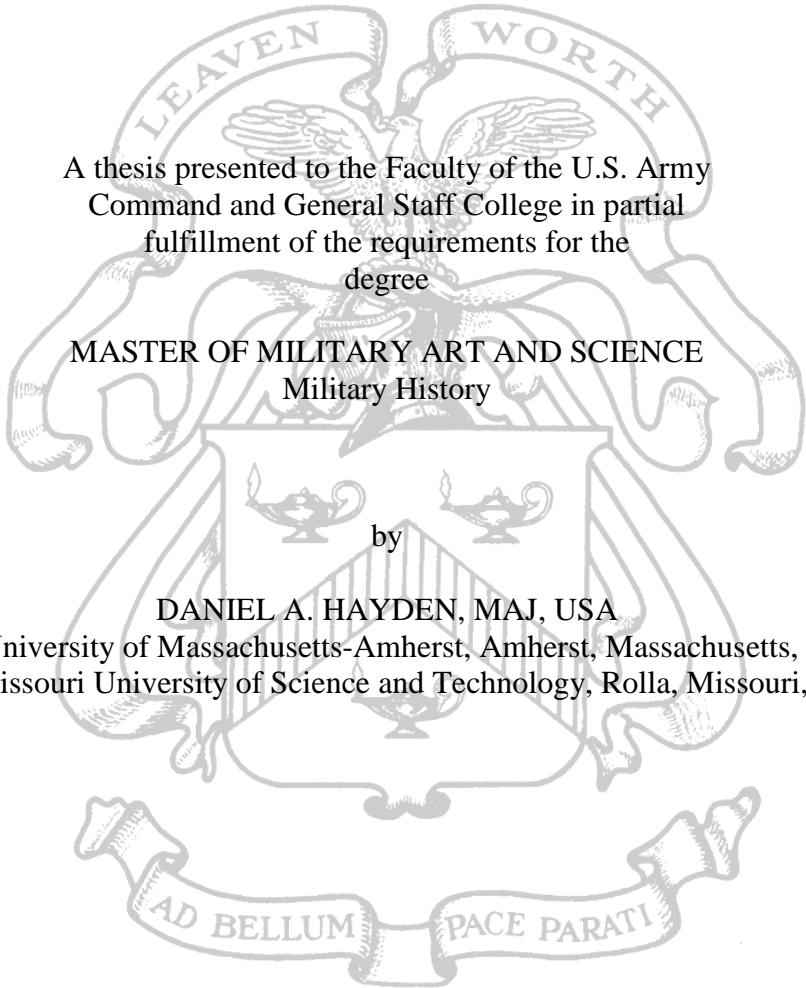


GEORGE WASHINGTON AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS  
DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR: A STUDY OF THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF CIVILIAN CONTROL



A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Military History

by

DANIEL A. HAYDEN, MAJ, USA

B.A., University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Amherst, Massachusetts, 2000  
M.S., Missouri University of Science and Technology, Rolla, Missouri, 2005

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Name of Candidate: MAJ Daniel A. Hayden

Thesis Title: George Washington and Civil-Military Relations During the  
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Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Thesis Committee Chair  
Jonathan M. House, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Donald B. Connelly, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Janet G. Valentine, Ph.D.

Accepted this 8th day of June 2012 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

GEORGE WASHINGTON AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR: A STUDY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CIVILIAN CONTROL, by Daniel A. Hayden, 122 pages.

The civil-military structure in which our military and its civilian authorities currently operate has grown and matured since the formation of the Army in 1775. George Washington went to great lengths to establish civilian control of the military as the Commander in Chief during the Revolutionary War. This thesis explores the dynamics between Washington and the Second Continental Congress as well his relationship with the individual state governments during this time. In order to give these relationships more context, this thesis presents an overview of five modern (Cold War period to present) theories of civil-military relations and their applicability to the experiences of George Washington. In doing so, this thesis provides a more current understanding of George Washington with regard to civil-military relations and his contributions to its growth and maturation of the pattern of civil-military relations currently enjoyed by our military and its civilian authorities.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

From Eliot Cohen's *Supreme Command* to Peter Feaver's "Agent Theory," modern civil-military theory and practice places a great deal of emphasis on the relationship between senior military officers and the President as Commander in Chief. Yet, from the time George Washington accepted command of the newly formed Continental Army to the day he resigned his commission at the Maryland Statehouse in Annapolis, he went through careful measures to subjugate himself to civilian authority. Given the lack of a true and singular executive authority, Washington took his marching orders from an ineffective Congress and received his soldiers and materiel from the colonial governments themselves. It was through these relationships and experiences that Washington established the precedents that nurtured a civil-military construct in which military subordination is unquestioned. George Washington's contributions to the establishment of civilian control continue to inform and shape the American civil-military experience and especially contemporary civil-military relations theory. Unfortunately, contemporary theory on civil-military relations often overlooks his overwhelmingly positive influence in this regard.

Therefore, it is useful to ask the question, how did George Washington and his experiences during the Revolutionary War contribute to the establishment of civilian control in America? To better answer this primary question, one must examine his relationships and his tensions with Congress as well as with the states. Washington's civil-military relationship with Congress had its difficulties and both parties were prone to missteps while trying to maintain a proper balance of authority over the military at a



time when Congress approached the notion of a large standing army with extreme caution and prejudice. Despite his difficulties in forming a healthy pattern of civil-military relations with Congress, Washington sought to establish Congress as the preeminent civilian authority over the military. While this was a cause for concern with regard to an evolving pattern of civil-military relations with the various state civil authorities, Washington's personal histories with many of the provincial power brokers helped to quell any underlying provincial resentment toward the Commander in Chief.

On June 15, 1775, the Second Continental Congress elected George Washington as the Commander in Chief of the recently formed Continental Army. Despite constant military and political setbacks, Washington served in this capacity for the duration of the Revolutionary War. His public and private correspondences clearly indicate that he felt it necessary completely to subjugate himself to civilian authority, regardless of the source of that authority.

