bryan’s Unpublished History of the Ratification of the Constitution,” 105-106. For a comprehensive review of the role of the Society of the Cincinnati in early national America, see Markus Hünemörder, *The Society of the Cincinnati: Conspiracy and Distrust in Early America* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

Cincinnati acted as a microcosmic example of what Antifederalists warned of: entrenched special interests in the military sector of the national government.<sup>59</sup>

“What cannot Congress do with an army at their heels, the revenue in their pockets?,” questioned a nameless, yet insightful Antifederalist. Indeed, many Antifederalists, including those from Albany, took their criticism one step further by adding the issue of cost, a practicality, to the equation. They asked, probingly, whether “raising and supporting an army and navy, in time of peace,” would “create additional expence?” And, just as in every other facet of objection to standing armies, Antifederalists from every part of the country seemed to echo the point of this argument. DeWitt Clinton, a young Antifederalist from the Clinton political dynasty of New York, had already heard “that some of the young men who are looking for places” in the new government “are so taken in the notion of a standing army, that they have already bespoke cloth at the shop-keepers for regimentals.” Hearsay or not, the propensity certainly existed. All it took was ratification or the standing army issue being pushed to the back burner.<sup>60</sup>

Financial assessments made by some Antifederalists issued vituperative assessments of the financial situation. In New York, A Son of Liberty feared that the common man would be “constantly subjected to the insults of *military* collectors, who will, by the magnetism of that most powerful of all attractives, the *bayonet*, extract from their pockets (without their consent) the exorbitant taxes imposed on them.” This Antifederalist might be overly descriptive, but it was for a reason—the reality of the situation would be worse than the description. Therefore, it would only be best to apply extra caution when considering solutions to the standing army issue.

---

<sup>59</sup> *United States Chronicle*, 17 April 1788; Thomas Rodney, Poplar Grove, 15 April 1788, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. XVII, 100-101; Quoted passage by Elbridge Gerry, in Rutland, *The Ordeal of the Constitution*, 7; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 28 December 1794, in Boyd, et al., eds., *TPTJ*, vol. 28, 228.

<sup>60</sup> *Winchester Virginia Gazette*, 7 March 1788, vol. VIII, 471; Albany Anti-Federal Committee Circular, 10 April 1788, vol. XXI, 1382-1383; A Countryman III [DeWitt Clinton], *New York Journal*, 20 December 1787, vol. XIX, 450, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*.

If precautionary measures were passed over, A Ploughman of Virginia predicted he and his fellow citizens would have “to support and pay our own tormentors, with a bayonet at our breast.”<sup>61</sup>

In the full version of the fourth essay of Cincinnatus, which was bisected for placement in the *Antifederalist Papers* and addressed to James Wilson, Esq., the expense angle is thoroughly examined. Cincinnatus calculated for “every thousand in these armies a million of dollars must be levied upon the public, and such armies—raised and supported, would at once maintain the dignity of the government, and ensure the submission of the people. We shall be as dignified as the Turks, and equally free.” The future, in the long term, mattered to Antifederalists, not just the exigencies of the national government’s solvency or credibility on the international level. As connoisseurs of history, global affairs actually informed Antifederalist thought just as much Federalist thought. Only, Antifederalists were more cautious of repeating the mistakes, directly or indirectly, of other cultures. This meant that true confederation and the use of citizen soldiers remained the best method of liberty. Americans own history taught them as much. “The safety of the country, we have already experienced to depend, upon the militia,” recalled Cincinnatus. “Switzerland has often experienced the same.”<sup>62</sup>

Antifederalists told of every danger presented by standing armies. The Federal Farmer made some of the most refined arguments. If the Constitution were to be ratified, then at least the “military ought to be subordinate to the civil authority, and no soldier be quartered on the citizens without their consent.” The quartering issue, a legitimate concern of the practical kind, would be properly discussed and solved in the convention setting by a diverse group of

---

<sup>61</sup> A Son of Liberty, *New York Journal*, 8 November 1787, vol. XIX, 135-136; A Ploughman, *Winchester Virginia Gazette*, 19 March 1788, vol. VIII, 508 in *Ibid*.

<sup>62</sup> Cincinnatus IV, “To James Wilson, Esquire,” *New York Journal*, 22 November 1787, in *Ibid*, vol. XIX, 282.

Antifederalists. Regional and class composition, as is shown in the material Antifederalists left for future generations to not only read, but learn from, did not make their cause internally combust. They did not take their frustrations out on each other in the public forum, nor did enough time elapse for intraparty conflict to initiate, let alone take hold. The new just beat the old. Their singular focus was mitigating the detrimental effects of Federalism, which most dangerously began at the acceptance of standing armies. The crafty Hugh Hughes brings it all together—opposition to ratification, competing ideologies, and argumentative methodology—the best, having artfully written “*And, to crown the whole, there must, of course, be a most supreme standing army for us to feed, clothe and pay, if you will pardon the redundancy of the phrase.*”<sup>63</sup>

Similar to the work of Hugh Hughes, a number of satirical pieces humorously encapsulate public opinion on the subject of standing armies, as well as ratification itself. New York was particularly active in this regard, but the citizens of states as diverse as Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Massachusetts were also heavily involved. Alexander Hamilton, as Publius, the greatest Federalist, received some attention via this medium. Chiding the “*well-born,*” including Hamilton, on military issues, One of the Nobility relayed the “*Political Creed of every Federalist.*” Apparently, Federalists believed “*that the people of America are cowards and unable to defend themselves, and that, consequently, standing armies are absolutely necessary.*” Hamiltonian Federalists would not have denied this, even in the face of sweeping condemnation. In fact, Publius’s “*attempts to prove the expediency of supporting a *standing army* in time of peace have been so futile, that even the friends of the new plan are offended with them.*” Hamilton’s influential circle, then, was openly attempting to divert attention from the standing army issue, preventing it from gaining traction during the ratification debates. The Farmer from

---

<sup>63</sup> The Federal Farmer: An Additional Number of Letters to the Republican, 2 May 1788, vol. XVII, 275; A Countryman IV[ Hugh Hughes], *New York Journal*, 15 December 1787, vol. XIX, 427, in *Ibid*.

Maryland sarcastically articulated this point. “I was persuaded,” he recalled, “that the grave would have closed on my bones, before this question would be publicly proposed in America.” Through the restriction of legitimate aspects of debate, the Hamiltonians managed to keep their own interests fully represented—unrestricted.<sup>64</sup>

Suilpub, who fashioned himself the alter ego of Publius, likewise held the same points of view. “Insolent plebian dogs—dare they say the New Constitution is not good, when their betters say it is?,” he wondered. Of course, Suilpub did not believe the words he wrote. This satirist was merely poking fun at the Hamiltonian Federalist mentality. The fact that Suilpub identified Federalists as enemies to the plebian interest, rather than upper class Antifederalist, hurts the dissension thesis researched by Saul Cornell and assumed by others. Differences of opinion existed in both ideologies, over major and minor items. Sources are readily found to this end. Finding Antifederalists, or even Federalists for that matter, who were willing to undercut their respective causes by publicly voicing displeasure over internal matters proves much more challenging. Suilpub had an opportunity to let readers in on his feelings. Yet he and most of his ilk targeted Federalists, not the Antifederalist elite, and mainly because all Antifederalists opposed standing armies. Suilpub’s irony confirms this idea, for, as far as he knew “—we must have an army too—it will be easy to get money then: for if the people won’t pay, it is only sending the army to collect it.”<sup>65</sup>

In a more pointed appraisal, Pennsylvanians summarized “The Federalist’s Political Creed.” These Antifederalists make clear that Federalists are to blame for moving away from American ideals. It was their first point: “1. They maintain that the revolution and the declaration

---

<sup>64</sup> One of the Nobility, *New York Journal*, 12 December 1787, vol. XIX, 405; *Philadelphia Freeman’s Journal*, 2 January 1788, vol. XX, 565, in *Ibid*; A Farmer II, *Maryland Gazette*, 29 February 1788, in Bruce Frohnen, ed., *The Anti-Federalists: Selected Speeches and Other Writings* (Washington D. C.: Regnery Gateway, 1999), 576.

<sup>65</sup> Suilpub, *Albany Gazette*, 21 February 1788, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. XX, 794.

of independence, however important at those periods, are now to be considered as mere farces and that nothing that was done then ought to be any bar in the way of establishing the proposed system of arbitrary power.” Thus, the pace of the movement for ratification offended Antifederalists as much as what it stood for, because it was obvious to them that the Federalists were trying to spring a program antithetical to the principles of the Revolution, on Americans. The Federalists first ideological stance, according to these Antifederalists, dealt with the standing army issue. It was said that: “3. A large standing army should be kept up in time of peace, under the specious pretence of guarding against *foreign* invasions and our frontiers against the savages; but in reality to overawe and enslave the people, who, if provoked at the violation of their rights, should at any time dare to murmur or complain, the military should be employed to *bayonet* them for their arrogance and presumption.” By making Federalists out to be the challengers, even the bad guys, Antifederalists forged an identity of their own—timely allies, because no human interest or institution can be absolutely monolithic.<sup>66</sup>

Antifederalists in South Carolina took to rhyme and verse. They identified the militia as the proper defense of and liberty:

A standing army!—curse the plan so base;  
A despot’s safety—Liberty’s disgrace.—  
Who sav’d these realms from Britain’s bloody hand,  
Who, but the generous rustics of the land;  
That free-born race, inur’d to every toil,  
Who tame the ocean and subdue the soil,  
Who tyrants banish’d from this injur’d shore  
Domestic traitors may expel once more.

Such an appeal highlights how important the issue, in its entirety, was to those who opposed ratification. The same zeal barely exists for, say, the topics of territorial expansion or the power of impeachment (also, the right of recall) under the new government. Albany Antifederalists

---

<sup>66</sup> “The Federalist’s Political Creed,” *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, 10 May 1788, in *Ibid*, vol. XVIII, 5.

erupted in their own song and dance. They covered many relevant issues, cynically: “Talk of *Holland & Greece*, and of *purses & swords*, Democratical mobs and congressional Lords: Tell what is surrendered and what is enjoy’d, All things weigh alike, boys, we know, in a void.” The creativity on the part of these grassroots Antifederalists shows a level of awareness, not to mention sophistication, previously ignored or undiscovered by significant scholars in the early national field.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, Cornelius, presumably of Massachusetts, offered a scathing review of potential presidential politics. He wrote, with the standing army issue in full view:

*The executive power is to be vested in a President of the United States, who is to hold his office during term of four years and who is to be commander in chief of the army and navy, and of the militia of the several States, when called into the actual service of the United States. He is to receive for his services, at stated times, a compensation which shall not be increased nor diminished during term for which he is elected. This compensation must, and ought, to be suited to the dignified station in which that officer is placed, which cannot be considered as far below that of an European monarch.*

The role of the executive branch gave the Antifederalists nightmares. With a standing army at the president’s side, the potential existed for an individual in the good graces of the military to carry out despotic measures. The standing army would be the vessel in which those measures were to be enforced. Moreover, the executive branch, along with appointees, could nullify the legislature, whichever form it was to take with ratification. Regardless of the form of abuse, it was the Antifederalists’ concern that Americans would be no better off than they were under British rule.<sup>68</sup>

A Georgian, appropriately named A Georgian, stressed the importance of critically examining the form—the ins and out, the causes and effects—of the proposed Constitution. “Show that you have yet that noble spirit,” he beseeched readers, “and provide remedies against

---

<sup>67</sup> *States Gazette of South Carolina*, 28 January, vol. XV, 486; “The News-Mongers’ Song for the Winter of 1788,” *Albany Gazette*, 15 November 1787, vol. XIX, 250, in *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Cornelius, *Hampshire Chronicle*, 18 December 1787, in Storing and Dry, eds., *CA*, vol. 4, 143.

[...] the fatal effects of a standing army in time of peace.” This writer did not go out of his way to align himself with either ideology in play, but that care was cast aside when it came to the logic of preserving liberty. Keeping a standing army just did not make sense if freedom was the goal. The warnings were numerous and frequent. Luther Martin, Maryland’s version of Patrick Henry, led one of the last public stands on the issue. “My Countrymen! Never forget this truth,” he pled. “Engrave it on the tender minds of your children, as the first article of their political creed: *That there is no government safe with a standing army, and there is none that is not safe without.* With warnings of this sort made public, it is a wonder that the standing army issue has been forgotten.<sup>69</sup>

Merrill Jensen, editor of the epic *Documentary History of the Constitution*, notes that Antifederalists “declared that Congress’ vast powers, especially the power of direct taxation and the power to create a standing army, would be inimical to the rights, liberties, and property of the people.” The public material he and his team have provided confirms this claim. No mention was made of class or sectional interest influencing Antifederalist opposition to standing armies, nor do the sources displayed suggest any such partition. The idea of introducing a new government along with a standing army actually seems to have helped Antifederalists articulate, if not develop, a party line.<sup>70</sup>

Objections to the idea of maintaining a standing army are also found in the realm of private correspondence. These letters come from far and wide, the same quality exemplified in public Antifederalist material. Equally as covered in private sources are the range of themes and unparalleled fervor with which Antifederalists approached the subject. Even avoiding ideological affiliation did not alter the hesitancy that some individuals expressed when privately considering

---

<sup>69</sup> A Georgian, *Gazette of the State of Georgia*, 15 Nov 1787, vol. III, 243; Luther Martin, Excerpts of Pamphlet Edition of *Genuine Information*, 12 April 1788, in *Ibid*, vol. XVII, 89.

<sup>70</sup> Editors’ Note, in *Ibid*, vol. II, 130.

the standing army issue. No less than theologian Ezra Stiles, a crucial figure in the foundation of Brown University and the development of Yale College (now Yale University), admitted “I know not whether it is possible to vest Congress with laws, revenues, and army and navy without endangering the ruin of the interior powers and liberties of the states.” Stiles’s deep respect for George Washington failed to cloud his judgment on the issue, an attribute usually reserved for Antifederalists. And many of them were not of the same stock as Stiles, or Washington.<sup>71</sup>

Federalists grew weary of opposition to standing armies. Cutting remarks were certainly made against cautious Antifederalists in the public sphere, but they were also made in private. “Nantucket from their foolish religious whims will not send to the establishment of a Government which has a right to raise armies, either in Peace or War,” said Nathaniel Gorham from Boston. Federalist frustration was well-founded. They were in pursuit of a new and central government, yet an issue as fundamental as the defense of that new and central government threatened their goals. More importantly, this indicates that there were fundamental differences in how early national Americans understood their Revolution, both historically and with an eye to the future. Roughly half wanted a stronger, cosmopolitan government, a risky business that is only amplified by the torrid pace of the push for ratification; the other half wanted more time to secure fewer intrusions, a vague proposition.<sup>72</sup> The ethics and realities of warfare was a good place to start for both sides, it was the foundation. Their conflicting opinions work to introduce a dose of reality to those who have bastardized the meaning of the term Founding Fathers. Appeals to founding unanimity, and even omniscience, do not explain the serious problems, perhaps

---

<sup>71</sup> The Ezra Stiles Diary, New Haven, 24 December 1787, in *Ibid*, vol. III, 502.

<sup>72</sup> Nathaniel Gorham to Henry Knox, 6 January 1788, vol. V, 629; Henry Van Schaack to Theodore Sedgwick, 9 February 1788, vol. VII, 1689, in *Ibid*. In the latter letter, Van Schaack reacts positively to ratification, stating “I shall now rejoice that I am an American born—The adoption of this Constitution will give us luster and dignity throughout the world.”

failures, which have surfaced both after and because of ratification. To be sure, the system is not to blame, no tangible system ever is; constitutional consolidation is far from an inherently evil concept. It is the people within a given system that cause problems, so the ability to do such must be addressed from the start. This is why approximately half of early national Americans, though sincerely wishing “for a Revisal of the Confederacy,” could not bring themselves to “consent to give the President power to Call the Militia of any State in the field to any part of the United States” for either indefinite or infinite amounts of time.<sup>73</sup>

James Monroe, closet Antifederalist and future Jeffersonian and President, had another method of dealing with the militia question. “Let them regulate the disciplining and training of the militia,” he wrote, with the hope that allowing such would circumvent the creation of a professional army, “that bane of all societies, the destroyer of the rights of men.” Monroe’s idea was certainly innovative. He was realistic enough to know that the centralized system, which was going to be ratified in some form, was also going to make defense a priority. That could have been taken care of a number of ways, but Monroe saw a potential bright spot for the militia in defending against foreign enemies and parasitic institutions, such as a standing army. Supplying a crucial Antifederalist report to Thomas Jefferson, George Mason listed the “things very objectionable in the proposed new Constitution; particularly the almost unlimited Authority over the Militia of the several States; whereby, under Colour of regulating, they may disarm, or render useless the Militia.” This was, of course, a stance that did not coincide with the one Monroe had developed. Yet both were communicating with each other, were on the same side of the aisle, and were highly critical of standing armies and military governments. Mason’s objection, though, spoke directly to the potential for a hostile takeover by governmental overlords. This is one of the few instances in which Antifederalists, of the same class no less, expressed differing

---

<sup>73</sup> Elting & Varick to Peter Van Gaasbeek, 25 September 1787, in *Ibid*, vol. XIX, 53.

points of view on how to solve the standing army issue. Either way, Antifederalists knew the future of the militia was at stake, as the citizens of the new mode of government would be “more easily to govern by a standing Army.”<sup>74</sup>

Some southern, middle class Antifederalists thought: “Soldiers who [---] [---] [---] der the defenseless in hopes of obtaining plunder, and being applauded by their aspiring Leader, who is aiming at power, no matter how it be obtained—O! tempora, O mores shall we who a few years ago so unanimously engaged in warding off British usurpation, now tamely submit to the home bread Monster of a form equally detestable?” Antifederalists, as well as people who questioned the necessity of a standing army had to vividly express their beliefs because the standing army was one of the only political issues that physically endangered citizens, threatening life and limb. Both mortality and morality were at stake, and an early national identity crisis thus ensued. Richard Henry Lee and George Mason, upper class Antifederalists if there ever were any, agreed with their middle class counterparts. Lee predicted that “The greatness of the powers given & the multitude of Places to be created, produces a coalition of Monarchy men, Military men, Aristocrats, and Drones whose noise, impudence & zeal exceeds all belief.” Elbridge Gerry, tempering his thoughts in correspondence with John Adams, nonetheless wrote “a check on standing armies in time of peace [...] would have met with my approbation.” The records left by Antifederalists show that Gerry was not alone in his disapprobation, as standing armies were known to halt all progress.<sup>75</sup>

Private correspondence also contained economic concerns. An unnecessary standing worked to drain productive members of society—the marketplace—of their earnings. A

---

<sup>74</sup> James Monroe, *Some Observations on the Constitution*, 25 May 1788, vol. IX, 859; George Mason to Thomas Jefferson, 26 May 1788, vol. XVIII, 79, in *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Wilson to Archibald Stuart, 4 November 1787, vol. VIII, 145; Richard Henry Lee to George Mason, 1 October 1787, vol. VIII, 28; Elbridge Gerry to John Adams, 20 September 1787, vol. IV, 16, in *Ibid.*

Connecticut skeptic was particularly incensed. Since “the new constitution gives all the power both of the sword and purse into the hands of the Congress,” he figured, “our people reckon it leads to and opens a door for despotism, tyranny, anarchy and confusion, and every evil work.” In theory, the army could very well act on behalf of, or worse, independently of Congress to procure funding, presumably for its own needless propagation. Massachusetts men conversed about this very ruse. One of them speculated that “a Continental collector at the head of a standing army will not be so likely to do us justice in collecting the taxes.” Thankfully, this prediction has yet to come to fruition on a wide scale. DeWitt Clinton, from the New York Convention, also reported that a man named “Judge Smith [...] observed that he had no objections to giving the Congress the sword, but he was for restricting their power over the purse—because the Honble Gentlman. very well knew that some people who had no great inclination to handle the sword, were notwithstanding very fond of thrusting their hands into the purse.” Ultimately, control of the purse determined control of the sword because federal projects have a way of finding the proper funding, especially as time marches on. Clinton’s message implies that checks and balances should apply to political issues as much as to branches of government, which is what debate centered on at the Philadelphia Convention of 1787—the *what* more than the *why*.<sup>76</sup>

Other Antifederalists posed more realistic questions. For instance, one man corrected his friend’s misplaced support for increased naval armament: “you say a few frigates wd. answer the purpose of coercion better than a standing army—Should N. Carolina be punished for the delinquence of Virginia?—The non-importing states, by this system, wd. be involved in the fate of the importing states, if the latter deserve, or are supposed to deserve, chastisement.” What

---

<sup>76</sup> Hugh Ledlie to John Lamb, Hartford, 15 January, 1788, vol. III, 578; Nathaniel Barrell to George Thatcher, Boston, 15 January 1788, vol. V, 719; DeWitt Clinton to Charles Tillinghast, 2 July 1788, vol. XXII, 2082, in *Ibid.*

stands out from this letter is the fact that its writer grasps the differences between regional economies, yet is asking a bigger question. He sought to preserve each state's competitive advantage, the basis of a republican economy, by avoiding meddlesome or unfair intervention. And, at this point in time, militaries were the most obvious and ominous vessels of intrusion. This correspondent could have called for an energetic government, complete with a standing army, to improve his economic outlook. Instead, he realized the synergistic effect of regional freedom was worth more than the sum of consolidation.<sup>77</sup>

More in the way of private material exists, but provocative correspondence demonstrates how far the push for ratification seeped into the lives of early national Americans. Both Federalists and Antifederalists had to devote their time and energy to the public domain, yet still found room to divulge hopes, doubts, remedies, and regrets in private letters and diaries. The standing army issue formed a significant part of the private documents crafted by constitutional skeptics or full-fledged Antifederalists. This suggests that the Antifederalist concern over standing armies was more than just some sensational ploy concocted to capture the public's imagination. They would not have written at length, in private, if that were the case. Hence, Antifederalists asked: "why will they [the new government] have power to keep standing armies in times of peace?"<sup>78</sup>

Constitutional conventions, the official venues for settling the matter in each state, were responsible for codifying the zeitgeist. Thus, the opinions spoken by Antifederalists at the conventions reflected those of their constituencies—a novel concept. However, some items require clarification. Antifederalist uniformity, for instance, can only be highlighted where Antifederalists actually lived and breathed. Ironically, this was the case in the larger states. In

---

<sup>77</sup> William Nelson, Jr. to William Short, 12 July 1788, in *Ibid.*, vol. X, 1701.

<sup>78</sup> David Redick to William Irvine, Philadelphia, 24 September 1787, in *Ibid.*, vol II, 135.

particular, Virginia and New York Antifederalists understood the importance of each other's regional influence.<sup>79</sup> Very little exists in the way of Antifederalist objection from the conventions of smaller states like Delaware, New Jersey, and Georgia. Those states, respectively, favored ratification by votes of 30-0; 38-0; 26-0. Those states either lacked volume of debate, were Federalist strongholds, or soon-to-be beneficiaries of Federalist windfall through ratification. On the other hand, Rhode Island, the smallest in stature, was profoundly skeptical of the new plan. They were so devoted to the preservation of local politics that they held their convention two years after the Constitution was ratified—upon New Hampshire's ratification. Sadly, though Antifederalism was strong in New Hampshire, where a vote of 57-47 for ratification was achieved only after a second session convened, not many records of the state's convention remain. Otherwise, Antifederalists in the conventions were heard loud and clear.<sup>80</sup>

Pennsylvania was the first state to call a convention, elect delegates, and conduct their proceedings, all in the latter half of the year 1787. Their Antifederalist delegates were also some of the most strident, hammering Federalists on the standing army question. Robert Whitehill warned that the “government which possess all the powers of raising and maintaining armies, of regulating and mandating the militia, and of laying imposts and taxes of every kind must be supreme.” Federal supremacy is exactly what he and his Antifederalist colleagues tried to prevent. They treated consolidation indignantly, not understanding how there could be sufficient support for “a risk which we may easily avoid.” William Findley agreed with this assessment. “Under the present Confederation,” he pointed out, “Congress have not both the power of raising standing armies and the means of paying them.” Since the new system did lay claim to these

---

<sup>79</sup> Virginia Antifederalist Convention Delegates to John Lamb (New York), 9 June 1788, in *Ibid.*, vol. X, 1590; John F. Mercer of Maryland, *Antifederalist* No. 60, “Will the Constitution Promote the Interests of Favorite Classes?,” in Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers*, 176.

<sup>80</sup> General Ratification Chronology, 1786-1791, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. VII, xix-xxi.

abilities, a standing army was sure to follow. Thus, the warnings made by Antifederalists about standing armies were all but guaranteed.<sup>81</sup>

John Smilie was a particularly ardent Antifederalist. He was equally as perceptive. “The federal government does not immediately abolish the state governments but eventually it will produce it,” he stated, as in “the *Roman Republic* when the *senate* were but a *name*,” either being appointed to or inheriting the position. Just as problematic, the new system had “the power of raising armies.” When combined with control “over the militia of each state,” consolidation became very “formidable to liberty.” Additionally, the state governments would not be able to keep up with the general government’s “extensive powers in point of taxation” since they could “only tax the little that is left.” Smilie understood that ratification had the potential to render state and local governments useless, through the primary control of the purse and the sword. The states might, at best, hope for jurisdiction over minutia if the new system grew absolute.<sup>82</sup>

Smilie matched ideology with intellect, spurning the perceived stain of his plebian classification. He used his considerable talents to criticize the ability of the proposed government to maintain standing armies. Smilie and his constituents believed that “In a free government there will never be need of standing armies; for it depends on the confidence of the people.” These Pennsylvanians properly interpreted self-governance and the rules of indirect democracy. The delegate model of representation—power vested only in the will of the people—was not in effect if the government was growing on its own, responsible unto itself, and/or claiming ownership of the lives and bodies of supposedly free citizens. To Smilie, if the government “does not so depend” on the power of the people, “it is not free,” thus paving the way for a professional army to guard and enforce the actions of the independent government. This model representative

---

<sup>81</sup> Robert Whitehill, *The Pennsylvania Convention*, 28 November 1787, in *Ibid*, vol. II, 396; William Findley, *The Pennsylvania Convention, Convention Debates*, 6 December 1787, in *Ibid*, 510.

<sup>82</sup> John Smilie, *The Pennsylvania Convention*, 28 November 1787, in *Ibid*, 410-411.

also drew attention to the way the executive branch was constructed. “The Senate and the President may dismiss the Representatives, when once a standing army is established with funds.” An executive branch expanding in reality, due to the failure of precautionary barriers in the area of theory, was the quickest way to experience a shift in power, both in the nature and construction of the government. Many Antifederalists, including Smilie, realized that at that point, “this government will terminate.”<sup>83</sup>

After the Constitution was ratified by the requisite number of delegates, the Antifederalists of Pennsylvania released their “Dissent,” one of the most infamous tracts of anti-ratification sentiment. They predicted that consolidation would ruin the public spirit, and any attempt to fight the system in the face of wrongdoing would be met by its standing army, which “shall render opposition vain.” The dissenters assumed Federalists desired a standing army because “the Congress under this constitution will not possess the confidence of the people.” Making their case even clearer, the Antifederalists wrote that “The framers of this constitution appear to have been aware of this great deficiency,” having to craft laws that “must be executed by force.” The problem the dissenters were getting at was that of representation. If a standing army was needed, it would be due to attempts by the central government to enforce “the most arbitrary measures” against the will of the people, or the majority. This would indicate the operation of an independent government, rather than a government wholly dependent on the independent citizens—voters—of the states. The clearest sign of the movement toward that goal was that no serious measures were taken, by Federalists or just those who supported the overall goal of ratification, to prevent “a permanent STANDING ARMY.” The Pennsylvanian Antifederalists are generally seen to have been in favor of plebian ends, yet Antifederalists of every class and throughout the nascent nation agreed with them when it came to their collective

---

<sup>83</sup> John Smilie, The Pennsylvania Convention, Convention Debates, 6 December 1788, in *Ibid*, 508-509.

physical safety.<sup>84</sup>

“This outcry of weakness of the federal government is only a specious pretense to cover the artful schemes of designing men,” spoke Benjamin Gale of Connecticut. Gale took exception to Federalists whom he figured were looking to get-rich-quick. These bad Federalists “would recover their commutation securities and the notes purchased of the soldiers” upon ratification. The soldiers, then, would have lost out by having sold their notes for pennies on the proverbial dollar. And these were the soldiers who had produced something, having served admirably in the Revolutionary War. Gale wanted nothing to do with a standing army specifically because of the successful American performance during that ultimate struggle for freedom. “When you have taken the militia out of the hands of the governors, placed them under the President of the Congress, and converted them into a standing army,” Gale asserted that the country would be asking for trouble. He warned: “Power once given up out of your hands never was given back again nor never was recovered back without the *shedding of blood*.” Gale made some of the most astute observations of any Antifederalist in any convention setting. He believed that in “a mild government, gentlemen want no military force to support it, and an arbitrary and oppressive government doth not deserve it.”<sup>85</sup>

Also in the Connecticut convention, General James Wadsworth “objected against it [the proposed constitution], because it gave the power of the purse to the general legislature; [...] and that authority which has the power of the sword and purse is despotic.” Antifederalists agreed with this notion so heavily that Oliver Ellsworth, Federalist and perhaps Connecticut’s most influential political figure, constructed an elaborate speech in order to dispel the fears and rumors

---

<sup>84</sup> “The Dissent of the Minority of the Convention,” The Pennsylvania Convention, 18 December 1787 in *Ibid*, 629-638.

<sup>85</sup> Speech by Benjamin Gale, The Election of Convention Delegates, 12 November 1787, in *Ibid*, vol. III, 422-428.

surrounding the standing army issue. “If a war breaks out, and our situation invites our enemies to make war,” he asked, “how are we to defend ourselves?” Without the congressional power to raise a standing army or integrate state militias, how would the government, either the new or old form, “enlist a man or buy an ox?” Ellsworth snidely remarked “shall we rally the remainder of our old army?” His justification of a consolidated military was made in conjunction with the idea that “Union is absolutely necessary.” Connecticut Antifederalists disagreed with both of these proposals, and they were not the only ones.<sup>86</sup>

At a count 187-168, Massachusetts, the heart of New England, featured the highest amount of votes both for and against ratification. The highlights of the opposition deal with the standing army issue. The constitution, according to General Thompson, was “big with mischiefs,” a prime example being the congressional power to keep a standing army. “The great Mr. Pitt [William Pitt the Elder]” said, Thompson instructed, “standing armies are dangerous—keep your militia in order—we don’t want standing armies.” Pitt happened to be one of the few champions of colonial America in an imperial atmosphere that felt otherwise. After all, it was the British standing army that forcefully cornered the American colonies, stoking a rebellion.<sup>87</sup>

Major Kinsley of Massachusetts remembered that in “the old Confederation, the delegates were our servants; now they are our masters, and we have no control over any usurpation of theirs—they have all our money, a standing army, a Federal town.” He was absolutely correct. Nothing guaranteed that the people would remain represented instead of oppressed but their own informed and virtuous interjection. Antifederalists did not have faith when it came to entrenching a central government. They did have faith when the playing field

---

<sup>86</sup> Gen. James Wadsworth, *The Connecticut Convention, Convention Debate*, 7 January 1788, vol. III, 547; Speech by Oliver Ellsworth, 4 January 1788, in *Ibid*, 545.

<sup>87</sup> Gen. Thompson, *The Massachusetts Convention, Convention Debates*, 25 January 1788, in *Ibid*, vol. VI, 1316.

was level. Yet, a Mr. Dawes professed that state constitutions already reflected the language of the English Declaration of Rights when it came to the standing army issue. In these documents, “it was declared to be unconstitutional to raise and keep a standing army in time of peace, *without the consent of the legislature*. Thus, citizens “ought not to object to such a power in a Congress arising immediately from the people.” Absent from this lesson was the fact that, as Major Kinsley pointed out, the potential existed for the development of a federal buffer zone. The legislature could very well act according to its own agenda as a political class, or even be compelled in countless ways by another branch of government. Both of those roads have been traveled since ratification, as special interests and executive prerogative have led to legislative acquiescence.<sup>88</sup>

The Honorable Mr. King asked “whether any government can exist” without the power of the purse and the sword, an objection in the minds of Antifederalists and skeptics. Mr. White replied that “in giving this power we give up every thing; and Congress, with the pursestrings in their hands, will use the sword as a witness.” One of the rougher Antifederalists of Massachusetts gave a similar take. Mr. Nasson spoke for his kind: “We may, sir, be poor; we may not be able to pay these taxes, &c.—we must have a little meal, and a little meat, whereon to live; and save a little for a rainy day: But what follows? Let us see. To raise and support armies. Here, sir, comes the key to unlock the cabinet: Here is the mean by which you will be made to pay your taxes. But will ye, my countrymen, submit to this?” Mr. Nasson and his poor took issue with ratification and standing armies, Federalist imperatives. No resentment toward their Antifederalist superiors was noticeably expressed. Therefore, the Antifederalist pursuit of anarchy and disorder, the charge through which Federalists so frequently tried to justify their actions, held little weight.

---

<sup>88</sup> Maj. Kinsley, *The Massachusetts Convention, Convention Debates*, 21 January 1788, 1297; Mr. Dawes, *The Massachusetts Convention, Convention Debates*, 24 January 1788, 1337, in *Ibid.*

Antifederalists of the lower order had no problem with localized government; they were not seeking to abolish or rewrite state constitutions anymore than customary practices had already dictated.<sup>89</sup>

Standing armies faced scrutiny in southern conventions as well. A South Carolina delegate, the honorable James Lincoln, wondered about the future of republican government. “What security have we for a republican form of government,” stated a curious Lincoln, knowing that it relied “on the mere will and pleasure of a few men, who, with an army, navy, and rich treasury at their back,” could do anything they wished. He simply did not trust the Constitution’s claim, at the end of Article IV, to preserve republican ideals. Mr. Patrick Dollard held similar views, informing fellow convention delegates that his district was “highly alarmed at the large and rapid strides which this new government has taken towards despotism.” His district was not amused with the proposed government’s take on the armed forces. Dollard indicated “they will not accept of it [ratification] unless compelled by force of arms, which this new Constitution plainly threatens [...] like Turkish janizaries enforcing despotic laws,” without regard, at “the points of bayonets.” The standing army issue in the new system was cut and dry. It could either be provided for or not provided for. There was no way of sidestepping those options, assuming ratification occurred. Antifederalist citizens, if not all their representatives, certainly were not ever going to be *more* accepting of ratification if it meant harboring a standing army. “This is the sense and language, Mr. President, of the people,” Dollard cryptically confirmed.<sup>90</sup>

One of, if not the most memorable speech made against ratification came from Rawlins

---

<sup>89</sup> Hon. Mr. King, *The Massachusetts Convention, Convention Debates*, 21 January 1788, vol. VI, 1287; Mr. Nasson, *The Massachusetts Convention, Convention Debates*, 1 February 1788, in *Ibid.*, 1399.

<sup>90</sup> Hon. James Lincoln, *South Carolina Legislature*, 18 January 1788, 314; Mr. Patrick Dollard, *The South Carolina Convention*, 20 May 1788, 337-338, in Jonathan Elliot, ed., *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia, in 1787*, vol. IV, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1888 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968).