As Commander in Chief, Washington answered not only to Congress but also to the governors of the individual states. He was dependent on one for his command authority and guidance and on the other for both personnel and materiel. Despite a steady depreciation of the Continental currency, untrained soldiers whose enlistments always seemed to be at an end, and a sometimes-crippling shortage of equipment, George Washington and his lieutenants forged ahead. They did not have the luxury of a strong standing army or the advantage of a fully operating government at any level. Most of their soldiers and materiel came to them in a piecemeal fashion from the states that based their support to Washington on where the threat was at any given point in time; nor did

they have the steady flow of supplies or adequate systems of sustainment that today's military leaders enjoy.

The study of George Washington's experiences and influence on our country's civil-military experience is well-trodden territory. However, most studies on the matter focus on one or two elements of George Washington's civil-military relations with either Congress or the states. For example, most historians point to his handling of the events at his camp in Newburgh, New York, in 1783 as the key event in his establishment of today's civil-military model.<sup>1</sup> Although his suppression of the "Newburgh Conspiracy" is a major example of his thoughts and deeds into action concerning military interaction with civil authority, this event was not the first time he displayed patience, fortitude, and understanding with regard to civil authority. Indeed, these characteristics were the hallmark of his time as Commander in Chief. This thesis approaches George Washington's impact on the current state of civil-military relations in a more holistic manner through a well-defined framework of modern civil-military relations theory in order to illustrate his contributions to the establishment of the hallmark of present day civil-military relations: civilian control.

Given the wealth of public and private correspondence and writings that Washington produced throughout his life, there is ample primary source material for this study. As W. W. Abbot writes in *George Washington Reconsidered*, George Washington was very conscious of how future generations would view his contributions to his country. For posterity's sake, he was a prolific writer and extremely disciplined in the preservation of his correspondence and diaries even though he refused to write an autobiography. In this regard, Washington was not at all different from his peers.

However, none of his contemporaries, according to Abbot, left subsequent generations with nearly as much material as did George Washington.<sup>2</sup> Luckily for anyone attempting to extrapolate his thoughts and feelings on any number of a variety of topics, a majority of his writings has been published or are in the process of being published. The fact that this massive undertaking began in 1969 and continues to the present day speaks volumes to not only the wealth of material left behind by Washington but also to the value it holds over 200 years later. The bulk of his writing is now readily available through *The Papers of George Washington* and in digital format through the University of Virginia.<sup>3</sup>

The secondary resources available on George Washington and his impact on our country are voluminous to say the least. The many biographies on our first President range in degree from myth debunkers to hagiographers. Of particular concern was being able to identify objective biographies and find reliable commentary that fell in the middle of that spectrum. The introduction to Don Higginbotham's *George Washington Reconsidered* outlines a concise review of the most prevalent literature on the topic and these ten pages alone were a great stepping off point.<sup>4</sup> However, choosing where to begin, where to follow the example of others, and where to finish was a challenge for this project.

Ron Chernow offers a very succinct and balanced look at Washington with his publication *Washington: A Life*, which provides a more recent look at Washington than James Thomas Flexner's epic biography. While Chernow's work relies heavily on Flexner's efforts, he also has the advantage of the more holistic body of Washington's correspondence with the recently published *Papers of George Washington*. In addition, the writings of both Joseph Ellis and David McCullough are of value when looking for a

fresh approach to the study of the earliest years of our nation. Although Ellis's biography of Washington is prone to wander and only scratches the surface on most topics, he still presents a fairly well rounded portrait of Washington. Finally, David Hackett Fischer does a remarkable job of bringing Washington's decision making and its impact on the course of the Revolutionary War to life even if Fischer's work does seem to read like a textbook at times.

This study focuses on Washington's time as the Commander in Chief examining George Washington's relationship with Congress, his relationship with the states, and how they inform the classic theories of Samuel P. Huntington and Morris Janowitz, and the recent theories of Peter Feaver, Rebecca Schiff, and Michael Desch. All of these theories borrow from the experiences of George Washington in some way or another.

The study of civil-military relations throughout U.S. or American history is as vast as it is varied. Samuel P. Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* and Morris Janowitz *The Professional Soldier* are widely regarded as the two pillars of civil-military relations theory. Huntington's work is not without its flaws as evidenced by the fact that most subsequent works on the subject attempt to discredit his theories on objective civilian control and its foundational concepts of the military professional.<sup>5</sup> Given the level of professionalism inherent within the military's officer corps, Huntington presupposes an officer of an apolitical nature. In very clear and concise language, Huntington asserts a definitive split between the military and civilian spheres of influence. It is solely within the civilian sphere to direct policy regarding the use of force and it is solely within the military's sphere to implement that policy.<sup>6</sup> It is also important to note that many within the senior ranks of today's military still hold Huntington's

theories in high regard. For evidence of this, one merely needs to read the recent White Paper from the US Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) *The Profession of Arms* to discover how highly regarded Huntington's theories remain today among the military's senior leadership.

Historically, most view Janowitz's treatment of civil-military relations as a sociological response to Huntington's institutional view of the normative question of civil-military relations.<sup>7</sup> This makes sense because Janowitz is a sociologist. While also focusing on the military officer as a professional, Janowitz contends that rather than a divide between the military professional and civilians there is and will continue to be great overlap. This is due mainly to the increased influence that technological advances have had in developing the various professional realms within the officer corps. Furthermore, in response to Huntington's assertion of objective civilian control, Janowitz calls for more civilian oversight and argues the inevitability of a military transition to a constabulary type force.<sup>8</sup> Written within the context of Cold War society and the persistent threat of a nuclear war, *The Soldier and the State* and *The Professional Soldier* leave much to be desired for today's contemporary students of civil-military relations. It is for this reason that Peter Feaver and Rebecca Schiff have presented their own theories on the subject. Having published several articles before the publication of *Armed Servants* in 2002, Feaver attempts to answer the normative question of civil-military relations (or as he calls it, the "civil-military problematique") with his "agency theory." Feaver applies the principal-agent model to his study of civil-military relations in which the civilian authority is the principal with the military being its agent. According to