Lowndes, the former President (Governor) of South Carolina. Lowndes, an upper class southerner if there ever were any, nevertheless led a democratic shock to South Carolina's overly repressive system amidst the Revolutionary War. During the process, the title of the head of state changed from president to governor. Yet, to say the least, he was not in favor of ratification. Lowndes, in fact, "wished for no other epitaph, than to have inscribed on his tomb, 'Here lies the man that opposed the Constitution, because it was ruinous to the liberty of America.'"<sup>91</sup> He obviously intended to preserve the independence that his state and the other states actually won. His dramatic appeal happened to be inspired by the standing army issue.

Lowndes thought the notion of "falling a prey to foreigners as one of those arguments tending to precipitate us into measures inimical to our natural interest." Prosperity would not be achieved in a constant state of either warfare or the threat of it. The national interest could interfere with the natural interest that Lowndes spoke of. He chose instead to focus on internal issues such as "our running into debt without any intention to pay." According to Lowndes, "that was the rock on which we might split [...] and, therefore, all those arguments for establishing the necessity of a navy and standing army were nugatory, and entitled to very little attention." Holding such an opinion was certainly easy when desiring to remain atop society in South Carolina, but the common man would have just as much to lose under the inevitable rule of a standing army, an all too infamous equalizer. Plus, the diehard Federalist Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, another prominent South Carolinian, favored the entrenchment of a standing army. Both Lowndes and Pinckney supported the institution of slavery, but they completely differed when it came to standing armies. The Antifederalists, at least, must have felt that the issue was integral to the future of a free America, regardless of the sizeable ethical contradictions thus

---

<sup>91</sup> Hon. Rawlins Lowndes, South Carolina Legislature, 18 January 1788, in *Ibid*, 311.

entailed in the acceptance of slavery.<sup>92</sup>

Mr. Spencer of North Carolina worried about the potential standing army causing a civil war. According to Spencer, various “states may have some excuse for non-compliance” with federal mandates. If truly part of a republican system, righteous states should not have to face the same fate as states which “feign excuses.” If a standing army was used to “compel them” across the board, without taking extenuating circumstances into account, some states would “probably call for foreign aid: and the very means of defence will operate to the dissolution of the system.” A delegate named Mr. Caldwell envisioned the creation of a political class, backed by a standing army which they enabled in return. The national Congress, detached from their home constituencies and “having a standing army, and the command of the militia, may [...] make an act to continue the members for twenty years, or even for their natural lives.” Caldwell’s efforts demonstrate that, at the foundation, concern over term limits involved the standing army issue.<sup>93</sup>

A Mr. Miller, also a representative from North Carolina, was not as aghast at the prospect of ratification as some of his colleagues. However, he was left perplexed by the simultaneously vague and telling language used to treat the standing army issue in the proposed system. Apparently, Miller “could not see the necessity of vesting this power in the” executive branch. “By being the commander-in-chief of the army, navy, and militia,” the bipartisan Miller concluded that the president’s “influence would be too great in the country.” In Kentucky, a state by 1792, Samuel McDowell and company posted their thoughts on the Constitution. They plainly pointed out that tampering with the militia “may leave us in a defenseless State and subject us to the ravages of the Merciless Savages.” Territorial infringement aside, McDowell

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 309; Fields and Hardy, “The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History,” 393.

<sup>93</sup> Mr. Spencer, Convention of North Carolina, 26 July 1788, vol. IV, 76; Mr. Caldwell, Convention of North Carolina, vol. IV, 62-63, in Elliot, ed., *DSSC*.

knew the army issue was not inconsequential. This was also realized by the tardy Rhode Islanders, who ultimately decided to consider the Constitution, but not without voicing the truism “That standing armies are dangerous to liberty, and ought not to be kept up” unless entirely unavoidable. The diversity of the individuals who objected to the standing army issue in its entirety was impressive and undeniable.<sup>94</sup>

Samuel Chase, a judge and political figure from Maryland known for switching political affiliations later in life, nonetheless referenced a “Maxim—Money finds Men (Troops) and Troops will find money.” Chase also did not like the mechanism which was supposedly put into place to prevent reliance on, and potential abuses by, the professional army: levying “money for their support for two years.” His basic philosophy sanctified the multifaceted role and utilization of militias, independent ones in America’s case. The nationalization of the militia, therefore, would irrevocably harm the states’ rights ideal valued by Chase—those of a proper republic, according to the Antifederalist understanding of them. Military issues were communicated in every state and state convention that Antifederalists were a part of. Otherwise, Federalists remained in silence.<sup>95</sup>

The entire plan was almost entirely dependent on the outcome of the conventions of Virginia and New York. Without these two states assenting to ratification, Federalist credibility would plummet in the area of public perception—the result of a financial interest deemed too narrow. Likewise, the Virginia and New York conventions respectively produced the third and first narrowest margins of victory (89-79; 30-27) of the entire countrywide process.

---

<sup>94</sup> Mr. Miller, Convention of North Carolina, 28 July 1788, in Elliot, ed., *DSSC*, vol. IV, 114; Samuel McDowell, et al., to the Court of Fayette County, Kentucky, 28 February 1788, vol. XVI, 262; Rhode Island Form of Ratification and Amendments, Rhode Island Convention, 29 May 1790, vol. XXVI, 999, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*.

<sup>95</sup> Samuel Chase, “The Tendency of the Constitution to Annihilate State Governments,” Notes of Speeches Delivered to the Maryland Ratifying Convention, April 1788, in Storing and Dry, eds., *CA*, vol. 5, 84-85.

Massachusetts placed second in this regard. The standing army issue was consistently piled on by many Antifederalists, some unknown, some well-known.<sup>96</sup>

Patrick Henry was without a doubt the most vocal opponent of standing armies in the Virginia Convention. In one of his speeches regarding the power of the purse, Patrick Henry “professed great repugnance at parting with the purse, without any control to the proposed system of Government.” And when it came to the sword, Henry was “persuaded [...] we ought to be still more cautious and circumspect” than with the purse. Many Virginians, regardless of their stance on ratification, agreed with Henry. Even Virginian George Nicholas, a Federalist and supporter of standing armies, saw it necessary to confirm “that many of the people have declared against a Government [...] which established a standing army.” A delegate named John Dawson chose to highlight the ethical miasma instilled by most professional armies. An army was to be avoided because it would be composed of those “whose only occupation would be idleness, whose only effort the introduction of vice and dissipation, and who would, at some future day deprive us of our liberties.” Dawson made an important point by invoking the future implications of a standing army. The force could serve an initial purpose in securing America’s fragile borders and, as the Federalists pointed to, fostering international respect. Over time, however, that very force could turn on its own people. Antifederalists and those against professional armies in general not only feared this, they expected it.<sup>97</sup>

On the fifth of June, 1788, Patrick Henry transmitted one of the most comprehensive negative assessments of standing armies given at the combined constitutional conventions.

Denigrating the design of the new plan, he likewise hit the standing army issue hard. “A standing

---

<sup>96</sup> General Ratification Chronology, 1786-1791, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. VII, xix-xxi. New York’s elected delegates identified as Antifederalist by a count of 46-19.

<sup>97</sup> Patrick Henry, *The Virginia Convention, Convention Debates*, 14 June 1788, vol. X, 1274-1275; George Nicholas, *The Virginia Convention, Convention Debates*, 6 June 1788, vol. IX, 1003; John Dawson, *The Virginia Convention, Convention Debates*, 24 June 1788, vol. X, 1494, in *Ibid*.

army we shall have,” uttered a disgusted Henry, “to execute the execrable commands of tyranny; and how are you to punish them?” Henry remarkably, considering his oratorical verve, highlighted a realistic danger. He asked, rhetorically, who would “order them to be punished? Who shall obey these orders? Will your mace-bearer be a match for a disciplined regiment?” Henry’s concern was credible, especially since the Constitution planned to interfere with the militias.<sup>98</sup>

“Your militia is given up to Congress, also, in another part of this plan,” Henry preached. He, along with Antifederalists and Revolutionary leaders, were shocked over what they saw as the phasing out the militia, regardless of clever constitutional wording. Indeed, as Saul Cornell argues, “The militia statutes each colony enacted tell only part of the story of how this vital institution was enmeshed in the everyday lives of most colonists.” The militia put the defense of the community and personal property in the hand of local individuals, those who best understood the intricacies of daily life in a given area. Henry thought nationalization of militias would render the entire ideal impotent, since the central government “may or may not furnish them” with the necessary supplies. A standing army, composed of soldiers blissfully ignorant of local objectives, would then have the responsibility of defense, replacing militias. Antifederalists knew that this transition could signal the defense of only the central government from external attacks, or worse, to forcefully keep the states themselves in line. This latter possibility was eerily reminiscent of the issue between the Crown and its American colonies.<sup>99</sup>

Questioning the overall intent of the new government, Henry mocked the idea that “we must be a great and mighty empire; we must have an army, and a navy, and a number of things.” The Revolution, after all, ignited as a result of colonial resentment over imperial practices—

---

<sup>98</sup> Patrick Henry, The Virginia Convention, Convention Debates, 5 June 1788, in *Ibid.*, vol. IX, 957-958.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 958-959; Saul Cornell, *A Well Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origin of Gun Control in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

abuses. Following in the Crown's footsteps seemed counterintuitive to Antifederalists, whether of Virginia or New York, the Carolinas or Massachusetts. Henry, for one, would not stand for it, especially not without voicing his displeasure. All this talk of the ratification of a centralized system was anathema. "When the American spirit was in its youth, the language of America was different," recalled Henry. "Liberty, sir, was then the primary object."<sup>100</sup>

More of the same came from New York Antifederalists, who held the convention majority. The army, according to Melancton Smith, was a dangerous institution because "All men have their Vices." If vice infiltrates government, corruption ensues. When corruption ensues within a political class, "the Liberties of the People are [...] destroyed—the Poor cannot gain, the Rich will." On the power of the purse and sword, John Williams uncovered the "mere construction that in some Instances the States have concurrent jurisdiction as to Taxes." The first department to benefit from such an arrangement would be that concerning national defense. Williams foresaw a bleak, yet completely possible scenario in which "command of the revenues of a state, gives the command of everything in it. He that hath the purse, will have the sword; and they that have both, have every thing: So that Congress will have every source from which money can be drawn." These are merely the opinions that stand out, as not everyone who was against the idea of keeping a standing army could use the conventions to rail against them. Furthermore, New York chose to focus a significant amount of its attention on the advancement of recommended amendments to the Constitution.<sup>101</sup>

John Lansing, one of New York's top Antifederalist delegates, offered a sprawling message on military issues in his proposed Declaration of Rights that eventually became part of

---

<sup>100</sup> Patrick Henry, The Virginia Convention, Convention Debates, 5 June 1788, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. IX, 959.

<sup>101</sup> Melancton Smith, The New York Convention, Convention Debates, 21 June 1788, 1781; John Williams, The New York Convention, Convention Debates, 27 June 1788, 1938, John Williams, The New York Convention, Convention Debates, 26 June 1788, 1919, in *Ibid*, vol. XXII.

the recommendations given by the New York Convention:

That the Militia should always be kept well organized armed & disciplined & include according to past usages of the States all the Men capable of bearing Arms and that no Regulations tending to render the general Militia useless & defenceless by establishing select Corps of Militia or distinct Bodies of Military Men not having permanent Interests & Attachments to the Community ought to be made & that the Militia ought not to be subject to Martial Law except in Time of War Invasion or Rebellion & that in All Cases the Military should be under strict Subordination to & governed by the civil power.

This no-nonsense motion, which was mostly absorbed into the convention's final copy of attached conditions, sums up the nationwide Antifederalist stance on the issue and is indicative of the conditional terms crafted by the conventions of other states. Lansing finished by adding "That no soldier in Time of Peace ought to be quartered in any House without the Consent of the owner & in Time of War only by the civil Magistrate in such Manner as the Laws may direct."<sup>102</sup>

Upon the conclusion of their proceedings and inspired by the Pennsylvania Dissenters, most states, like New York, forwarded amendments on military matters in similar fashion. Maryland suggested that "no standing Army shall be kept up in Time of Peace, unless with the Consent of Three Fourths of the Members of each Branch of Congress: Nor shall Soldiers, in Time of Peace, be quartered upon private Houses, without the Consent of the Owners." The Virginia Convention echoed each of these conditions. To this, they added "that no soldier shall be enlisted for any longer term than four years, except in time of war, and then for no longer term than the continuance of the war." The militia question was also thought to be taken care of in the amendments offered by the state conventions. Each suggested that their respective state legislatures should remain in control of the government, and in addition, "shall not be subject to martial law." North Carolina convention delegates cosigned these ideas. In their 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment, they bluntly included "that the people have a right to keep and bear arms [and] a

---

<sup>102</sup> John Lansing, The New York Convention, Convention Debates and Proceedings, 7 July 1788, in Ibid, vol. XXII, 2112.

well regulated militia composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defence of a free state.”<sup>103</sup>

The reality of the interjection of these terms led James Madison and the moderates of both ideologies to accept the idea of conditional ratification. The Federalists knew time was of the essence and the Antifederalists, in a perfect world, wanted more of it, but a majority of delegates settled for the incorporation of state-level recommendations in a federal Bill of Rights. As the ideologues of the debates in New York, Hamiltonian Federalists and Clintonian Antifederalists were not thrilled with this idea, but even they mostly agreed to “no appropriation of money” and “consent of 2/3ds” of the legislature limitations on standing armies. Amendments effectively satiated a number of delegates and filled a number of holes in the original proposition, though, as predicted by some Antifederalists, the provisions were not firm enough to keep an energetic standing army from appearing at a future time.<sup>104</sup>

Never totaling more than seven hundred men under the Articles of Confederation, the national army experienced a fivefold increase in the following decade. And, looking back on American military history from today’s vantage point, this was just the tip of the iceberg.<sup>105</sup> It is *how* and *why* such growth occurred, rather than the fact that it did occur, that is the most important aspect of the sector in question. *What* happened is only that which was allowed to happen, just as a seed will germinate under the proper conditions. Ratification is what allowed

---

<sup>103</sup> Amendments of the Minority of the Maryland Convention, 29 April 1788, vol. XVII, 241; The Virginia Convention Amendments, 27 June 1788, vol. XVIII, 203-204; The North Carolina Convention Amendments, 2 August 1788, vol. XVIII, 316-317, in *Ibid.* New Hampshire’s 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment also called for no standing army unless approved “three fourths of the Members of each branch of Congress,” and no quartering of soldiers. This can be viewed in: Ratification of the Constitution by the States of New Hampshire, 21 June 1788, in U.S. Bureau of Rolls and Library, *The Documentary History of the Constitution of the United States of America, 1786-1870*, vol. II (Washington D. C.: U. S. Department of State, 1894), 141-144.

<sup>104</sup> The New York Convention, Convention Debates and Proceedings, 21 July 1788, in *Ibid.*, vol. XXIII, 2259. Footnotes 52, 94 107 and their corresponding textual passages show that, on the standing army issue, some Antifederalists considered legal compromises useless.

<sup>105</sup> Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3-5.

the armed forces to bloat; the proper measures were simply not put into place to hinder its future development.

Saul Cornell, arguing against Antifederalist uniformity, still states that Antifederalists stayed “fairly consistent for the duration” of the ratification debates as far as their overall theoretical objections were concerned. The key to Cornell’s contention is that there existed “a greater range of responses over *what to do* about the defects of the Constitution.”<sup>106</sup> Here is where the standing army issue departs from the theses, both perfunctory and comprehensive, which pigeonhole Antifederalism. Not much could have been done to avert this particular question; there was little room for haggling or interpretation. Either the keeping of regular troops could have been explicitly prohibited aside from life-or-death instances, or vague policy in the applicable areas would herald their inevitability. The latter avenue was taken.

To that end, a perceptive Antifederalist wrote, “there is no bar against a standing army in time of peace. For tho’ no appropriation of money to this use may be for a longer term than two years, yet this is long enough, when ye. [the] same appropriation may by continued for two years to ye. end of time.” Luther Martin had a similar take on constitutional ambiguity. Martin insisted that “*this plan of government, instead of guarding against a standing army, that engine of arbitrary power, which has so often and so successfully been used for the subversion of freedom, has, in its formation, given it an express and constitutional sanction, and hath provided for its introduction.*” No amateur in matters of law, Martin emphasized the significance of the concept of intent. It would be one thing if the framers of the proposed system simply overlooked the standing army issue, it would be another if the issue was deliberately manipulated by one side, the invested side, to produce a favorable outcome. Ideally, since the future of the country was said to be at stake, the debates should have colored in all of the Constitution’s gray areas, but the

---

<sup>106</sup> Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 31.

standing army issue was one area lost in the shuffle. The issue faded from the limelight upon the acceptance of an adequate Bill of Rights, which was to be paired with the constitutional provisions dismissed by Antifederalists of Martin's mindset. Antifederalism followed suit, finding itself pushed to the margins of political theory and history. As one went, so did the other.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> William Symmes Jr. to Peter Osgood Jr., 15 November 1787, vol. XIV, 112; Luther Martin, "Genuine Information VII," 18 January 1788, vol. XV, 410, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*. Regarding the absence of the standing army issue in the proposed government, George Mason lamented that "no Declaration of any kind for preserving Liberty of the Press, the Tryal by jury in civil Causes; nor against the Danger of standing Armys in time of peace" was visible. These areas required the utmost transparency, yet a prohibition of peacetime armies is not found in the final copy of the Bill of Rights. The former two of the three combined concerns, all of which Antifederalists sought closure to, are settled by the document. Mason's notes can be found in *Ibid*, vol. VIII, 45.

## CHAPTER TWO: STANDING ARMIES IN *THE ANTIFEDERALIST PAPERS*

“Our great Lords and Masters are to lay taxes, raise and support armies, provide a navy, and may appropriate money for two years...Now, my countrymen, I would ask you, why are all these things directed and put into their power?”<sup>108</sup>

Straying from the principles that motivated the American colonies, now independent states, to part ways with the Crown, the leading proponents of Federalism supported the idea of keeping professional armies. These theorists did not necessarily weigh the issue of maintaining a standing army in terms of legality. In other words, practicality, as experts on the subject state, was not treated as “a question of individual rights.” However, as Alexander Hamilton used the *Federalist Papers* to argue that “the steady operations of war against a regular and disciplined army can only be successfully conducted by a force of the same kind,” Antifederalists, near and far and from top to bottom, thought otherwise. For when it came to “the liberty granted by the system to establish and maintain a standing army without any limitation or restriction,” there existed “a great degree of unanimity of sentiment in the opposers”—Antifederalists.<sup>109</sup>

Of the eighty-five documents astutely chosen by Morton Borden to serve as the *Antifederalist Papers*, a set representing the consolidated form of Antifederalist thought and counterpoint to the *Federalist Papers*, over one-third address the standing army issue in the contexts of necessity, expense, and danger and tyranny. This number increases to nearly one-half when including references to civil conflict based on military matters left unresolved or

---

<sup>108</sup> A Farmer and Planter, *Antifederalist* No. 26 (Part I), “The Use of Coercion by the New Government” in Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers*, 72.

<sup>109</sup> Fields and Hardy. “The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History,” 423; Publius [Alexander Hamilton], *Federalist* No. 25, “The Same Subject Continued: The Powers Necessary to the Common Defense Further Considered,” *New York Packet*, 21 December 1787, in Edward Mead Earle, ed., *The Federalist: A Commentary on the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Modern Library, 1941), 157; Plebian, *Antifederalist* No. 85, in Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers*, 251.

engendered by the Constitution in its originally proposed form. The significance of such frequency is that it includes papers with diverse focal points; the number is not limited to standing armies as stated subject matter.<sup>110</sup>

The criticism of standing armies found throughout the *Antifederalist Papers* is indicative of the inclusive standards evident in other public and private sources. Class, social status, and regional bias did not impede the Antifederalist rejection of the maintenance of peacetime forces, or the Constitution in general, because it is exactly timely integration which has always been the surest defense against insidious institutions. In Benjamin Austin's letters, under the pseudonym Candidus, it is firmly stated that "we have reason to venerate" certain supporters of ratification, "but though this country is now blessed with a Washington, Franklin, Hancock and Adams, yet posterity may have reason to rue the day when their political welfare depends on the decision of men who may fill the places of these worthies." And, "as power is thought necessary to raise an army, [...] to trust this power in the hands of a few men delegated for two, four and six years," amounted to insanity. Centinel, the alias for Pennsylvania's Samuel Bryan, son of financially and politically successful George Bryan, "lamented that the interested and designing have availed themselves so successfully of the present crisis, [...] prostituting the name of a Washington to cloak their designs upon your liberties." But, he asked, just how would freedom be bestowed "upon every class of citizens, as has been so industriously inculcated and so fondly believed by some? Would it have been by the addition of numerous and expensive establishments? By doubling our judiciaries, instituting federal courts in every county of every state? By a superb presidential court? By a large standing army?"<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> For a detailed enumeration, refer to the Appendix.

<sup>111</sup> Candidus [Benjamin Austin], *Antifederalist* No. 22, "Articles of Confederation Simply Requires Amendments, Particularly for Commercial Power and Judicial Power; Constitution Goes too Far," 55; Centinel [Samuel Bryan], *Antifederalist* No. 21, "Why the Articles Failed," 53, in Borden, ed. *The Antifederalist Papers*.

“Reason,” a Newport Man suggested, “is truly defined, in all cases short of mathematical demonstration, to be a supposing that the like causes will produce the like effects. Let us proceed by this rule.” An overbearing constitution was not required to keep the cantons which composed Switzerland free, peaceful, and prosperous—not to mention respected. Nor was any “controlling power” needed to help tiny San Marino, an enclave in coastal Italy, from losing “its freedom and independence these thirteen hundred years.” The lesson to be learned from these exceptional cases, especially since America has been fashioned one as well, is that these places, vulnerable and exposed “in the neighborhood of the warlike and intriguing Courts of Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, have kept their freedom and original form of government.” An ocean now separating the states from any other continent made it “reasonable to suppose that the same good sense and love of freedom [...] will secure us from all attempt within and without.” The author of this Antifederalist passage emphasized not only the value of avoiding warfare, using the virtues of peace to both discredit and defuse potential tensions, but also the physical characteristics that allowed for such thinking to flourish.<sup>112</sup>

An Old Whig, seemingly drained, understood war from every angle, as his “generation in America have seen enough of war, and its usual concomitants, to prevent all of us from wishing to see any more of it—all except those who make a trade of war.” If those who profited from war became entangled with the new government, or worse, were inside the new government, the experiment in liberty would be over and considered a colossal failure. The Federal Farmer warned that unlike in England, where citizens “were compactly settled on a small island, with a great city,” America was vast and mostly undeveloped. “It is impracticable for any but the few to assemble in one place,” he said, so those “few must be watched, checked, and often resisted.” To him, taking power from a king just meant that it would be passed down the line “to senators, to

---

<sup>112</sup> A Newport Man, *Antifederalist* 18-20, (Part II), “What Does History Teach?,” in *Ibid*, 48-49.

decemviri, to dictators, to tribunes, to popular leaders, to military chiefs, etc.” These groups always vied for power, given the opportunity. Another warning, by Amicus, read “power is a very intoxicating thing, and has made many a man do unwarrantable actions, which before he was invested with it, he had no thoughts of doing.” And in the final act, these men strive to secure—“by means of a standing army—a perpetual and absolute government.” True independence could not prevail in such a setting.<sup>113</sup>

“The European governments are almost all of them framed, and administered with a view to arms, and war, as that in which their chief glory consists. They mistake the end of government. It was designed to save men’s lives, not to destroy them,” reported Brutus. Thought to be either Thomas Tredwell or Robert Yates, both resident leaders in New York, Brutus wrote at length about the horrors of standing armies. He also, along with George Clinton, a fellow Antifederalist, Governor of New York, and eventual vice president to Thomas Jefferson, appeared to derive pleasure from crafting counterpoints to the arguments belonging to another citizen of New York, Alexander Hamilton. In response to Hamilton’s *Federalist* No. 23, through which he justified the implementation of an energetic federal government, Brutus offered more in the way of high-minded, utopian ethics than Antifederalists were hitherto ascribed by early national historiography. “We ought to furnish the world with an example of a great people, [...] let the monarchs in Europe share among them the glory of depopulating countries, and butchering thousands of their innocent citizens, to revenge private quarrels, or to punish an insult offered to a wife, a mistress, or a favorite.” Allowing a standing army to be instituted, especially under the authorization of an arbitrary and unlimited “general government,” meant following in

---

<sup>113</sup> An Old Whig, *Antifederalist* No. 46, “Where Then is the Restrain?,” 132; The Federal Farmer, *Antifederalist* No. 56 (Part II), “Will the House of Representatives be Genuinely Representative?,” 164; Amicus, *Antifederalist* No. 53, “A Plea for the Right of Recall,” 153, in *Ibid.*

the footsteps of imperial powers—some that were painfully familiar, and all known to fall from grace.<sup>114</sup>

The differences between classes of Antifederalists have been said to have prevented their collective prosperity. Yet, Antifederalists agreed with each other enough to profess, without obstruction, their belief that incessant warfare prevented prosperity. Aristocrotis, a Carlisle, Pennsylvania Antifederalist, pointed out the common ground shared by the various classes that embodied Antifederalism. “How great was my surprise,” he expressed, “to find some of the people under different signatures—such as Centinel, Old Whig, Brutus, etc.—daring to oppose” ratification. Aristocrotis facetiously “expected the superior character of the convention would have secured it from profane sallies of a plebeian's pen.” Every Antifederalist, of course, did not emerge from the plebian condition, but that does not mean that most Antifederalists, together, did not work feverishly for (or against) a particular cause, just as the confederation they likewise backed was to function. Otherwise, a gargantuan congress, detached from local realities and “supported by a well disciplined army and active militia,” would come to “command dread and respect abroad, obedience and submission at home.” If the Federalists had their way, they could “look down with awful dignity and tremendous majesty from the pinnacle of glory to which fortune has raised them upon [...] their subjects, whom they have reduced to that state of vassalage and servile submission.” Playing the role of an enthusiastic Federalist, Aristocrotis concluded that “America will then be great amongst the nations,” with an enclosed populace and “invincible armies.”<sup>115</sup>

Many *Antifederalist Papers* are characterized by their flamboyance. Constitutional

---

<sup>114</sup> Brutus, *Antifederalist* No. 23, “Certain Powers Necessary for the Common Defense, Can and Should Be Limited,” in *Ibid*, 59-60.

<sup>115</sup> Aristocrotis, *Antifederalist* No. 51 “Do Checks and Balances Really Secure the Rights of the People?,” in *Ibid*, 144-148.

scholar Jack Rakove states that the debates “took the form not of a Socratic dialogue or an academic symposium but of a cacophonous argument.”<sup>116</sup> Rakove remains surprisingly even-tempered in his appraisal, but it is important to understand that, for the most part, style does not invalidate substance in a free society. Dispensing with political exclusivity and arbitrary regulation is exactly what most Antifederalists had in mind when evaluating ratification, and their leading class was on board with preventing aristocratic extravagance from taking root in the new government.

Richard Henry Lee, perhaps the most paternalistic Antifederalist, absolutely dreaded the thought of a cultural seizure by “dangerous men,” mainly because of their “evident dislike to free and equal government.” Lee was unusually direct about this scenario. “The fact is,” he wrote, “these aristocrats support and hasten the adoption of the proposed constitution, merely because they think it is a stepping stone to their favorite object. I think I am well founded in this idea.”<sup>117</sup> This was as cutting of a condemnation as one can expect from an Antifederalist aristocrat, yet the means did not blur the ends. Albeit calmly and coolly, Lee expressed the same concerns about the people and programs involved in ratification as other, more creative Antifederalists did. If he indeed sensed irreconcilable differences within Antifederalism, especially ones based in economic standing, he could have elaborated on it in an effort to control the problem and redirect Antifederalist attention to the object at hand. Instead, his mind was focused on the dangers presented by the “factions of the few [...] formed into private juntas.” In comparison, disparate class tensions, including “the licentiousness of the multitude,” were, according to Lee, “but small

---

<sup>116</sup> Jack N. Rakove, *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution* (New York: Knopf, 1996), 132. Rakove also writes “appeals to principle and common sense and close analyses of specific clauses accompanied wild predictions of the good and evil effects that ratification would bring.” These theatrics were an indication that the American marketplace, from goods to ideas, was moving further away from the dictatorial whims of a hereditary peerage.

<sup>117</sup> The Federal Farmer, *Antifederalist* No. 37, in Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers*, 100.

evils.”<sup>118</sup>

Lee, a better edifier than entertainer, was simply not in the business of satire, nor were most other upper class Antifederalists. Patrick Henry might have been the most incendiary leader, but was still not as imaginative as the grassroots. A Pennsylvanian called Montezuma, on the other hand, had no problem mocking “the Aristocratic party of the United States.” Attempting to showcase the Federalist mindset, with tongue planted firmly in cheek, Montezuma lambasted the “silly people who are so foolishly fond of a Republican government,” who should not fear “a president at our head who is captain—general of the army, navy and militia of the United States.” Again, from this angle, the rank and file had the opportunity to voice any number of displeasures with their Antifederalist leaders. But these Antifederalists did not say that other Antifederalists kept them down or hindered progress in the debates, they said that the “constitution is calculated to restrain the influence and power of the LOWER CLASS.” Plebian Antifederalists understood that the Constitution, along with support for a standing army, was the work of Federalists. Petty, internal bickering, even if it existed amongst Antifederalist ranks, as it always exists amongst every group of individuals, could not have spread far or fast enough within two years or less to corrupt Antifederalism.<sup>119</sup>

In a “humble address of the low-born of the United States of America, to their fellow slaves scattered throughout the world,” John Humble pointed out the flaws of the proposed government in lively form. Everyone “except 600 thereabouts” in the United States were of the lower classes according to Humble—that is, no matter their ideological predisposition or aspiration, most citizens just did not have influential wealth. In turn, this harsh truth, refused by some, kept the top 600 in their elevated position. To the humble, it seemed “that a standing army,

---

<sup>118</sup> The Federal Farmer, *Antifederalist* No. 55 (Part I), “Will the House of Representatives Be Truly Representative,” in *Ibid*, 162.

<sup>119</sup> Montezuma, *Antifederalist* No. 9, “A Consolidated Government is a Tyranny,” in *Ibid*, 20-23.

composed of the purgings of the jails of Great Britain, Ireland and Germany,” would keep those 600 afloat by “collecting the revenues of this our king and government.”

An Old Whig thought the worst of the relationship between the executive branch and the military. This writer sensed the erosion of virtue in subsequent administrations and eras. He asked readers to ponder how things would turn out with an ignoble executive or war hero who was “a favorite with his army,” a force perhaps “unwilling to part with their beloved commander in chief.” Patronage was clearly on an Old Whig’s mind. He estimated “that it is perhaps a chance of one hundred millions to one that the next age will not furnish an example of so disinterested” a leader as George Washington, the assumed inaugural executive. Any future president, in other words, would jump at the chance to stay in power, especially if requested. The only way to halt such a potential development would be to “call another convention to revise the proposed constitution.” America could be in store for a military dictatorship on the other side of expeditious ratification.<sup>120</sup>

Additional Antifederalists expressed similar concerns in similar fashion. An American posed the questions: “Can we not call from the fields, the counters, the bar, and mechanics’ shops, any more Generals? Is our soil exhausted?” Under the new system, as it is now and as was criticized by Antifederalists in its inception, social roles were compartmentalized. What used to be the practice of leaders and freemen rising to face a challenge in time of need was to dissolve into delegation, division, and bureaucracy. The virtue of both the individual and the community would deteriorate when stripped of the freedom, yet also the social obligation of serving when called upon. According to *Philadelphensis*, a particularly intense Antifederalist, “a military king,

---

<sup>120</sup> An Old Whig, *Antifederalist* No. 70, “The Powers and Potential Dangers of His Elected Majesty,” in *Ibid*, 204-205.

with a standing army devoted to his will, are to have an uncontrolled power.”<sup>121</sup>

Philadelphiensis’s “fustian” words made Francis Hopkinson’s skin crawl. The refined Federalist further disclosed that the man behind Philadelphiensis, Benjamin Workman, “was an Irish schoolmaster, had not been more than two years in the country,” and was “without either property or reputation in America.” Workman was, in fact, a mathematics professor at the University of Pennsylvania, a position only a certain group of people could find room to ridicule. All the more reason, figured Philadelphiensis, to be aware that a body of soldiers, beholden to Federalists, could “wantonly inflict the most disgraceful punishment on a peaceable citizen, under pretense of disobedience, or the smallest neglect of militia duty.”<sup>122</sup>

The realm of artful dissent was not limited to the common Antifederalist. Even Cato, or the aforementioned George Clinton, painted a vivid picture of what could happen if the prospective executive branch hit critical mass. “My countrymen, beware that the advocates of this new system do not deceive you by a fallacious resemblance between it and your own state government,” implored Cato. Specifically, the executive branch of the central government was to gain a level of influence that had been previously out of the grasp of governors, the executives of individual states. Clinton was both experienced and successful in this office, and thus well aware of its latent dangers. “If the president is possessed of ambition” in the new system, warned Cato, “he has power and time sufficient to ruin his country.” The difference between the proposed executive and European royalty was negligible, both upper class Antifederalists like Clinton and middling Antifederalists shared this belief. They also feared the obvious; executives under the Constitution were not “divested of the prerogative of influencing war and peace [...] and

---

<sup>121</sup> An American, et al., *Antifederalist* No. 40, “On the Motivations and Authority of the Founding Fathers,” 108; Philadelphiensis [Benjamin Workman], *Antifederalist* No. 74, “The President as Military King,” 212, in *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Francis Hopkinson to Thomas Jefferson; 6 April 1788, vol. XVII, 29; Francis Hopkinson, “The New Roof,” *Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 December 1787, in Kaminski, Saladino, et al., eds., *DHRC*, vol. XV, 187-188; Philadelphiensis, *Antifederalist* No. 74, in Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers*, 213.

commanding standing armies and navies,” as governors had been under the Articles of Confederation. Combined, all the negative aspects of ratification, according to a metaphorical Cato, meant such “government is no more like a true picture of your own than an Angel of Darkness resembles an Angel of Light.”<sup>123</sup>

An outstanding *Antifederalist Paper* of grassroots origin, which addresses the neglected subject of slavery in pre-Constitutional America, also lambasts the notion of maintaining a standing army. Congratulating Rhode Island because the state “refused to send delegates to the Federal Convention,” the writer(s) believed that ratification would inevitably lead to Congress forcing the business of slavery, if not the practice, on states whose populations “have now declined that iniquitous traffic.” Rhode Island, unwilling to surrender its homegrown ethics, represented a beacon of hope to the creators of this paper. Of course, a new government could only intrude on the tiny state, not to mention any other stubborn state, if it had the ability to. To this end, it was known that the sword would accompany ratification. “A standing army is to be kept on foot,” the paper warns, “by which the vicious, the sycphantick, and the time- serving will be exalted, and the brave, the patriotic, and the virtuous will be depressed.” At the very least, both free states and slaves states confirmed that standing armies were instruments of the most elemental danger: the coercive prohibition of a community’s pursuits.<sup>124</sup>

The scourge of consolidation is what Antifederalists were wise enough to preach against, and from an impressively unprejudiced position at that. Antifederalists of all walks of life

---

<sup>123</sup> Cato [George Clinton], *Antifederalist* No. 67, “Various Fears Concerning the Executive Department,” in *Ibid*, 198-199. Cato also voices skepticism over standing armies in *Antifederalist* No. 14, “Extent of Territory Under Consolidated Government Too Large to Preserve Liberty or Protect Property,” *Ibid*, 38. Cato, weighing the pros and cons of the institution, concludes “If, therefore, this state [New York], and that of North Carolina, had an army under their control, they never would have lost Vermont, and Frankland, nor the state of Massachusetts suffered an insurrection, or the dismemberment of her fairest district; but the exercise of a principle which would have prevented these things, if we may believe the experience of ages, would have ended in the destruction of their liberties.”