Feaver, four patterns of civil-military relations serve as the foundations that dictate the level of conflict within the relationship.<sup>9</sup>

Rebecca Schiff branches off in a wholly different direction in her book, *The Military and Domestic Politics: A Concordance Theory of Civil-Military Relations*. Although first published in 2008, Schiff introduced her theories in a 1995 article in *Armed Forces and Society*. Her theory centers on the false universal application of previous “separation” theories of civil-military relations. Rather than calling for a definitive split or separation of the institutions, Schiff contends that concordance between them is more applicable today. What is most interesting is that rather than trying to establish a new theory to supplant current normative thought, Schiff contends that she is merely trying to offer a new perspective on the subject.<sup>10</sup> By doing so, she also admits that separation is in fact a good thing for the United States simply because it has been engrained in the fabric of our own civil-military structure for so long. It is not a stretch to argue this is due in no small part to the precedent set by George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

The final theory of civil-military relations on which this study focuses is from Michael Desch. Desch’s theory is a structural approach based on the degree of internal and external threats that America faces. He uses the threat-based structure in an attempt to determine the varying degrees of “goodness” in any civil-military relationship. In the end, he concedes that Huntington’s notion of objective civilian control is probably the ideal, but also contends this depends on the situation.<sup>11</sup> He further argues that military doctrine plays an important role in determining the health of a country’s civil-military

relations patterns at times when a threat-based structure is insufficient.<sup>12</sup> The following chapter examines these instances in further detail.

In addition to the primary sources already mentioned, there were a great many secondary sources that aided in the research of the various civil-military relations theories in this study. Mac Owens's recent work *US Civil-Military Relations After 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain* offers a very thorough and balanced overview of the major theories applied here. Although Dale Herspring's *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil-Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush* offers a slightly more cursory synopsis of various civil-military relations themes, it is nonetheless very useful in helping the reader stay focused on several key points of emphasis. These include but are not limited to the major differences and influences of Huntington and Janowitz and the more contemporary responses to their theories. James Burk's 2002 piece in *Armed Forces and Society* was very helpful in building a foundational understanding of Huntington and Janowitz in particular. Finally, like many of his contemporaries, Michael Desch took many years and a few published articles to finalize his argument in his book *Civilian Control of the Military*. For example, the essay published in *Civil-Military Relations and Democracies* was a good start but his subsequent article in *Armed Forces and Society* was a much more succinct and holistic offering of his theory.

This study presents an overall framework of the five previously discussed theories on civil-military relations as it explores George Washington's own challenges in civil-military relations as well as his response to them. His relationship with Congress itself is essential given the lack of a true executive authority from which to take his orders even if Congress enmeshed legislative mechanisms that sought to establish itself as the executive

military authority. George Washington's dealings with the various state authorities are equally important given the fact that he received his soldiers and the preponderance of his materiel and supplies from them. This study concludes by explaining his contributions to the maturation of this country's civil-military relations experience and the establishment of civilian control. One overarching theory may not apply to the state of civil-military relations during this period in America's history but rather an amalgamation of them all. In the final analysis, there are certain things that theory cannot account for such as the power of personality and personal relationships. In addition, there are aspects of the theories discussed that serve as a wonderful line of departure for anyone studying the dynamics of the relationships between a military, its civil authorities, and its society.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Kohn writes on this extensively in *The Eagle and The Sword* as well as in his 1970 article in *The William and Mary Quarterly* in which he outlines the details of the events surrounding the Newburgh Conspiracy and George Washington's involvement. Richard H. Kohn, "The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy: America and the Coup D'Etat," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (April 1970), 187-220; Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

<sup>2</sup>Don Higginbotham, *George Washington Reconsidered* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 275.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 283-284.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-10.

<sup>5</sup>Peter D. Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society* 23, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 150-151. See also Peter D. Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (June 1999): 212.

<sup>6</sup>Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil-Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 5-8.

<sup>7</sup>Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations," 212.



<sup>8</sup>Mackubin Thomas Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 911: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 23-26.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 28-31.

<sup>10</sup>Rebecca L. Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered: A Theory of Concordance," *Armed Forces and Society* (Fall 1995): 7-12.

<sup>11</sup>Larry Jay Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 26.

<sup>12</sup>Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 911*, 26-27.

## CHAPTER 2

### A REVIEW OF RELEVANT CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS THEORY

#### Introduction

Through the history of armies interacting with their governments within democratic societies, the one constant has been the conflict contained therein. This conflict is rooted in the problem of how a society creates, mans, and equips a capable military for the purposes of defense while avoiding an armed force that poses a risk to that government. In other words, how do you make a military strong enough to protect and defend you but subservient enough so that it is not a threat to your society or government? This is the central question for anyone studying civil-military relations past, present, or future. This thesis explores certain aspects of current civil-military relations theory and uses them as a lens through which to explain how George Washington’s civil-military experience helped to establish and define the key aspect of civilian control that exists in the United States today.

The concept that Peter Feaver calls the “civil-military problematique” is the driving force behind the need for a theory and the continued study of civil-military relations. As Feaver states, “the civil-military problematique is a simple paradox: because we fear others we create an institution of violence to protect us, but then we fear the very institution we created for protection.”<sup>1</sup> Said another way, creating a military strong enough to protect a society and the emplacement of effective measures of control to keep that military from turning on its creator is the primary civil-military relations challenge for a society. However, if a military is too weak, it cannot adequately support its citizenry.<sup>2</sup> This was the primary concern for the military and their civilian authorities

during the time of the Revolutionary War. The founding fathers needed an army with which to fight for their independence yet they feared the existence of a strong military establishment. This conflict begs some sort of resolution through the study of contemporary civil-military relations theory.