<sup>124</sup> [Unsigned], *Antifederalist* No. 15, “Rhode Island is Right!,” in *Ibid*, 39-40.

demonstrated that they knew they stood a better chance preserving their liberties and local customs—understood to be diverse and offsetting—in a fair and balanced system requiring little or no external involvement. They would rather fight together, when needed, than together when not needed. Thus, it was believed that the new system would grant preferential treatment to certain, limited, ideas and practices, perhaps even exigent ones not guided by principle or the test of time, but always ones which would marginalize and embitter. A standing army would be tasked with enforcing the central government’s wishes, so Antifederalists took an obvious stance against them, both in theory and practice. A clever Antifederalist summed up his unique take on the Federalist mentality: they figured, “very clearly, that the fewer nations there are in the world, the fewer disputes [there] will be about the law of nations.” Failing that, “the greater number that are joined in one government, the abler will they be to raise ships and soldiers.” The Antifederalists certainly sounded bleak at times, compounded by episodes of intense criticism and outrageous sarcasm, but they did not envisage a bright future from what was being proposed. In a sense, they were the message and the messengers. Yet, they were shot for their efforts. They just knew grandiose change was not the answer. For upon consolidation, the government would “have the power of leading troops among you in order to suppress those struggles which may sometimes happen among a free people, and which tyranny will impiously brand with the name of sedition.”<sup>125</sup>

The dialectical onslaught undertaken by the Antifederalist ranks, which has remained the source and spirit of American distrust for government to this day, contributed to a well-balanced attack on Federalism. Without the perspectives of every class within Antifederalism, refutation of constitutional measures could and likely would have been labeled illegitimate by recorded

---

<sup>125</sup> A Countryman [DeWitt Clinton], *Antifederalist* No. 38, “Some Reactions to Federalist Arguments,” 103-104; A Federal Republican, *Antifederalist* No. 8, “The Power Vested in Congress of Sending Troops For Suppressing Insurrections Will Always Enable Them to Stifle the First Struggles of Freedom,” 19, in *Ibid.*

history, nothing more than the work of a narrow interest, whether elite or democratic, yet the same exclusive scope that Federalism and Federalists are praised for—the scope of genius. Warnings and those who warn are not afforded similar credit, even when both may highlight fatal flaws such as the potential outbreak of civil war. Massachusetts dissenters did not regard such “suggestions merely chimerical.” Nor, they thought, did their warnings “proceed from an overheated enthusiasm in favor of republicanism; neither yet from an ill-placed detestation of aristocracy; but from the apparent danger the people are in by establishing this constitution.” Though fiery, and sometimes drastic, common Antifederalists were rarely as ludicrous as Federalists and their followers describe. The class conflict model has even less basis in reality, at least when reviewing what Antifederalists of every level actually said about each other and their opponents. Antifederalism’s unified front covered every base when it came to opposition—reason and emotion, evidence and intuition, and argument and abstraction. And they strove for this balance because they knew “The government would have the “*ultima ratio* the *dernier resort* of the oppressed—the sword.”<sup>126</sup>

Specific legal provisions and prospective measures are also addressed in the *Antifederalists Papers*, especially ones that deal with the future of the militia(s). Through the simulation of congressional debate, this angle lends legitimacy to the application and study of Antifederalist ideals. The historical craft values the dullness associated with the inner workings of governments and their written records because those sources are readily available, minimal interpretation (insight) is required, and information deemed official tends to become official history. And, though the public’s voice—of the people—is supposed to be properly reflected, or represented, its energy is crowded out in the name of stoic productivity. This results in a tacit

---

<sup>126</sup> Consider Arms, Malachi Maynard, and Samuel Field, *Antifederalist* No. 52, “On the Guarantee of Congressional Biennial Elections,” in *Ibid*, 151.

back-scratching between the involved parties, a network of bureaucrats and academics. Faced with these superficial blockages, ones that “weigh oppressively on the capacity of the ordinary citizen to act,” it is not surprising that public interest wanes in the very spheres, like history, that have the ability to bridge the gap between awareness and hearsay.<sup>127</sup> Since Antifederalism is much more encompassing than previously classified, it is important to showcase evidence of the conventional variety rather than overcorrecting in the direction of unorthodoxy, even if only to satisfy the urges of the establishment. Because either way, myriad Antifederalists, including the likes of Cato, wondered if the Constitution, fully operational, would “beget such confidence and compliance, among the citizens of these states, as to do without the aid of a standing army.”<sup>128</sup>

The Federal Farmer carefully inspected the contents of the unamended Constitution, and a few things stood out to him. In Art. I., Sect. 8., for instance, the powers to declare war and to “raise and support” armies and navies are enumerated. “It seems fit the union should direct the raising of troops,” conceded the pragmatic Federal Farmer, but “the question is, how shall this power be lodged?” When combined with Art. I., Sect. 10., which provides that states cannot maintain peacetime troops or instruments of war, The Federal Farmer thought the “safest” course of action the central government could take in this affair would be to fund the military “by requisitions on the states,” rather than by a direct tax (income tax). Additionally, the writer thought it of “great propriety” to request an amendment specifying that “no land forces shall be kept up [...] and no appropriation of monies for their support shall be for a longer term than one year.” The one year term idea was not met in the ratified copies of the Constitution or the Bill of

---

<sup>127</sup> Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 631. Zinn's narrative, a subaltern masterpiece, is known as much for its theoretical framework as it is for its historical findings. His underlying message presses the audience to place greater emphasis on making certain that information used to prove a point is not laundered, lest accepted truths go the way of paper currency. Academics need to avoid the temptation of becoming agents of the state or any other institution that has the power to line their pockets. Keeping the moral high ground must continue to be, or return to being, the profession's primary motivation.

<sup>128</sup> Cato, *Antifederalist* No. 14, in Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers*, 38. Cato concluded: “I deny that it will.”

Rights, as previously explored.<sup>129</sup>

Sydney voiced concern over the future of literal Federalism, the interaction between the central government and state and local governments. Of particular import was the role of the executive branch in the proposed system, laid out in Art. II., Sect. 2. In this section, according to Sydney's summary, "The president shall be commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several States when called into actual service of the United States....except in cases of impeachment." Complications involving dualism, the fact that there was to be "a government within a government," are highlighted by Sydney. A prime example of failure in this area would be the ability of any president to override state governments and constitutions, and even overstep the policies outlined by the prospective federal constitution. Bad things have a way of materializing when self-interest and opportunity—positions inside the new government in this case—are married. Antifederalists knew organizational misuse, both major and minor, would occur without the incorporation of numerous and explicit safeguards. Hence, Sydney understood a despotic president would have "ample means to enforce the supreme laws of the land" if the Constitution offered control of a standing army and federalized the militia.<sup>130</sup>

Along the same lines, A Farmer, not to be confused with The Federal Farmer, reported that under the new plan, "The State governments [...] are divested of the power of commanding or prescribing the duties, wages, or punishments of their own militia, or of protecting their life, property or characters from the rigors of martial law." A Farmer did not seek to gain the power to keep standing armies, since "the members of a confederacy ought to be" deprived of that

---

<sup>129</sup> The Federal Farmer, *Antifederalist* No. 41-43 (Part II), The Quantity of Power the Union Must Possess Is One Thing; The Mode of Exercising the Powers Given Is Quite a Different Consideration, in *Ibid*, 118.

<sup>130</sup> Sydney [Robert Yates], *Antifederalist* No. 45, "Powers of National Government Dangerous to State Governments; New York as an Example," in *Ibid*, 130. Concerns regarding the militia also form large sections of the following *Antifederalist Papers*: No. 22, 56; No. 23, 61; No. 26, 72; No. 28, 74-77; No. 29, 79.

capability, he was simply echoing other Antifederalists who foresaw the central government taking command of all things military. What might happen as a result of that transfer of control, at that time or in the future, is precisely why Antifederalists gave such attention to the army issue. And, like most Antifederalists, A Farmer concluded that a standing army would amount to overkill if the militia was to be consolidated at the federal level anyway. The confederated states could not maintain a standing army, so the federal government, in his opinion, should not be able to either.<sup>131</sup>

To the assertion made by A Freeman, a Pennsylvania Federalist, that “Congress cannot train the militia,” Deliberator responded deliberately: “This is not strictly true.” Again, the question of which constitutional body was to have authority over the militia, in individual and collective form, took precedent. Some Federalists, apparently, could not decipher the meaning of their own work. Antifederalist writers such as Deliberator, in turn, pointed out logical flaws in Federalist thinking and writing. If congress really could not train the militia, a euphemism for controlling it, why make any new laws pertaining to it? Furthermore, how could the congressional power to train the militia not be at stake when, “by the 1st Article they are empowered ‘to provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining’ them?” Add to that the prospect of influence from the executive branch, and the institution was ripe for the most egregious abuses, “death itself not excepted.”<sup>132</sup>

Another constitutional curiosity attacked by Antifederalists was the Necessary and Proper Clause—Art. I., Sect. 8., Cl. 18. “The ‘necessary and proper’ clause,” according to Borden, “has, from the beginning, been a thorn in the side of those seeking to reduce federal power, but its attack by Brutus served to call attention to it.” Indeed, Brutus described the idea as “perfect and

---

<sup>131</sup> A Farmer, *Antifederalist* No. 39, “Appearance and Reality—the Form is Federal; the Effect is National,” in *Ibid*, 105-106.

<sup>132</sup> Deliberator, *Antifederalist* No. 44, “What Congress Can Do; What A State Can Not,” in *Ibid*, 123-124.

absolute” in its attempt to consolidate, the most critical aspect being that officials within the new system could enact laws and curtail liberties “in any mode they please.” Though humorously choosing not to “dwell upon” the well-known dangers posed by standing armies through arbitrary legal mechanisms and loopholes in this account, Brutus nonetheless feared how the sponsors of national programs and initiatives would be the “sole judges of what is necessary to provide for the common defense.”<sup>133</sup>

The Federal Farmer commented on the role that legislative apportionment played within the standing army subject. “It is certainly inadvisable,” the writer thought, “to lodge in 65 representatives, and 26 senators, unlimited power to establish systems of taxation, armies, navies, model the militia, and to do every thing that may essentially tend soon to change.” What The Federal Farmer spoke to was the eventual difficulty of deposing the establishment. It was considered much harder to both justify and accomplish a turnover in government if the power at the head was oligarchic instead of dynastic. An unnamed Antifederalist corroborated this claim, stating “The Athenians found by sad experience, that 30 tyrants were thirty times worse than one. A bad aristocracy is thirty times worse than a bad monarchy.” A standing army, “unrestricted as in the proposed constitution,” was sure to accompany either scenario because, outside of policing itself, “mankind cannot be governed but by *force*.”<sup>134</sup>

After inspecting the actual regulations set forth in the original draft of the Constitution, most Antifederalists were left skeptical, their reservations unquenched. The project was just too massive to gauge, so erring on the side of caution—refurbishing the Articles of Confederation—made the most sense to the Antifederalists. One of the leading Antifederalist thinkers thus

---

<sup>133</sup> Brutus, *Antifederalist* No. 17, “Federalist Power Will Ultimately Subvert State Authority,” in *Ibid*, 43-44.

<sup>134</sup> The Federal Farmer, *Antifederalist* No. 58 (Part IV), 170; [Unsigned], *Antifederalist* No. 28 (Part III), “The Use of Coercion By the New Government,” 77, in *Ibid*. A similar view is taken in *Antifederalist* No. 72.

claimed: “In a confederated republic, the division of representation, etc., in its nature, requires a correspondent division and deposit of powers, relative to taxes and military concerns. And I think the plan offered stands quite alone, in confounding the principles of governments in themselves totally distinct.” When viewed through the lens of the standing army issue, it was common knowledge that constitutional protections against them were needed in order for the new system to be considered anywhere near legitimate. But, Brutus said at the time, “nothing is said respecting it.” As such, the Antifederalists were unable to secure concrete legal checks against standing armies.<sup>135</sup>

Brutus, with his “uncommon foresight,” has also been described as the “most brilliant of all Antifederalist writers.”<sup>136</sup> It is therefore no surprise that the most comprehensive examination of standing armies found in the *Antifederalist Papers*, is Brutus’s bipartite “Objections to a Standing Army.” Throughout his miniseries, Brutus dissects and rebuts the standing army question from every possible angle. In the first part, Brutus responds to Federalists who presume that since “the general government is to be exercised by the people of America themselves,” a standing army would not be a danger to them. In other words, citizens cannot strip themselves of their own influence. Brutus begs to differ, thinking “such an idea is groundless and absurd” when accounting for the space “between the people and their rulers, even when the latter are representatives of the former.” Those legislative representatives, furthermore, were not “accountable to, or removable by the state legislatures” according to the documentation provided by the Convention of 1787. The ratified copy of the Constitution also lacks any provision that would allow applicable bodies of voting citizens to recall their federal representatives—a check against dereliction of duty, of sorts. Brutus even went so far as to “pledge myself to give up all

---

<sup>135</sup> The Federal Farmer, *Antifederalist* No. 41-43 (Part I), 114-115; Brutus, *Antifederalist* No. 84, “On the Lack of a Bill of Rights,” 245, in *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Editor’s Foreword for Brutus, *Antifederalist* No. 17, in *Ibid.*, 42.

opposition to” ratification, on the condition that “the power to raise them [armies] be restricted as it is in the present confederation.” This public vow was one of the most noteworthy attempts by an Antifederalist to secure a future joyously bereft of a standing army and its attendant woes.<sup>137</sup>

Part II of Brutus’s presentation reviews the historical trajectory of the standing army issue, British heritage, and human nature, or, how events come to pass if man’s ability to reason is not properly utilized. Both Rome and Britain, “the two most powerful nations that have ever existed in the world,” eventually lost their way. In their particular eras, the valuation of liberty set these societies apart from the rest. It was the cornerstone of each land at their highest points and the source of their respective successes. Eventually, morals and motivations languished, and tyranny followed in the wake. “A standing army effected this change,” pronounced Brutus. On the Federalist consensus, the necessity of standing armies “to garrison a few posts [...] in order to guard against the sudden encroachments of the Indians, or of the Spaniards and British,” Brutus did not see the logic. In fact, no Antifederalist understood why the step beyond garrisoning landed on the upkeep of regular troops. Brutus responded to this notion by instructing that “Logicians say, it is not good reasoning to infer a general conclusion from particular premises.” Only flimsy arguments justified the utilization and maintenance of a standing army in specialized cases, like protection of the frontier, and Brutus is perhaps the best of the Antifederalists at pointing this out. Hamilton even took it upon himself to absorb Brutus’s blows—both were New Yorkers and released their essays to the New York presses—while attempting to counterpunch. Brutus thought all of it was simpler than indicated, the standing

---

<sup>137</sup> Brutus, *Antifederalist* No. 24 (Part I), “Objections to a Standing Army,” in *Ibid.*, 62-65. Many of the claims made by Antifederalists against the concept of standing armies, especially those presented in this project, match the theme of Brutus’s. They were not making that same case about more nuanced issues such as congressional apportionment or judicial activism. Brutus also echoed fellow Antifederalists regarding who wanted standing armies. He considered it “a well known fact, that a number of those who had an agency in producing this system [the Constitution], and many of those who it is probable will have a principal share in the administration of the government under it, if it is adopted, are avowedly in favor of standing armies.”

army question at the center of everything. For the “command of the revenues of a state gives the command of every thing in it. He that has the purse will have the sword, and they that have both, have everything.”<sup>138</sup>

The *Antifederalist Papers* serves as both a consolidated and an official form of Antifederalist thought. Borden’s collection lends credibility to the study of Antifederalism in an otherwise hostile academic environment. Upon inspection of the documents, themes such as unity, respect, and understanding stick out. The papers chosen by Borden, based on subject matter, come from a diverse cast of Antifederalists, particularly in the areas of class and region. This solidarity is also evident in less organized sets of Antifederalist material. When taken together, these trends construct what amounts more to a forgotten past than an imaginary tale. It always comes back to ratification, as Antifederalists of all types advised their countrymen to remember “That it is very easy to change a free government into an arbitrary one, but that it is very difficult to convert tyranny into freedom.”<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup> Brutus, *Antifederalist* No. 25 (Part II), “Objections to a Standing Army,” 66-70; Brutus, *Antifederalist* No. 32 (Part I), “Federal Taxation and the Doctrine of Implied Powers,” 84, in *Ibid.* *Antifederalist* No. 33, also by Brutus and in response to *Federalist* No. 23, conveys the same logic.

<sup>139</sup> [Unsigned], *Antifederalist* No. 15, in *Ibid.*, 40.

## CHAPTER THREE: JEFFERSON’S PURSUIT OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY

“Were armies to be raised whenever a speck of war is visible in our horizon, we never should have been without them. Our resources would have been exhausted on dangers which have never happened, instead of being reserved for what is really to take place.”<sup>140</sup>

Those who opposed the outright ratification of a new constitution remained dedicated to a collection of related ideas that would yield a terminal goal: confederation. The maintenance of a standing army notwithstanding, confederation kept the structural cancer of partisanship in check by limiting the sphere of factional influence to the state level. Federalists were bound by no such constraints since the proliferation of a national network, contingent on ratification, was the key component of their efforts in the conventions. In essence, Federalism served the dual purpose of merging principal concerns with party machinery, whereas Antifederalism was singularly consumed with preserving and advancing guiding principles which were assumed to not be open for debate. The former benefitted from this arrangement, forcing the latter to regroup.