From Samuel P. Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* to Peter Feaver's *Armed Servants*, the study of civil-military relations in our country has been as equally thorough as it has been diverse. Within this context, an all-encompassing and overarching theory for the study of civil-military relations simply does not exist. This is not from the lack of trying or wanting as many great minds approached this problem from many angles, but all fell short in some way, shape, or form. To add to the confusion, there is not even an agreement concerning which intellectual realm the study of civil-military relations falls. There are competing and complimentary theories in the fields of sociology, political science, and history.<sup>3</sup>

Considered by many as the dean of post World War II civil-military relations,<sup>4</sup> Samuel P. Huntington views the issue through an "institutional" lens while his contemporary Morris Janowitz looks at it through a "cultural" lens.<sup>5</sup> More recently, in an attempt to reconcile what he sees as shortcomings in *The Soldier and the State*, Peter Feaver takes on his mentor within a post Cold War context.<sup>6</sup> Michael Desch authors another popular theory of the post Cold War study of civil-military relations as he frames his thoughts within the context of a society's threat environment.<sup>7</sup> In addition, Rebecca Schiff endeavors to add to the discussion by giving her theories as they apply to both mature and immature democracies.<sup>8</sup>

## Military Professionalism versus the Citizen-Soldier

The two primary and competing foundational theories, which have driven the discussion on civil-military relations for over half a century, are those of Samuel P. Huntington and his contemporary, Morris Janowitz.<sup>9</sup> These two theories represent widely differing views on where the military, as a profession, belongs within our society. Whereas Huntington argues that the military should remain apart from society, Janowitz contends the opposite should be the norm. They differ from each other in the fundamental view that our society should have of the military. Huntington champions the notion of a professional soldier while Janowitz supports the ideals of the citizen-soldier.<sup>10</sup> As will be explained in detail, Huntington supports “objective” civilian control of the armed forces and Janowitz favors “subjective” civilian control, albeit in a limited fashion.<sup>11</sup>

In his seminal work on the subject, Samuel P. Huntington presents us with his widely read and oft-criticized theories on civil-military relations in *The Soldier and the State*. All subsequent theories and arguments since the start of the Cold War period build upon the foundation laid by Huntington. Huntington admits that his studies of civil-military relations and his writing of *The Soldier and The State* are the product of his own frustrations with previous civil-military relations theory and even describes them as “a confused and unsystematic set of assumptions and beliefs.”<sup>12</sup> He continues by stating the purpose of his work is to provide a more relevant framework for the study of civil-military relations and concludes this line of thought by hoping his new framework serves future generations as a stimulant for further thought and discussion of civil-military relations.<sup>13</sup>

Referred to as an “institutional” theory by Mac Owens, Huntington gives his answer to the normative question of civil-military relations by clearly defining when and how the split should occur between the two institutions of the soldier and the state.<sup>14</sup> The dialogue of balancing the requirements of national security with the maintenance of a democratic government occurs primarily between the military and society. In this dialogue, Huntington asserts that the professional officer corps represents the military whereas the country’s democratically elected leaders represent society.<sup>15</sup> Given that the security of a society is solely within the military’s purview and the officer corps is the executive agency given the responsibility for its execution, Huntington takes an in depth look at the officer corps as a professional body. He adamantly believes the modern officer is, in the truest sense, a professional. He goes into great depth with his analysis, as he believes this assertion is the most fundamental thesis of *The Soldier and the State*.<sup>16</sup>

Serving as an advocate for the military profession, Huntington laments the fact that society tends to ignore the professional character of the officer corps in comparison to other professions.<sup>17</sup> Huntington stresses three characteristics inherent to any profession when examining the military officer as a professional. The application of these characteristics of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness is where Huntington presents the facts and assumptions surrounding his primary argument that the military most effectively serves its primary purpose when it is a separate institution from the rest of society.<sup>18</sup>

A professional is an expert in his craft. This expertise comes from years of experience and professional military education. Professional expertise requires a professional education provided by “special institutions operated by or affiliated with the

profession itself.”<sup>19</sup> The second element to Huntington’s litmus test for a professional is social responsibility. Just like a physician practicing medicine, society insists that the military employs its expertise only for “socially approved purposes.”<sup>20</sup> Society through its political agent, the state, is the approval authority for these purposes.<sup>21</sup> As a final yet critical note on this characteristic, Huntington insists that a military officer’s responsibility is to the state as an expert advisor. He insists that a military officer cannot impose decisions outside his special field of expertise. The final characteristic found in a profession is a sense of corporateness. Corporateness most notably exists with a shared sense of purpose and a collective feeling of separation from the rest of society not employed within their profession. Furthermore, a shared sense of misery from lengthy training or educational requirements contributes to this concept of corporateness.<sup>22</sup>

At the heart of Huntington’s ideal answer to the civil-military problematique is the necessity of what he calls objective civilian control of the military. As Huntington sees it, “civilian control in the objective sense is the maximizing of military profession.”<sup>23</sup> Objective civilian control makes the military an instrument of the state rather than a politicized mirror of the state. Therefore, the goal of any system of civilian control is to minimize military political power and objective civilian control does so by professionalizing the military and rendering them politically neutral. This is Huntington’s roundabout way of answering the question of the civil-military problematique.<sup>24</sup>

Objective civilian control over the military is in direct opposition to his worst-case scenario of subjective civilian control. He describes subjective civilian control as the constant interaction of competing civilian interest groups or factions within a society in order to maximize their power with respect to the military. However, given the numerous

interests of these factions, it is impossible to maximize their power as a whole.<sup>25</sup> These are important characteristics and concepts to note while moving forward with a study of the civil-military relationships between George Washington and his civilian authorities because although Washington believed he and his generals were trained military professionals, they were in fact closer to Janowitz's citizen-soldier. The conflict between Washington's notions and reality influenced his civil-military relations throughout the war.

Often held as the sociological response to Huntington, Morris Janowitz offers an alternative in his two primary works *The Professional Soldier* and *The Reconstruction of Patriotism*. Janowitz states his intent to treat his study of the military profession as an object of social inquiry.<sup>26</sup> While Huntington argues for the clear delineation of spheres between the military and civilian authority, in *The Professional Soldier*, Janowitz dismisses this assertion by citing the rapid technological advances as the primary catalyst for the exact opposite.<sup>27</sup> His theories of separation predicated on an increasingly technologically savvy military professional drove civil-military relations theory for the next twenty years. However, his more recent work, *The Reconstruction of Patriotism*, is more applicable toward this study of George Washington's civil-military relations.

By contrast, Morris Janowitz presents his ideal of the citizen-soldier while he laments a loss of civic virtue in *The Reconstruction of Patriotism*. Janowitz does not pretend to have invented this notion of the citizen-soldier and recognizes its existence as far back as the Greek city-states. The citizen-soldier is one who lives a domestic life but voluntarily serves his country when that country calls for his service. This concept is most closely associated with the colonial minutemen while that capacity for military

service currently resides in the various state National Guard units. These citizen-soldiers are a part of the society as opposed to Huntington's professional who is separate from society. This concept of the citizen-soldier is important as it gives one a proper framework to properly understand Washington's views on military professionalism and serves as a point of agreement between Washington and Congress. Washington and his generals failed to exhibit the prerequisite professional expertise and corporateness that led to subjective civilian control and periods of poor civil-military relations. Yet, Janowitz's virtues of the citizen-soldier served as a point of agreement and helped to strengthen the civil-military relationships between Washington, Congress, and the states.

As the U.S. military's relationship with its civil authorities continues to evolve with each new election and conflict, so too do the more contemporary theories on those relationships. Although the contributions of Huntington and Janowitz to the study of civil-military relations are undeniable, the end of the Cold War brought a clamor for a new and more relevant theory on the subject. The theories of Peter Feaver, Rebecca Schiff, and Michael Desch do just that. Their concepts give a fresh outlook to the often asked question of who controls the military and how.

#### Peter Feaver's Agency Theory

In an attempt to reconcile the flaws in the two classic theories, Peter Feaver, a former Huntington disciple, addresses the conflict found in the civil-military problematique with his "agency theory." Feaver opens with a brief review of the arguments originally made by Huntington and Janowitz with hindsight being 20/10. In his final analysis, Feaver essentially states that neither got it fully right nor did they get it fully wrong.<sup>28</sup> Even for a neo-Huntingtonian, his critique of his mentor's theories is



relatively honest and unbiased. It is because of the inadequacies in Huntington's explanation of American civil-military relations that he presents his own model on the issue of how civilians control the military. With his agency theory, Feaver explores the day-to-day relationship of control between principal and agent.<sup>29</sup>

Feaver applies a simple yet elegant principal-agent model to his study of civil-military relations. According to Feaver, the level of conflict between principal and agent varies, and is dependent upon the level and amount of oversight applied by the principal and whether the principal perceives the agent to be "working" or "shirking." Simply put, an employer (principal) contracts someone (agent) to perform a specific task and fulfill certain duties and responsibilities. In order to ensure the agent is doing what he is hired to do (working), the principal puts mechanisms in place (monitoring) to be certain that the agent is not doing something he should not (shirking). These monitoring techniques are either intrusive or non-intrusive.<sup>30</sup> Within the context of civil-military relations, civilian authority represents the principal, and the agent is the military that the principal contracts to provide security.

Feaver's usage of the terms working and shirking is important but misleading if not applied to his agency theory within the context of civil-military relations. In very simple terms, working is doing things the way civilians want. Shirking is doing them the way the military wants. Working means doing something to the satisfaction of the civilians and shirking means not doing it to the principal's satisfaction. Shirking, thus, does not imply a lazy and slovenly individual buried in the maze of the Pentagon, although Feaver admits they may exist.<sup>31</sup>

According to Feaver, determining whether someone is working is straightforward from the principal's perspective. After all, it is the principal's perspective that matters the most in this context. The complex piece to this dynamic is determining whether the agent is shirking. Civilians want security from external threat and they want to ensure political control of their destiny. The first goal of security is the functional goal of the principal in the agency theory. Ensuring political control of their destiny is the relational goal for the principal. When the principal and agent clearly define and meet these two goals, the military is working. Shirking usually occurs when the relational goals are not met. Shirking, in Feaver's theory, typically takes one of three forms. The first is a military's effort, perceived or not, to shift policy outcome by purposely inflating the estimated cost in lives and dollars of a military operation. The second form of military shirking takes the form of military efforts to determine the policy outcome with "end runs," press leaks, or covert appeals to other political actors whose goals are more in line with theirs. Finally, the third form of military shirking is when the military attempts to undermine policy through the process of "slow rolling" so the policy is never implemented.<sup>32</sup>

Feaver's agency theory is an excellent starting point for any holistic analysis of George Washington's civil-military relationships with Congress. Washington's authority came from Congress, as did his guidance for the conduct of the war. There is a common misconception that Washington did not maintain a healthy pattern of civil-military relations with Congress during his time as the army's Commander in Chief. However, when viewed within the context of Feaver's notion of working and shirking, one finds a more complex answer to a seemingly simple question.