Addressing the question of “factions” in his *Federalist* #10, James Madison—arch-Federalist, and, fittingly, soon-to-be Federalist opponent—argued that under the proposed constitution, sectional prerogatives would mitigate the influence that any single political party or commercial interest would have in the national sphere.<sup>141</sup> Madison’s criticisms of political parties, however, circulated from the Federalist war room, as were George Washington’s warnings on the pitfalls of faction. Equating parties to necessary evils, most Federalists likewise lumped in the concept of the maintenance of standing armies. The Antifederalists understood that

---

<sup>140</sup> Transcript of President Jefferson’s Sixth Annual Message to Congress, *Connecticut Courant*, 10 December 1806.

<sup>141</sup> Publius [James Madison], *Federalist* No. 10, “The Same Subject Continued: The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection,” *New York Packet*, 23 November 1787, in Earle, ed., *The Federalist*, 54-55.

the question had to be resolved during the ratification process in order to prevent its manifestation at some future juncture, either as an intended instrument of control or unintended consequence of circumstance.

Instead, concrete resolution was skirted, which explains how and why the issue has achieved institutional permanence in the public eye even though “Concern about standing armies did not end with [...] the adoption of the federal Constitution.” According to Lois G. Schworer, expert of the standing army issue in the Anglo world, the criticism “took on a decided partisan coloration, with the Jeffersonian Republicans adopting the sentiment as their own.”<sup>142</sup> This was the progeny of the Antifederal objection, but the issue did not last after the founding of the Whig party in 1833. Now, a complete *ex post facto* legal movement, devoted to the issue in its entirety, would have to occur before legitimate policy changes could follow suit. James Madison’s case certainly encapsulates how early national issues can get lost in the shuffle.<sup>143</sup> Politics after ratification were so volatile that the esteemed Madison had a change of heart after devoting such physical and intellectual energy to the Federalist cause. He joined Jefferson to lead the Democratic-Republicans upon admitting that Hamilton had coopted Federalism—the national bank issue, a Hamiltonian initiative, determining whether America employed a fixed or living Constitution. It is not surprising then that a number of people, in an era of rampant speculation and expanding opportunities, were under the impression that Antifederalism’s objectives were

---

<sup>142</sup> Schworer, “*No Standing Armies!*,” 199.

<sup>143</sup> For a comprehensive review of Madison’s political identity, see: Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 191; \_\_\_\_\_, “The Hamiltonian Madison: A Reconsideration,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 92, no. 1 (January 1984), 3-28; Richard E. Labunski, *James Madison and the Struggle for the Bill of Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 261. Labunski finds that Madison, feeling the Constitution gave the federal government sufficient power, directed his attention to the maintenance of states’ rights. Labunski states, “President Washington [...] saw the Virginia Resolution—which had been written by Madison—as threatening to use the state’s authority to prevent enforcement of the Sedition Act.” Washington then asked a reluctant Patrick Henry to “oppose further efforts” by Virginia to rock the boat. Madison and Henry virtually traded political places. This was likely the result of a bipartisan (ideological) lack of satisfaction with the ratified copy of the Constitution—either too much or too little had changed. Awareness of this political bind was also lacking, hence its transpiring.

prosaic. Moreover, their uniform criticism of standing armies notwithstanding, “the idea of a decentralist party is rather odd.”<sup>144</sup>

Thomas Jefferson’s absence in this critical period, spanning the years 1784-1789, left Antifederalism—more pertinently, opposition in general—vulnerable and ratification inevitable. From Antifederalism to the contents of the Constitution itself, much could have changed shape if Jefferson, a personality who lent the ultimate air of credibility to dissent, had been stateside. At least one major Federalist of the time, Theodore Dwight, even considered Jefferson “The acknowledged head of the Anti-federal party.”<sup>145</sup> However, while tempting, determining the outcome of a ratification process including Jefferson is too speculative to be of any true value. That being the case, the best option, simply put, is to examine what Jefferson imparted in his writings. What becomes evident no matter if painstaking or cursory efforts are undertaken is that Jefferson dwelled on issues he considered significant. Following this pattern, he can be seen to have considered the standing army issue significant enough to echo any and every Antifederalist objection to standing armies, before, during, and after the constitutional movement. Since regional priorities did not incapacitate the Antifederalist cause like previously thought, the addition of Jefferson’s mentality and character would have impacted, albeit indeterminately, both the entire constitutional question and how history would remember it. In a message to English theologian and political dissenter Joseph Priestley, Jefferson clarified his constitutional role. “I was in Europe when the constitution was planned & established, and never saw it till after it was established,” he penned. “On receiving it I wrote strongly to mr Madison urging” to include a bill

---

<sup>144</sup> It seems that even Madison thought Hamilton was getting what he wanted all along, a clear and early demonstration of how the consolidated system doctored party politics. James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 8 August 1791, in William T. Hutchinson, William M. E. Rachal, et al., eds., *The Papers of James Madison*, Congressional Series, vol. 14 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1962-), 69; N. P. Trist, “Memoranda,” 27 September 1831, in Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, vol. III, 533-34; Duncan, *The Antifederalists and Early American Political Thought*, 98.

<sup>145</sup> Theodore Dwight, *History of the Hartford Convention: With a Review of the Policy of the United States Government Which Led to the War of 1812* (New York: N. & J. White; Boston: Russell, Odiorne, & Co., 1833), 9.

of rights that protected civil liberties along with “the substitution of militia for a standing army.” Madison “accordingly moved in the first session of Congress for these Amendments which were agreed to & ratified by the states” as they currently stood. “This is all the hand I had in what related to the Constitution.”<sup>146</sup>

Removed from the daily grind of the ratification question, Jefferson lamented his position. Akin to watching the game from the sidelines, he learned of constitutional particulars through correspondence. “Were I in America,” he chimed, “I would advocate it warmly. [...] But I own it astonishes me to find such a change wrought in the opinions of our countrymen since I left them. The warmly advocated ‘it’ was what he had heard about the Constitution, the astonishment came in the form of snatching from the people “trial by jury in civil cases, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of commerce, the habeas corpus laws” as well as “yoking them with a standing army.” Jefferson, whose insight was greatly valued, thought the acceptance of these concepts was “a degeneracy in the principles of liberty to which I had given four centuries instead of four years.” Jefferson, a hopeful visionary, realized that his country was “vibrating between too much and too little government, and the pendulum will rest finally in the middle.”<sup>147</sup>

Indeed, communication was the most important link between Jefferson and the Constitution. He was at the mercy of his domestic colleagues and their reporting; since most of his correspondents directly or indirectly sided with a given school of thought, bias was evident. It is surprising that Jefferson was not convinced of the Antifederalists’ total impropriety as he received letter after letter detailing their shortcomings. Or perhaps that is precisely why the discerning Jefferson held even, knowing that, in most cases, there are two sides to a story. The

---

<sup>146</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestly, 19 June 1802, in Boyd, et al., eds., *TPTJ*, vol. 37, 626.

<sup>147</sup> Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 2 February 1788, in *Ibid*, vol. 12, 558.

polymath Francis Hopkinson, for instance, noted “there are great oppositions made to the new Constitution, but this opposition chiefly arises from a few leading Party Men in the Towns and Cities who have been very industrious in holding it up as a political Monster to the multitude who know nothing of Government and have gained many Proselytes in the back Counties.” Regretting that “the objections and arguments of the Minority were treated with too much levity and even disdain by the majority,” John Brown Cutting added to the grim portrait of Antifederalism that was painted for Jefferson. These harsh appraisals were tempered by Madison’s. The engine propelling the drafting of the Constitution, and arguably Jefferson’s most trusted source, Madison observed that his “adversaries take very different grounds of opposition. Some are opposed to the substance of the plan; others to particular modifications only.” Fair or unfair judgment of Antifederalism aside, Jefferson did not take the bait.<sup>148</sup>

Complicating matters were the friendly relations Jefferson maintained with some of these individuals, especially figures from his native Virginia such as James Madison and James Monroe.<sup>149</sup> Through it all, Jefferson still managed to retain the countenance of a leader. “You will of course be so good as to continue to mark to me it’s progress,” Jefferson instructed Madison, a man who needed no instruction. His language in constitutional correspondence remaining consistent and conciliatory, Jefferson also leaked a bit of calculation to James Monroe, stating “From the first view I had of the report from Phila. I had some strong objections to it and as I had no inclination to *inlist myself on either side*, made no *communication* or

---

<sup>148</sup> Francis Hopkinson to Thomas Jefferson, 6 April 1788, vol. 13, 39; John Brown Cutting to Thomas Jefferson, 7 July 1788, vol. 13, 333; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 22 April 1788, vol. 13, 98, in *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 18 November 1788, in *Ibid.*, vol. 14, 188. This letter is unlike most penned by Jefferson. In it, he singled out James Madison for his skillful role in expounding the political theories found in some of the *Federalist Papers*. Jefferson wrote, “With respect to the *Federalist*, the three authors have been named to me. I read it with care, pleasure and improvement, and was satisfied there was nothing in it by one of those hands, and not a great deal by the second. It does the highest honor to the third.” The first author Jefferson referred to was Alexander Hamilton, his nemesis; second was key Federalist John Jay; third was James Madison, constitutional authority and Jefferson’s confidant.

positive *declaration of my sentiments* until after the Convention met.” Continuing, he offered that “There appear’d [...] an impropriety in interfering with the subject in that manner.” Jefferson’s balanced approach not only prevented misguided alignment, but also managed to make his hybridized belief system more palatable both during and after ratification. He counted himself among “the republican federalists,” those who supported the Constitution “for its intrinsic merits,” not “as a stepping stone to monarchy.” After all, it is a fact that Jefferson “heartily” rejoiced upon hearing the news that the requisite nine states had ratified the Constitution, but he did so only after informing Monroe of his wish for the inclusion of a bill of rights that would secure “trial by jury, habeas corpus, freedom of religion [...] & no standing armies.” Because Jefferson led by example from abroad, it is intriguing to imagine if that leadership would have either translated or transformed had Jefferson never left for France.<sup>150</sup>

Philosophically, even as Federalists believed that if Antifederalists, due to the diversity of their local needs, were “to meet in pursuit of amendments [...] they would soon be convinced of the utter impossibility of an accommodation,” and thus “unavoidably check the great system,” Jefferson seemed to understand the value of opposition. On Antifederalist efforts to at least include a bill of rights protecting against standing armies, amongst the familiar lot of civil and individual liberties, Jefferson opined “In this way there will have been opposition enough to do good, and not enough to do harm.” Also addressing the necessity of creating checks against standing armies and guarantees for personal rights, Jefferson confidently declared that “these are fetters against doing evil by which no honest government should decline.” Though Jefferson stated that “Govr. Clinton in New York, and Mr. Henry in Virginia are moving heaven and earth

---

<sup>150</sup> Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 7 February 1788, vol. 12, 570; Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 12 July 1788, vol. 13, 353; Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 23 May 1792, vol. 23, 538; Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 9 August 1788, vol. 13, 488-489, in *Ibid.*

to have a new Convention to make capital changes” to the Constitution, he nevertheless wrote in the same thought: “There has been just opposition enough to produce probably further guards to liberty without touching the energy of the government.” Of course, Jefferson did not fully grasp the proposed extent of said government—its exact reach was a topic continually questioned by Antifederalists, and in fact why Antifederalism existed in the first place. A complete understanding of the ramifications of ratification was just not in the cards for someone dwelling across the Atlantic, especially when under a bombardment of biased correspondence. Yet his own theory on the nature of lawmaking, “that no society can make a perpetual constitution,” which was divulged to Madison during the debates, contradicts most of what the Constitution sought to achieve and has come to stand for. So, if Jefferson supported the revision of even his own ideas “at the end of 19 years,” working closely with Hamilton to institutionalize Hamiltonian ideas, as Madison did before his switch in affiliation, might not have panned out.<sup>151</sup>

When finally stateside, which coincided with ratification, Jefferson took to defending Antifederalists—or, former Antifederalists. Jefferson’s language flourished from 1790 onward, mostly because of his political rivalry with Alexander Hamilton, the leading Federalist figure before, during, and after ratification, and whose theories and policies were regarded as antithetical to republicanism. Cautiously retracing his steps, Jefferson realized, in a note to none other than George Washington, that “The ultimate object of all this”—the continuous accumulation of new debt on the public debt tab—“is to prepare for the way for a change, from the present republican form of government, to that of a monarchy, of which the English constitution is to be the model. That this was contemplated in the Convention, is no secret,

---

<sup>151</sup> William Stephen Smith to Thomas Jefferson, 15 February 1789, vol. 14, 560; Thomas Jefferson to C. W. F. Dumas, 12 February 1788, vol. 12, 584; Thomas Jefferson to Alexander Donald, 7 February 1788, vol. 12, 571; Thomas Jefferson to John Paul Jones, 23 March 1789, vol. 14, 689; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 6 September 1789, vol. 15, 396, in the Editorial “The Earth Belongs in Usufruct to the Living,” in *Ibid.*

because its partisans have made none of it.” In Congress, the Republicans, of which Jefferson counted himself amongst, were “joined by the two, three, or half-dozen anti-federalists, who, tho they dare not avow it, are still opposed to any general government: but being less so to a republican than a monarchical one,” they sided with “those whom they think pursuing the lesser evil.”<sup>152</sup>

In another letter to Washington, which shows how determined Jefferson was to convince the president to remain either ideologically balanced or unaffiliated, he commented “This exactly marks the difference between Colo. Hamilton’s views and mine, that I would wish the debt paid tomorrow; he wishes it never to be paid, but always to be a thing wherewith to corrupt and manage the legislature.” Being the only figure to stand against Federalist policies as part of Washington’s cabinet, Jefferson remarked that “tho’ they raised the cry of Antifederalism against those who censured the mode of administration [...] it should come to be tried that the very men whom they called Anti federalists were the men who would save the government.” Indeed, Jefferson thought “the Antifederal champions are now strengthened in argument by the fulfillment of their predictions; [...] this has been brought about by the Monarchical federalists themselves.” The lines were quickly drawn during Jefferson’s domestic stay. And he founded his own ideology, out of the ashes of Antifederalism and in spite of Federalism. “An alarm has been endeavored to be sounded as if the republican interest was indisposed to the payment of the public debt,” Jefferson reported to southern Federalist and fellow foreign ambassador Thomas Pinckney. The Federalists “endeavored with as little success to conjure up the ghost of anti-federalism, and to have it believed that this and republicanism were the same, and that both were Jacobinism,” a French political movement conceived by democratic extremists. “But,” Jefferson

---

<sup>152</sup> Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 23 May 1792, in *Ibid*, vol. 23, 537.

casually penned, “those who felt themselves republicans and federalists too, were little moved by this artifice.”<sup>153</sup>

Jefferson sensed who he and his ilk were up against, having articulated thoughts eerily similar to those offered by former Antifederalists. As early as 1787, speaking on public debate over ratification, Jefferson concluded that “in the Eastern states the printers will print nothing against it unless the writer subscribes his name.” Such a practice was not customary in a culture of pseudonyms, a culture of assumed honor.<sup>154</sup> But, the culture was changing, or perhaps was never cemented to begin with. To Jefferson, certain factors gave “the anti republican party “an appearance of strength and numbers. [...] They all live in cities, together, and can act in a body readily and at all times; they give chief employment to the newspapers, and therefore have most of them under their command.” Thus, Jefferson had no confidence in the very periodicals used to support the ratification of the Constitution, and all things which happened to favor Federalist stances. About this, Jefferson stated, chillingly, “when i read the newspapers & see what a mass of falsehood & what an atom of truth they contain, I am mortified with the consideration that 99/100ths. of mankind pass through life imagining they have known what was going forward when they would have been nearer to the truth had they heard nothing.” The hostile attitudes taken by these sources, especially on efforts to secure republican government both at home and abroad, were apparently obvious. They were, as Jefferson put it, “those of Hamilton himself and

---

<sup>153</sup> Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 9 September 1792, vol. 24, 355; Notes on Conversations with Tobias Lear and John Beckley, 7 April 1793, vol. 25, 517; Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 23 May 1792, vol. 23, 538; Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Pinckney, 3 December 1792, vol. 24, 696-697, in *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Thomas Jefferson to William Carmichael, 15 December 1787, vol. 12, in *Ibid.*, 425; Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). In this monograph, Freeman explores how honor, respect, and reputation were woven into a national political fabric filled with rival or otherwise self-interested politicians. To Freeman, the practices surrounding the concept of honor diffused tense situations by cloaking them in tradition and familiarity. If Jefferson indeed observed demands involving the signatures of individuals to their particular documents, it would be akin to a sign of disrespect—one side calling the other out by disregarding the already limited, yet acknowledged, code of conduct. Also, if this disrespect applied to classes other than the elite, it would indicate Federalist disdain for democratic expression. Federalists, as a uniform body, took egalitarian swings as encroachments on their collective societal status.

the monarchs of his cabal.” This cabal had supported the establishment of standing armies, a most unrepublican position.<sup>155</sup>

In correspondence regarding ratification, Jefferson repeatedly scoffed at the notion that a permanent, professional military should be entrenched. “I do not pretend to decide,” Jefferson admitted, “what would be the best method of procuring the establishment of the manifold good things in this constitution and getting rid of the bad.” Included in that bad was “the omission of a bill of rights providing clearly and without the aid of sophisms [...] protection against standing armies,” freedom of the press and religion, and guarantees for trial by jury and the writ of habeas corpus. His reasoning “to abolish standing armies in time of peace” is hard to deny. Jefferson, one of America’s greatest statesman, estimated that “More than magazine-guards will be useless if few, and dangerous if many. No European nation can ever send against us such a regular army as we need fear,” so, if “no check can be found to keep the number of standing troops within safe bounds, while they are tolerated as far as necessary, abandon them altogether, discipline well the militia.” Jefferson’s criticism of the Constitution centered on the issues that gave rise to the Bill of Rights, the public debt question, and the maintenance of standing armies. However, the latter two issues, containing mechanisms virtually unchecked by the Constitution, stuck with Jefferson for the remainder of his life. Jefferson proclaimed that the country would never be able to “get rid of an army, or of our debt.” He predicted that “The least rag of Indian depredation will be an excuse to raise troops, for those who love to have troops, and for those who think that a public debt is a good thing.” Hamilton’s sect of Federalism held that those items were good things, meaning valuable to them, and Jefferson was left unable to directly face them when it counted

---

<sup>155</sup> Thomas Jefferson’s Notes on the Letters of Christoph Daniel Ebeling, 15 October 1795, vol. 28, 509; Thomas Jefferson to Theodore Foster, 11 September 1801, vol. 35, 260; Thomas Jefferson to William Short, 23 March 1793, vol. 25, 436 in Boyd, et al., eds., *TPTJ*.

most.<sup>156</sup>

Jefferson was as clear as ever leading up to and during his presidency, the standing army issue and its relation to republicanism at the front of his mind. “As to the naval armament, the land armament, and the marine fortifications which are in question with you, I have no doubt they will all be carried. Not that the Monocrats and Papermen in Congress want war; but they want armies and debts.” Already commenting on “violations of the constitution” and getting “back to the true principles of that instrument,” Jefferson blamed the Federalists for “propensities to war, to expence,” and foreign entanglements. Tracking public sentiment, he saw that “even the German counties [...] remonstrated against the Alien & Sedition laws, standing armies, & discretionary powers in the President.” Jefferson was ready to bring the fight to the Federalists after enduring his post as Secretary of State and witnessing abuses of power by the cabinets of consecutive Federalist presidents, Washington and Adams. What helped convince Jefferson of the incompatibility of his beliefs and those of the Federalists was how the latter regarded the bulk of American citizens. The soon to be president was outraged at “the denunciation of the democratic societies,” having stated it was one of the worst of the “extraordinary acts of boldness of which we have seen so many from the faction of Monocrats.” Following the Adams administration, which has come to be known for its hubris, the people who valued those democratic societies elected their champion, Thomas Jefferson, in a political revolution that lasted, numerically, from 1800 to 1824. It lasted much longer in spirit, and the Federalist Party, whom the Antifederalists fought so desperately, was terminated along the way.<sup>157</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 20 December 1787, vol. 12, 440-441; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 13 July 1788, vol. 13, 443; Thomas Jefferson to Charles Carroll, 15 April 1791, vol. 20, 215, in *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, April 3 1794, vol. 28, 49-50; Thomas Jefferson to Edmund Pendleton, 13 February 1799, vol. 31, 36; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 28 December 1794, vol. 28, 228, in *Ibid.* For more on democratic societies and their relation to Jefferson’s ideology, which was an extension or redevelopment of Antifederalism made relevant to the constitutional system, refer to Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 17-67.

Defining not only what he stood for, but also who he represented, Jefferson stated that the Democratic-Republicans, the party which he led, were “friends to the freedom of religion, freedom of the press, trial by jury & to economical government, opposed to standing armies, paper systems, war & all connection other than of commerce with any foreign nation,” or, “a majority firm in all those principles which we have espoused and the federalists have opposed uniformly.” Jefferson took his election and the rise of his party as point of pride. “Nero wished all the necks of Rome united in one, that he might sever them at a blow. so our ex-federalists, wishing to have a single representative of all the objects of their hatred, honour me with that post,” gloated Jefferson to French philosopher Volney. Continuing to enumerate his ideology’s accomplishments, Jefferson contended that Democratic-Republicans had “restored our judiciary to what it was while justice & not federalism was its object.” Basking in their triumphs, Jefferson drew his attention to the standing army issue. Jefferson practiced what he preached, making it one of his first orders of business to have Albert Gallatin, his Secretary of the Treasury, crunch the numbers to “show how far it will be necessary to reduce the naval and military establishments.” Jefferson and his administration followed through on this idea.<sup>158</sup>

Jefferson and congressional Republicans were successful in reducing the size of the armed forces—by 1802 the army was cut to approximately 3,000 men after prior mandates allowed that number to approach, and ultimately exceed 5,500. Offices were also dissolved or suspended under Jefferson’s watch, such as that of the Quartermaster General.<sup>159</sup> Regarding

---

<sup>158</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Gideon Granger 13 August 1800, vol. 32, 95-96; Thomas Jefferson to Volney, 20 April 1802, vol. 37, 296; Albert Gallatin to Thomas Jefferson, 14 March 1801, vol. 33, 275, in Boyd, et al., eds., *TPTJ*.

<sup>159</sup> Stewart, ed., *American Military History*, vol. 1, 123; Thomas Jefferson to Tadeusz Kosciuszko, 2 April 1802, in Boyd, et al., eds., *TPTJ*, vol. 37, 167. In this letter, Jefferson both quantifies and justifies the decrease. “We are now actually engaged in reducing our military establishment one third, and discharging one third of our officers. We keep in service no more than men enough to garrison the small posts dispersed at great distances on our frontiers,” and which “no circumstance whatever can bring these garrisons together, because it would be an abandonment of their forts.”

national defense, Jefferson made his stance clear in his first annual message. “The only force which can be ready at every point, & competent to oppose” potential enemies, Jefferson posited, “is the body of neighboring citizens, as formed into a militia.” In time of peace, a standing army would thus be nothing more than a financial burden and waste of resources. The president stood firm in his convictions, going so far as to risk the firm majority that the Republicans held in the legislature to keep militarism—in other words the emergence of a military industrial complex—at bay. He wrote to his daughter that “great opposition is made to the reduction of the army, the navy, and the taxes.” Jefferson continued, bluntly, “they will be reduced; but some republican votes will fly the way on the occasion.” Even if the army was an accepted institution, no matter its scope, Jefferson pursued its contraction because he thought it was always “useful to exhibit examples of the military will controuled & circumscribed by the civil authority.” To ameliorate the losses to the fighting force, Jefferson founded the United States Military Academy at West Point. There, an officer class was to be trained in the military arts with the intention of properly leading citizen soldiers, who featured less rigorous training, into battle.<sup>160</sup>

Though Jefferson was not privy to all the events and details behind the push for ratification—fortuitous timing for the Federalists—one thing is for certain: he never lost sight of the standing army issue. And when it came time for Jefferson to put his stamp on not just American political culture, but American culture itself, he proceeded without allusion to military might, that most effective tool of propaganda. Actually, the polar opposite occurred, as “President Thomas Jefferson took office in 1801 committed to a policy of peace and

---

<sup>160</sup> President Thomas Jefferson’s First Annual Message, as spoken to Congress, 8 December 1801, vol. 36, 61-62; Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson Randolph, 17 January 1802, vol. 36, 388; Thomas Jefferson to Anthony Haswell, 13 October 1802, vol. 38, 489, in *Ibid.* In the same vein as his letter to the formerly imprisoned—under the Sedition Act of 1798—Haswell, Jefferson suggested in a letter to Samuel Adams (26 February 1800, vol. 31, 395, in *Ibid.*) that Bonaparte “transferred the destinies of the republic from the civil to the military arm. Some will use this as a lesson against the impracticability of republican government. I read it as a lesson against the danger of standing armies;” Robert M. S. McDonald, ed., *Thomas Jefferson’s Military Academy: Founding West Point* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004).

economy.”<sup>161</sup> His primary objective, which scholars accept, was to use commerce as a “means of peaceable coercion” whenever possible. That also meant avoiding the wartime economy whenever possible. In a letter to James Madison, who was absorbed into the Democratic-Republican Party soon after his efforts as a Federalist led to ratification, Jefferson expounded on his anti-war mentality: “I should hope that Congress instead of a denunciation of war, would instantly exclude from our ports all the manufactures, produce, vessels and subjects of” aggressive nations. “This would work well in many ways, safely in all, and introduce between nations another umpire than arms. It would relieve us too from the risks and the horrors of cutting throats.” Jefferson’s concerns were finely tuned and ahead of his time, equal parts practical and moral.<sup>162</sup>

Drafting and enacting specific sanctions would also prevent the necessity of the various branches of the armed forces, on behalf of the federal government, to protect certain sectors of the American economy, especially when other sectors would receive little to no support. The carrying trade, a practice “that involved the transportation of goods neither produced nor consumed within the United States,” was at the center of this question. Drew R. McCoy, expert in the development of American political economy, observed that Republicans “insisted that the protection of this commerce did not justify the expense and danger of a large navy.” Indeed, Jefferson, communicating about the economic ambitions of the Federalists, lamented that “we are running navigation mad, and commerce mad, and navy mad, which is worst of all.” It was obvious to Jefferson and most Republicans that the public debt and the carrying trade were inextricably linked, and therefore wholly in line with Federalist policies. Even as backers of a professional standing army, Federalists thought that any “encroachments of Gr. Brit. on our

---

<sup>161</sup> Stewart, ed., *American Military History*, vol. 1, 123.

<sup>162</sup> Thomas Jefferson to George Logan, 21 March 1801, in Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, 23; Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 24 March 1793, in Boyd, et al., eds., *TPTJ*, vol. 25, 442.

carrying trade must be met by passive obedience [...] lest any misunderstanding with them should *affect our credit, or the prices of our public paper.*” Business was business, and the standing forces supported by Federalists were likewise designed to secure Federalist interests, savory or unsavory, and only when the Federalists wished to do the unleashing. That freakish relationship was anathema to Jefferson and his overall vision for America—productive and peaceable, each virtue determining the other with little to no intervention from external forces or internal institutions. Ratification, though, brought about a complication that Federalists were not prepared enough to foresee or wise enough to solve, since the incapacitation of their ideology was not part of their plan. Consolidation, the product of ratification, would, eventually, both equalize and neutralize elections by making party politics about the competitive pursuit for control of the machinery of government—the dole—rather than the representation of varying political principles.<sup>163</sup>

Despite cementing his legacy in the minds of others and reaching many of his goals, Jefferson felt unfulfilled by his presidential terms. Not even he could overcome the structural changes of ratification. He chose to leave the honor of holding that office off his epitaph as a result. Finally retiring to Monticello after 1808, Jefferson continued to reflect on issues he found meaningful. Debating Dr. Thomas Cooper on the necessity of keeping a standing army by comparing the cases of England and America, nations in the thick of the War of 1812, the former president suspected that American males were “so happy at home that they will not hire themselves to be shot at for a shilling a day. Hence we can have no standing armies for defence, because we have no paupers to furnish the materials,” unlike Britain and other imperial powers

---

<sup>163</sup> Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 174; Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, 18 January 1800, in Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 7, 406; Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 17 April 1791, in Boyd, et al., eds., *TPTJ*, vol. 20, 236.

found throughout the old world. It was known to Jefferson and many revolutionary figures that entrenched militaries attracted, for the most part and as a last resort, men from the unskilled persuasion. Consequently, their service, which frequently descended into “piracy on the ocean, [...] conflagration, plunder and devastation,” gave them a false sense of standing, entitlement, or security. And what is worse is that these men pulled off such feats in the name of their aristocratic masters, a whole other source of “wretchedness.” Each fed the other’s ignoble appetite in this relationship. “A society thus constituted possesses certainly the means of defence,” Jefferson stated. “But what does it defend?”<sup>164</sup>

“True, Jefferson granted, “some of our public buildings have been burnt, and some scores of individuals on the tide waters have lost their moveable property and their houses. [...] But these individuals have their lands and their hands left. They are not paupers.” Citing history, just as the Antifederalists had, he was able to inform Cooper that the free Greeks and Romans “had no standing armies” because “their system was to make every man a soldier, & oblige him to repair to the standard of his country, whenever that was reared. This made them invincible; and the same remedy will make us so.” Following in the footsteps of this standard, Jefferson supported “classing the militia according to age, and allotting each age to the particular kind of service to which it was competent.” He estimated the number of capable male citizens in America, ages 18-45, at just below three quarters of a million. In a note to his good friend James Monroe, Jefferson also voiced the need to “train and classify the whole of our male citizens, and make military instruction a regular part of collegiate education.” Jefferson even positively spun the embarrassing moments of the early segment of the War of 1812. “It is more a subject of joy that we have so few of the desperate characters which compose modern regular armies. But it

---

<sup>164</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Cooper, 10 September 1814, in J. Jefferson Looney, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. 7 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005-), 649-652.

proves more forcibly the necessity of obliging every citizen to be a soldier.” Secure and confident in his ethics, Jefferson ended that subject by stating “We can never be safe till this is done.”<sup>165</sup>

Recollecting his relationship with the great George Washington, Jefferson expressed regret. “After I retired from that office,”—Secretary of State—“great and malignant pains were taken by our Federal-monarchists and not entirely without effect, to make him view me as a theorist, holding French principles of government which would lead infallibly to licentiousness and anarchy.” Jefferson continued: “to this he listened the more easily from my known disapprobation of the British treaty. I never saw him afterwards, or these malignant insinuations should have been dissipated before his just judgment as mists before the sun.” Jefferson did not retire, or die, a broken man. But he was certainly, and deservedly, tired. This was especially true for the fruitless things that altered the direction of society, of societies, and that he knew would never completely disappear—nuisances, setbacks, vices, corruption. Incessant warfare was surely counted amongst these. A drained Jefferson uttered “One war, such as that of our revolution, is enough for one life.” Conditions have vacillated between vicious warfare and nominal peace ever since, a state of instability foreseen by both the Antifederalists and Thomas Jefferson. “There are instruments so dangerous to the rights of the nation and which place them so totally at the mercy of their governors,” mused Jefferson, “that those governors, whether legislative or executive, should be restrained from keeping such instruments on foot but in well-defined cases.” That instrument, according to Jefferson and Antifederalist thought, was a

---

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 652-654; Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 19 June 1813, in Ibid, vol. 6, 209. In this letter, Jefferson again refers to the rank and file of a professional army as “pauper hirelings.” This was not the sign of disrespect it would be considered in today’s climate of military worship, an Antifederalist concern. It was merely Jefferson articulating what many of his contemporaries believed: militaries should not be looked to for long-term, personal employment. One is much less likely to understand or fight for principle when the spoils of war are on the line. Furthermore, the primacy of warfare—since few legitimate threats to the America existed—was a sign of an improperly structured economy. Peace (morality) and prosperity (economic productivity) were lost in this scenario.

standing army.<sup>166</sup>

---

<sup>166</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Walter Jones, 2 January 1814, vol. 7, 103; Thomas Jefferson to Jose' Correa da Serra, 27 December 1814, vol. 8, 168, in *Ibid*; Jefferson to David Humphreys, 18 March 1789, in Boyd, et al., eds., *TPTJ*, vol. 14, 677-678.

## CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF ANTIFEDERALISM IN HISTORY AND POLITICS

To be sure, the constitutional ordeal was not a struggle between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ or self-interest versus the interest of the whole. Both the Federalist and Antifederalist elite were interested in maintaining their elevated positions in society.<sup>167</sup> The issue was whether the ability to defend one’s home, while preventing unnecessary militarism, would continue to derive from the states themselves, or from a central position. Informed by history, Antifederalists believed “that republican government was possible only for a relatively small territory and a relatively small and homogeneous population.” Likewise, their preference of state militias over professional armies was critical to this conception of republicanism because it was taken as truth that “mercenaries were to be categorically condemned.” Antifederalists of all stripes believed that the best defense was a vested defense. Thus, the proposal of the Constitution threatened to erode the inherent classicality of Revolutionary (and Antifederalist) thought. The Antifederalists made compelling arguments in an attempt to avoid this scenario, nipping at the heels of the better-prepared Federalists until the bitter end. As it turned out, and just as the Antifederalists had predicted, ratification rendered traditional notions of republicanism obsolete. Over time, the shift in the seat of power brought forth a spate of anticipated complications—of which the ability to raise and support a peacetime army was neither the first, nor last.<sup>168</sup>

The future of public life—participation in politics—in the United States “is now threatened by the consequences of the very methods” utilized by Federalists to attain

---

<sup>167</sup> Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 8-12, 63-80.

<sup>168</sup> Kenyon, “Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists and the Nature of Representative Government,” 32; Fields and Hardy, “The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History,” 406; Sellers, *American Republicanism*, 3-7; McCoy, *The Elusive Republic*, 10. McCoy argues that after constitutional ratification, American republicanism was never “a rigidly and unequivocally defined system of thought.” The republican ideal was encroached by not only a widespread acceptance of commercialism, but also by the rise of progressive views regarding the proper course of social progress. These issues were direct outgrowths of the struggle between opposing ideologies (Federalism and Antifederalism) during the ratification debates.

ratification.<sup>169</sup> A major component of this problem is the role that the military plays, not to mention its many grim potentialities, in the American way of life. Antifederalists foretold that the maintenance of a standing army within a consolidated government would likely be the cause of social and political tensions for future Americans—not because the issue is inherently political, but because power corrupts. In the mildest case, the concept could spawn a number of unintended defects; in the worst case, it could result in the termination of liberty and the rule of law.