### Rebecca's Schiff's Concordance Theory

More recently, Rebecca Schiff presented her civil-military theory of concordance as an alternative to the more universally accepted theories whose relational foundation is separation of the military, the politicians, and the citizenry. The fact that she makes a distinction and separates the political elites from the citizenry is key because neither Huntington nor Janowitz make that same type of separation. However, it is important to note that her theory, albeit critical of any institutional theory on civil-military relations, is not meant to supplant nor challenge such theories per se but rather offers a more holistic approach that she argues is more applicable to today's international civil-military environment.<sup>33</sup>

Schiff's "concordance theory" contends that previous theories based on separation are not universally applicable. Just because a certain system works for the United States does not mean it is the proper solution elsewhere. She states, "civilian control prevails in American political culture because the conditions for implementing that type of control are embedded here."<sup>34</sup> Although she takes aim at Huntington's separation theory of civil-military relations, she readily admits that the civil-military relations in the United States are quite healthy and normal overall. She gives an example of this by mentioning the fact that the average American citizen does not wake up in the morning worried about the military and whether or not a coup is imminent. This is not the case in other countries and a focal point for understanding Schiff's concordance theory. Separation of the institutions is neither a good thing nor a bad thing in all cases but the exportation or application of a system of separation occurs too often. Separation may very well be the answer for some

but it is not the answer for all.<sup>35</sup> The answer of separation, integration, or a mix of the two lies in a country's cultural conditions and historical background.<sup>36</sup>

Schiff insists that a civil-military structure of separation works for the United States because it evolved and matured throughout this country's history. This is important for anyone studying George Washington and civil-military relations. When viewed through this aspect of her theory, one finds George Washington responsible for the establishment of civilian control of the military.

#### Michael Desch's Threat Based Analysis

Michael Desch presents a threat-based explanation of civil-military relations patterns in his 1999 book, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment*. In it, he lays out a very simple structural analysis to explain patterns of civil-military relations throughout America's history. He writes from the perspective of someone trying to find an answer to why civilian control of the military became weaker immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union in a post-Cold War world. He does not subscribe to some of the theories of his contemporaries that this weakening of civilian control constitutes a crisis of civil-military relations but he does see the need to submit a viable explanation.<sup>37</sup>

Historically, a country's pattern of civil-military relations and the extent to which civilians control its military is in direct relation to the type and severity of the threat a country faces. Civilian control is a function of the origin and intensity of that threat. The difference between the two is quite simple. The Cold War and World War II were periods of high external threats. These threats are those that threaten the country as a whole and tend to bring unity and focus the military's attention outward. Internal threats are those

such as efforts of subversion and internal threats each threaten the difference actors in different ways. Internal threats that only affect the state but not the military are less likely to negatively impact civilian control. However, the internal threat that affects the military and the manner in which they do so is key to understanding Desch's theory. These internal threats specific to the military are things like preservation of its organizational autonomy and budget share. Desch also notes that threats also orient a military in a specific direction. Simply stated, a high external threat environment forces a military to orient its efforts outward and vice-versa.<sup>38</sup>

The easiest cases for a structural theory are those with a high external threat and low internal threat as well as those with a low external threat and a high internal threat. Countries facing a high external threat and a low internal threat are more likely to have the most stable civil-military relations. This is due in part to the fact that the military's focus is outward in these threat environments. A high external threat is likely to bring about a more experienced civilian leadership and a lower internal threat to the military. Opposing this civil-military stability is a nation with a low external threat and a high internal threat because the civilian leadership is most likely focused less on national security affairs. This opens the door for the aforementioned internal threats to the military such as budget cuts. These internal threats are likely to cause the military to attempt political intervention on its own behalf. This scenario of low external threat coupled with a high internal threat is, in Desch's assessment, the worst-case scenario and indicative of civil-military instability.<sup>39</sup>

The cases that require a more nuanced approach for a structural theory are those where external and internal threats are either both high or both low. For the purposes of

this study, only an examination of the former is necessary. For scenarios that present a high external threat and a high internal threat, measuring the strength of civilian control is also complicated. This is primarily an issue in the civilian arena as heightened internal and external threats cause factions and disagreements to emerge. For the military however, the high external threat causes it to come together and is less likely to fracture. Although its focus is uncertain given the intensity of each type of threat, the chances are high in a mature system that its focus will remain outward and make it more capable of meeting that external threat. Given the uncertainty of civilian control due to its fractious nature, the quality of civil-military relations in this scenario is likely to be poor at best.<sup>40</sup>

A closer look at a military's doctrine is the best way to determine whose interests prevail in a structurally indeterminate threat environment. A military's doctrine determines how a military employs its capabilities and how it uses its resources. The focus on military doctrine in this regard is not its effect on external consequences but rather its influence on internal consequences as it relates to the strength of civilian control. Military doctrine affects civilian control in three ways for cases when the strength of civilian control is difficult to structurally determine.<sup>41</sup>

Military doctrine affects civilian control by shaping the military's structure, its organizational culture, and serves as a focal point for disagreement or agreement between leaders on both sides. In order to determine the orientation of a military's focus, its organizational structure indicates whether that focus is on the internal threat or the external threat. In other words, doctrinally speaking, which threat or mission set does the military spend its time and money. Typically, a military cannot have it both ways. If it spends its resources training for and fighting a war beyond its borders, it is externally

focused and its doctrine for doing so is much more conducive to civilian control. By contrast, a military whose doctrine is internally focused on a perceived threat from within its own borders finds itself in a situation in which poor civil-military relations exists.<sup>42</sup>

A military's organizational culture is the second way that doctrine helps determine the type of civilian control in a structurally indeterminate environment. This culture is the "pattern of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that prescribe how a group adapts to its external environment and manages its internal affairs."<sup>43</sup> In this specific instance, a military's culture of subordination to civilian authority is the critical factor. If subordination to civilian authority is inherent in a military's organization, civilian control is much stronger than in a military that enjoys a more autonomous organizational culture.<sup>44</sup>

The final way that a military's doctrine affects civilian control is whether it is a focal point of disagreement or agreement between the military and civilians. Borrowing from Huntington's premise of military realism and civilian liberalism, Desch states that in a challenging external security environment both sides converge on military realism. However, given the lack of a strong external threat, civilian liberalism is likely to prevail as the norm as its own focus turns inward and thus becomes a threat to the military's well-being. This typically causes a divergence of ideals with military realism and weakens civilian control.<sup>45</sup>

### Conclusions for A Way Ahead

This chapter is a brief review of several of the more salient theories of civil-military relations presented in the last 50 years. Each one addresses the problem of how civilians and civilian authorities control the military from a different angle and in a

different way. None of these theories is without fault as one thing is certain: given the constant turnover of personnel and the evolving threat, there is simply no universal theory that holistically addresses the problematique.