Not a quarter of a century later, amidst the War of 1812, Federalists understandably warmed to Antifederalist insights.<sup>170</sup> Among these was the danger posed by congressional support for unnecessary militarism—at least when it came to Federalist interests in the areas of commerce and territory. The disinterested, intellectual portrayal of the framers forwarded by early national scholars is not actually carried into this period, or any point of time following ratification. Antifederalists, the true idealists, saw that demagoguery and fair-weather commitments would accompany political consolidation. Fittingly, historian James M. Banner found that the Federalists of the early nineteenth century opposed Jefferson not only for political reasons, but also because of his “disregard for practical realities, well-tried procedures, and institutional forms.” Jefferson’s idealism, chalked up to “illusions of *theory*,” stand out even more when considering the fact that he was not one of the exalted framers of the Constitution. To make matters worse, Antifederalists are only thought of as framers in passing, if at all. Based on

---

<sup>169</sup> Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Linda Medcalf, “The Dark Side of the Constitution,” in John F. Manley and Kenneth M. Dolbeare, eds., *The Case against the Constitution: From the Antifederalists to the Present* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1987), 120-121.

<sup>170</sup> McCoy, *The Elusive Republic*, 200. “Advancing the Antifederalist argument of 1788,” McCoy writes, “the Federalists claimed that republican government could not function effectively over such a large area; hence, American interest should extend no farther west than the Mississippi River.” The Federalists, in sum, wanted to maintain their political clout. Also see: James H. Ellis, *A Ruinous and Unhappy War: New England and the War of 1812* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2009), 88. Ellis details the hypocrisy of many Federalists for supporting actions like privateering during the conflict that they said they wanted no part of, the War of 1812.

their workload, this is an injustice which needs to be remedied. Further study of Antifederalism need to be applied to the philosophy, especially in regards to their numerous correct predictions. No less than the heartache and headache of a civil war was at stake, according to the title and contents of an *Antifederalist Paper* by the writer Philanthropos. If their advice was heeded, perhaps that indelible stain on the American experiment could have been reduced to nothing more than a crumb.<sup>171</sup>

Whether of plebian or refined stock, Antifederalists were aware of the dangers that would follow the speedy transformation of America's political framework, and they squeezed what they could from the proceedings to ameliorate the effects of such drastic change. So, despite the very real socioeconomic divisions within the Antifederalist ranks, a high degree of egalitarian thought was shared—certainly more than the Federalists and perhaps amongst the most ever generated by any American political faction or party. Theirs was certainly a joint cause; every attempt to compartmentalize the Antifederalists falls short as a result of their observable devotion to unconsolidated government. Specifically, a negative view of constitutionally-sanctioned standing armies formed the backbone of a cross-class Antifederalist identity. Each rank's written legacy showcases their steadfast disapproval of not only Federalism in general, but also, as a glaring ideological counterpoint, the idea of maintaining a standing army.

While no longer completely buried in the academic realm, Antifederalism continues to linger outside the collective American mind. Perhaps the philosophy's brief lifespan (1787-1789) helps explain its peripheral placement, but disconnects clearly exist since Antifederalist idioms, observations, truths, and successes have been appropriated by subsequent generations for

---

<sup>171</sup> James M. Banner, *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 129; Philanthropos, *Antifederalist* No. 7, "Adoption of the Constitution Will Lead to Civil War," in Borden, ed., *The Antifederalist Papers*, 16-18.

political, economic, social, and even moral and spiritual purposes.<sup>172</sup> Some are applied on a daily basis: a citizen stating their 1<sup>st</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights (Bill of Rights), for example. Individuals readily quote passages dealing with personal rights and liberty from famous Antifederalist figures—central government skeptics, of course—such as Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Mercy Otis Warren, and certainly the prolific, if enigmatic, Thomas Jefferson. Though not conclusively an Antifederalist by title, Jefferson’s beliefs, based on the prodigious extent of his writings, visibly indicate ideological mutuality with what the historical study understands as Antifederalism. References to key Federalist leaders like Robert Morris, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and even the historically prolific yet enigmatic James Madison are far less common in public discourse. Yet, the Federalists won the day, and their layout for effective governance, the bulk of the Constitution, stands to *this* day. To date, a widespread understanding of the conceptual differences between Antifederalism and Federalism is lacking in both the academic and public spheres, an injustice that intellectually deprives the very country that Antifederalism had a hand in molding.<sup>173</sup> It is the responsibility of historians to pursue, identify, recover, and share, for the benefit of both academia and the general public, the significance of such neglected or forgotten information.

To prevent Antifederalism from staying frozen in historical obscurity, whether intentionally or unintentionally, it must be understood for what it was: the scion of the Revolutionary ideal. The inclusive Antifederalist objection to standing armies explains their nearly uniform stand against Federalist policies. These casteless criticisms run contrary to the accepted notion in which Antifederalists, as a group, were marked by “their cacophony, not their

---

<sup>172</sup> Foreword by Jackson Turner Main, in Manley and Dolbeare, eds., *The Case against the Constitution*, viii.

<sup>173</sup> Duncan, *The Antifederalists and Early American Political Thought*, xxiii. Duncan justifiably feels that leaving the Antifederalists “out of our political tale [...] distorts not only American political history but also contemporary American political thought.”

harmony.”<sup>174</sup> While varying economic imperatives—not limited to slavery, manufacturing, self sufficient farming, cash crop farming, and law—made it difficult for elite Antifederalists to articulate a national platform, it did not prevent it. And, they all voiced concern over similar concepts, such as those that comprise the Bill of Rights and the role that the military would play in the proposed national government. It is difficult to determine if the standing army issue itself was enough to make or break ratification, but “the greatest talents on both sides devoted their best energies to its discussion.”<sup>175</sup> Assuming Antifederalists lacked solidarity strips the American Revolution of meaning and denies its theoretical successes. Individuals, states, and ideas came together, when necessary, to battle a common enemy. This enemy was their own culture, the latest in a line of empires to inevitably grow stale, and then be outgrown. But, as is so often mentioned, history seems doomed to repeat itself.

---

<sup>174</sup> Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 27. Cornell cites many Federalist sources which seem to imply that Antifederalism was doomed because no conclusive “alternative vision” was ever offered. While possible, and compelling, it is important to remember that perception can become reality. The Federalists simply could have been spreading rumors or falsehoods about the condition of their competition in order to remain a leg up in the ratification struggle. The Federalists were, after all, masters of the dissemination of propaganda. See also: McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum*, 6-8, 79; Main, *The Antifederalists*, 185, 252-259.

<sup>175</sup> Bernard Donahoe and Marshall Smelser, “The Congressional Power to Raise Armies: The Constitutional and Ratifying Conventions, 1787-1788,” *The Review of Politics* 33, no.2 (April 1971), 211. For a synopsis on the unprecedented growth of the national army during the nineteenth century, see: Christopher McGrory Klyza, “The United States Army, Natural Resources, and Political Development in the Nineteenth Century,” *Polity* 35, no. 1 (Autumn 2002), 1-28. When linking Antifederalism to the Bill of Rights and proactive political policy in general, consult: Saul Cornell, “Moving Beyond the Canon of Traditional Constitutional History: Anti-Federalists, the Bill of Rights and the Promise of Post-Modern Historiography,” *Law and History Review* (1994): 1-28.

**APPENDIX: ARMIES FOUND IN *THE ANTIFEDERALIST PAPERS***

The following individual documents from Borden's *Antifederalist Papers* contain passages that either criticize or question professional peacetime armies, as well as any ideas leading to the entrenchment of a culture of war:

No. 2 – William Grayson, “We Have Been Told of Phantoms”

No. 3 – A Farmer, “New Constitution Creates a National Government; Will Not Abate Foreign Influence; Dangers of Civil War and Despotism”

No. 4 – Patrick Henry, “Foreign Wars, Civil Wars, and Indian Wars—Three Bugbears”

No. 7 – Philanthropos, “Adoption of the Constitution Will Lead to Civil War”

No. 8 – A Federal Republican, “The Power Vested in Congress of Sending Troops For Suppressing Insurrections Will Always Enable Them to Stifle the First Struggles of Freedom”

No. 9 – Montezuma, “A Consolidated Government is a Tyranny”

No. 14 – Cato, “Extent of Territory Under Consolidated Government Too Large to Preserve Liberty or Protect Property”

No. 15 – [Unsigned], “Rhode Island is Right!”

No. 17 – Brutus, “Federal Power Will Ultimately Subvert State Authority”

No. 18-20 (Part II) – A Newport Man, “What Does History Teach?”

No. 21 – Centinel, “Why the Articles Failed”

No. 22 – Candidus, “Articles of Confederation Simply Requires Amendments, Particularly For Commercial Power and Judicial Power; Constitution Goes Too Far

No. 23 – Brutus, “Certain Powers Necessary for the Common Defense, Can and Should Be Limited”

No. 24 (Part I) – Brutus, “Objections to a Standing Army”

No. 25 (Part II) – Brutus, “Objections to a Standing Army”

No. 26 (Part I) – A Farmer and Planter, “The Use of Coercion by the New Government”

No. 27 (Part II) – John Humble, “The Use of Coercion by the New Government”

No. 28 (Part III) – [Unsigned], “The Use of Coercion by the New Government”

- No. 29 – A Democratic Federalist, “Objections to National Control of the Militia”
- No. 32 (Part I) – Brutus, “Federal Taxation and the Doctrine of Implied Powers”
- No. 33 (Part II) – Brutus, “Federal Taxation and the Doctrine of Implied Powers”
- No. 37 – The Federal Farmer, “Factions and the Constitution”
- No. 38 – A Countryman, “Some Reactions to Federalist Arguments”
- No. 39 – A Farmer, “Appearance and Reality—the Form is Federal, the Effect is National
- No. 40 – Philadelphiensis; An American, “On the Motivations and Authority of the Founding Fathers”
- No. 41-43 (Part I) – The Federal Farmer, “The Quantity of Power the Union Must Possess is One Thing; the Mode of Exercising the Powers Given is Quite a Different Consideration”
- No. 41-43 (Part II) – The Federal Farmer, “The Quantity of Power the Union Must Possess is One Thing; the Mode of Exercising the Powers Given is Quite a Different Consideration”
- No. 44 – Deliberator, “What Congress Can Do, What a State Can Not
- No. 45 – Sydney, “Powers of National Government Dangerous to State Governments; New York as an Example”
- No. 46 – An Old Whig, “Where Then is the Restrain?”
- No. 48 – Leonidas, “No Separation of Departments Results in No Responsibility”
- No. 51 – Aristocrotus, “Do Checks and Balances Really Secure the Rights of the People?”
- No. 52 – Consider Arms, Malichi Maynard, and Samuel Field, “On the Guarantee of Congressional Biennial Elections”
- No. 53 – Amicus, “A Plea for the Right of Recall”
- No. 56 (Part II) – The Federal Farmer, “Will the House of Representatives Be Genuinely Representative?”
- No. 58 (Part IV) – The Federal Farmer, “Will the House of Representatives Be Genuinely Representative?”
- No. 67 – Cato, “Various Fears Concerning the Executive Department”

No. 70 – An Old Whig, “The Powers and Dangerous Potentials of His Elected Majesty”

No. 72 – Republicus, “On the Electoral College; On ReEligibility of the President”

No. 74 – Philadelphiensis, “The President as Military King”

No. 84 – Brutus, “On the Lack of a Bill of Rights”

No. 85 – Plebian, “Concluding Remarks: Evils Under Confederation Exaggerated; Constitution Must Be Drastically Revised Before Adoption”

## REFERENCES

### Primary Sources

Newspapers:

*Carlisle Gazette*, 9 January 1788

*Massachusetts Centinel*, 20 March 1790

*Pennsylvania Herald*, 12 December 1787

*Petersburg Virginia Gazette*, 13 March 1788

*Philadelphia Freeman's Journal*, 2 January 1788

*United States Chronicle*, 17 April 1788

Published Volumes:

*Annals of Congress, 1789-1824*. Volume 1. Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834.

Borden, Morton, ed. *The Antifederalist Papers*. East Lansing Michigan State University Press, 1965.

Boyd, Julian P., Charles T. Cullen, John Catanzariti, Barbara B. Oberg, et al, eds. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. Volumes 1-39. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-.

Davis, David Brion and Steven Mintz, eds. *The Boisterous Sea of Liberty: A Documentary History of America from Discovery through the Civil War* (paperback edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Dwight, Theodore. *History of the Hartford Convention: With a Review of the Policy of the United States Government Which Led to the War of 1812*. New York: N. & J. White; Boston: Russell, Odiorne, & Co., 1833.

Earle, Edward Mead, ed. *The Federalist: A Commentary on the Constitution of the United States*. New York: Modern Library, 1941.

Elliot, Jonathan, ed. *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia, in 1787*. Volume IV. 2<sup>d</sup> ed. of 1888. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968.

- Hutchinson, William T., William M. E. Rachal, et al., eds., *The Papers of James Madison*, Congressional Series. Volume 14. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1962.
- Farrand, Max, ed. *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*. Volumes I-III. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911.
- Ford, Paul Leicester, ed. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Volumes 1-10. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899.
- Frohnen, Bruce, ed. *The Anti-Federalists: Selected Speeches and Other Writings*. Washington D. C. Regnery Gateway, 1999.
- Hamowy, Ronald, ed. *Cato's Letters, or, Essay on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995.
- Jensen, Merrill, John P. Kaminski, and Gaspare J. Saladino, et al., eds. *The Documentary History the Ratification of the Constitution*. Volumes I-XVIII. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1976-.
- Rives, William C., and Philip R. Fendall, eds. *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison: Fourth President of the United States*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1865.
- Sheehan, Colleen A., and Gary L. McDowell, eds. *Friends of the Constitution: Writings of the 'Other' Federalists, 1787-1788*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998.
- Storing, Herbert J., and Murray Dry, eds. *The Complete Antifederalist*. Volumes 1-7. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981.
- U.S. Bureau of Rolls and Library, *The Documentary History of the Constitution of the United States, 1786-1870*. Volume II. Washington D. C.: U. S. Department of State, 1894.

## Secondary Sources

### Monographs:

- Bailyn, Bernard. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967.
- Banner, James M. *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815*. New York: Knopf, 1970.
- Banning, Lance. *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.

- Beard, Charles A. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*. Original publication in 1913; reissue edition, New York: The Free Press, 1986.
- Buel, Richard Jr. *America on the Brink: How the Political Struggle over the War of 1812 almost Destroyed the Young Republic*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Burt, Shelley. *Virtue Transformed: Political Argument in England, 1688-1740*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Carr, J. Revell. *Seeds of Discontent: The Deep Roots of the American Revolution, 1650-1750*. New York: Walker & Company, 2008.
- Cornell, Saul. *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism & the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Coffman, Edward M. *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Duncan, Christopher M. *The Antifederalists and Early American Political Thought*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1995.
- Freeman, Joanne B. *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Gerston, Larry N. *American Federalism: A Concise Introduction*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2007.
- Hosmer, James Kendall. *Samuel Adams*. Reprint, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913.
- Hünemörder, Markus. *The Society of the Cincinnati: Conspiracy and Distrust in Early America*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2006.
- Jensen, Merrill. *The New Nation: A History of the United States during Confederation, 1781-1789*. New York: Vintage, 1965.
- Labunski, Richard E. *James Madison and the Struggle for the Bill of Rights*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Maier, Pauline. *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. New York: Knopf, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010.

- Main, Jackson Turner. *The Antifederalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961. Reprint, 2004.
- Manley, John F. and Kenneth M. Dolbeare, eds. *The Case against the Constitution: From the Antifederalists to the Present*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1987.
- McCoy, Drew R. *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980.
- McDonald, Forrest. *E Pluribus Unum: The Formation of the American Republic, 1776-1790*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965.
- Rakove, Jack N. *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*. New York: Knopf, 1996.
- Riker, William H. *The Development of American Federalism*. Norwell: Kluwer Academic, 1987.
- Rutland, Robert Allen. *The Ordeal of the Constitution: The Antifederalists and the Ratification Struggle, 1787-1788*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966. Reprint, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983.
- Schwoerer, Lois G. *"No Standing Armies!": The Antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth Century England*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.
- Sellers, M. N. S. *American Republicanism: Roman Ideology in the United States Constitution*. New York: New York University Press, 1994.
- Stewart, Richard W., ed. *American Military History: United States Army and the Forging of a Nation, 1775-1917*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2005
- Storing, Herbert J. *What the Anti-Federalists Were For: The Political Thought of the Opponents of the Constitution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Truxes, Thomas M. *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Wilentz, Sean. *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln*. Vol. 1, *The Crisis of the New Order*. New York: Norton, 2005.
- Wills, Garry. *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999.
- Yarbrough, Jean M. *American Virtues: Thomas Jefferson on the Character of a Free People*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998.

Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*. Reissue, New York: Harper Perennial, 2005.

Articles:

Cornell, Saul. "Reflections on 'The Late Remarkable Revolution in Government': Aedanus Burke and Samuel Bryan's Unpublished History of the Ratification of the Constitution," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 112, no. 1 (1988): 103-130.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Moving Beyond the Canon of Traditional Constitutional History: Anti-Federalists, the Bill of Rights and the Promise of Post-Modern Historiography." *Law and History Review* (1994): 1-28.

Donahoe, Bernard and Marshall Smelser. "The Congressional Power to Raise Armies: The Constitutional and Ratifying Conventions, 1787-1788." *The Review of Politics* 33, no. 2 (April 1971): 202-211.

Fields, William S. and David T. Hardy. "The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History." *The American Journal of Legal History* 35, no. 4 (October 1991): 393-431.

Kenyon, Cecelia. "Men of Little Faith: The Antifederalists on the Nature of Representative Government." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (April 1962): 4-43.

Klyza, Christopher McGrory. "The United States Army, Natural Resources, and Political Development in the Nineteenth Century," *Polity* 35, no. 1 (Autumn 2002): 1-28.

Lanubski, Richard E. "The Hamiltonian Madison: A Reconsideration," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 92, no. 1 (January 1984): 3-28.

Schwoerer, Lois G. "The Literature of the Standing Army Controversy, 1697-1699," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 28 (1965): 189-212.