The focus of most of these theories is to ascribe a pattern of healthy civil-military relations in mature democracies. However, some are not. That does not mean that those specific theories cannot apply to a mature democracy, though. Having said that, they all attempt to explain the present in order to prescribe the future of civil-military relations. Perhaps the more prudent place to look is in the past.

If these theories apply to mature democracies, it begs the question: how did George Washington contribute to the maturation of civil-military relations in this country while serving as Commander in Chief? As stated earlier, the contributions of George Washington to the study of civil-military relations are nothing new but many theories overlook his contributions. There are several questions that spring from these theories, questions that are pertinent to an analysis of George Washington's experiences and behavior. Huntington insists on the need for a divide between civil authority and the military. However, Janowitz insists on a convergence of the two with his ideal citizen-soldier. This disagreement feeds the argument for the type of military that a society needs and whether it should be comprised of professionals, citizen-soldiers, or perhaps a combination. For Washington, the citizen-soldier takes the form of an all-volunteer force and the various forms of state militia while he views himself and the Continental Army as true military professionals. Neither Huntington nor Janowitz agree with Washington in either case. This needs to be reconciled as there is evidence from the Revolutionary War to support both arguments.



Another aspect that is worth exploring is the question of whether George Washington was working or shirking. Was Washington shirking and to what degree was he shirking? If his civil-military relations with Congress were poor, was it because Washington did not do what they wanted him to do? When one views the events surrounding Valley Forge through Feaver's framework, one discovers a more quantifiable answer to these questions. Furthermore, if the establishment of civilian control is key to successful nature of the current civil-military structure, as Schiff contends, how did George Washington contribute to the establishment of such a system? Finally, the civil-military conflict over handling internal threats and external threats in the forms of Tories and the British military bears mentioning because, again, one does not find the evidence of overwhelming conflict that one expects to find. These particular aspects of these theories provide the framework by which this thesis explains how George Washington's experiences informed and contributed to the establishment of civilian control of the military in present day America.

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<sup>1</sup>Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique," 150.

<sup>2</sup>Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 911*, 12.

<sup>3</sup>Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations," 212.

<sup>4</sup>Language to this effect to describe the impact that Samuel Huntington has had on the study of civil-military relations is scattered throughout most readings on the subject. As further discussed, one cannot overstate his contributions to this particular field of study. See Michael C. Desch, "Soldiers, States, and Structures: The End of the Cold War and Weakening U.S. Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 24 (Spring 1998): 390; Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 911*, 12; Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations," 212.

<sup>5</sup>Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 911*, 13

<sup>6</sup>Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup>Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup>Rebecca L. Schiff, *The Military and Domestic Politics: A Concordance Theory of Civil-Military Relations* (London: Routledge, 2009), 173.

<sup>9</sup>Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique,” 150.

<sup>10</sup>Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 5-9.

<sup>11</sup>Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 911*, 23-25.

<sup>12</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), vii.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, vii-viii.

<sup>14</sup>Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 911*, 13.

<sup>15</sup>Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 3.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 7-79. Huntington devotes three chapters of his book strictly to the ideas of professionalism in the officer corps. The first chapter discusses the basis for professionalism. The second chapter gives a historical synopsis on the creation of professionalism within the officer corps of various armies throughout the past. Chapter 3 is his study of the military mind and borrows heavily from Clausewitz’ ideas on this subject.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>18</sup>Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 8. Huntington has an endnote describing the extent to which he researched the idea of what it means to be a professional. It bears mentioning because it is his only footnote for this chapter of his book.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 79-94, 141-163, 456. As enamored with objective civilian control as Huntington is, he recognizes its limits, especially in our own society. The key issue is balancing the ideologies prevalent to the officer corps with the prevalent ideologies of the society. Borrowing heavily from Clausewitz and Jomini, Huntington insists the military ethic is conservative and deeply realist. He reviews four major political ideologies and concludes that of the four, only conservatism is inherently not antimilitary. Of the three that are antimilitary, liberalism poses the biggest threat to the professionalism of the military and thus to national security. He posits inherent conflict between his 1957 liberal society and the conservative values needed for an effective military, and expounds on the foundations of American liberalism and its challenges to its military professionals. However, in the end, he contends that the solution to this unending conflict of America's pattern of civil-military relations is the weakening of liberalism or the weakening of the security threat.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 83-85.

<sup>26</sup>Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: Free Press, 1971), lvi.

<sup>27</sup>Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 8-10. Janowitz contends that a narrowing of skill differential between the military and society occurs due to the high level of specialization within the officer corps produced by advances in technology. Driven by these advances, military officers are required to possess special skills common to civilians and most even have civilian equivalents such as engineers, logisticians, and human resource specialists.

<sup>28</sup>Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 16-52.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 58-61.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 60-68.

<sup>33</sup>Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered," 7-11.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>35</sup>Schiff, *The Military and Domestic Politics*, 8-21.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>37</sup>Desch, "Soldiers, States, and Structures," 390-391.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 389.

<sup>39</sup>Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*, 12-15.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>44</sup>Desch, "Soldiers, States, and Structures," 396.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 396-397.

CHAPTER 3  
GEORGE WASHINGTON, CONGRESS, AND THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF CIVILIAN CONTROL

When the civil and military powers cooperate, and afford mutual aid to each other there can be little doubt of things going well.<sup>1</sup>

— George Washington to the New York  
Committee of Safety, April 20, 1776

Introduction

On June 14, 1775, the Second Continental Congress officially and collectively assumed responsibility for the band of colonial militia entrenched outside of Boston, Massachusetts. In effect, the Continental Army was born. The next day, Congress elected one of its own to serve as the first Commander in Chief of the newly christened army. Although he lacked the depth of military leadership experience possessed by some of his contemporaries, George Washington was uniquely qualified to handle the duties and responsibilities given to him that day. Throughout the duration of the war, periods of turmoil and cordiality marked the landscape of his relationship with his civilian authorities. However, with his handling of Congress, George Washington set a precedent for the pattern of civil-military relations under which the United States and its military operate today.

The intent of this portion of the thesis is to bring some of Washington's contributions to the forefront using modern civil-military relations theory as a framework for this discussion. The contrasting theories of Samuel P. Huntington and Morris Janowitz provide the most appropriate context to reconcile Washington's own thoughts

and practices on the topic of military professionalism. As discussed in the previous chapter, Huntington extolls the virtues of the military professional and presents three specific characteristics of a professional. The existence of the military professional, for Huntington, leads to a type of civilian control in which politics is no longer a factor in a military professional's decision making. Huntington also insists on distinct separation between the military and civilian authority. The existence of the military professional helps to maintain that separation. Morris Janowitz, on the other hand, champions the notion of the citizen-soldier. This type of professional is a part of the society in which he lives and works. This framework of professionalism vice the citizen-soldier is particularly useful when trying to reconcile the mistakes made by Washington and Congress in the course of their civil-military relationship. It is clear through his writings that Washington considered himself a military professional. However, when one examines the civil-military structure in place at the time, it is clear that Washington fell more into the category of Janowitz's ideal for the citizen-soldier.

In addition, the debate for professionalism aside, Peter Feaver's agency theory enriches one's understanding of the dynamics between Washington and Congress. Feaver's theory serves as a logical model with which to assess the effectiveness of Washington's execution of his Congressionally mandated duties and responsibilities. In other words, Feaver's model helps to determine whether Washington did things the way Congress wanted him to do them. Feaver uses the term "shirking" to describe a general who does things in a manner that conflicts with the preferences of his civilian authority. Feaver's agency theory helps to eliminate some formerly held notions of the civil-military relations between Washington and Congress during the Revolutionary War.

This chapter explores the relationship between Washington, Congress, and the military as it relates to the establishment of the unquestioned civilian control over the military that exists today. It first presents a brief background on George Washington followed by a similar treatment of the collective nature of the Continental Congress itself. Having given the relationship some context, this chapter reviews the winding path of Washington's civil-military relations with Congress through the course of the war and presents select examples to illustrate the far reaching impact of Washington's conduct as it relates to today's pattern of civil-military relations. This aspect of his contribution to the maturation of his country is one that many scholars overlook.<sup>2</sup>

### The Predestined General

Although it did not begin in such a manner, George Washington lived a charmed and unexpectedly long life. Born to Augustine and Mary Ball Washington in Westmoreland County, Virginia, on February 22, 1732, he was a fourth-generation Virginian and one of seven children. In the first of many family tragedies that characterized his early life, Washington's father died when George was eleven. His father's death effectively prevented Washington's entrance into upper society and limited his exposure to a more formal education, driving feelings of inadequacy and humility throughout the rest of his life.<sup>3</sup>

The biggest influence on Washington's teen years was his well-connected half brother, Lawrence. Lawrence Washington was fourteen years George's senior, and served as both his surrogate father and his conduit to early military service.<sup>4</sup> Through this familial connection and association with the powerful Fairfax family into which Lawrence married, George Washington petitioned for and received an adjutant-general

post in the Virginia militia in 1752. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Lawrence Washington's influence in George Washington's future as his connection to Lawrence gave George every political advantage in his pursuit of a career in the military. Furthermore, it was through Lawrence that Washington eventually became the owner and master of his family's estate at Mount Vernon. Tragedy struck Washington once again when Lawrence Washington died just as his half-brother's career began to show promise. Following Lawrence's death in 1752, Washington's newest admirer and mentor was none other than the same man who had granted his request for an adjutancy, Virginia Lieutenant Governor Robert Dinwiddie. Together with the Fairfax patriarch, William Fairfax, Dinwiddie proved a powerful ally for Washington through most of his early military career. Both men helped to screen their protégé from the criticism of the militia that characterized the relationship between colonial militia and British regulars.<sup>5</sup>

Washington's actions during an expedition into the Ohio wilderness in 1754 provide a key example of the support provided by Dinwiddie. Dinwiddie hastily ordered Washington to march whatever recruits he had to the Ohio River in order to defend English interests in the Ohio River valley. In a very broad set of orders, Dinwiddie authorized the use of force against any French opposition or any French forces that attempted to interfere with English military works or settlements. The result was a debacle at Fort Necessity that caused the only surrender of Washington's military career. Despite the international controversy caused by this expedition, Washington returned to Virginia as a quasi folk-hero because of Dinwiddie's public praise for Washington and the Virginia militia.<sup>6</sup> Although Dinwiddie privately reprimanded Washington for grossly



exceeding his orders, Dinwiddie's positive reports to London on the matter helped to make Washington an overnight sensation on both sides of the Atlantic.

The primary reason that Dinwiddie felt obligated to screen Washington from public criticism was because the Virginia legislature failed to adequately support the expedition in both manpower and equipment. Dinwiddie was simply covering up his own inadequacies. However, Washington could not fully escape controversy and tendered an abrupt resignation in 1754.<sup>7</sup> Despite his resignation, George continued to harbor martial ambitions as he acknowledged his future was "strongly bent to arms."<sup>8</sup>

Washington's sabbatical from military service was very brief because he became British Major General Edward Braddock's aide-de-camp in May 1755. Braddock's primary mission was the capture of Fort Duquesne (present day Pittsburgh). Learning of Washington's intimate knowledge of the frontier, Braddock willingly accepted Washington onto his staff even though he refused to listen to Washington's advice on frontier warfare. During a decisive engagement with French and Indian forces in the second week of July, Colonel Washington showed great poise and determination in the face of unrelenting enemy fire.<sup>9</sup> Had it not been for the death of his commanding general, it is probable that Washington was in line to receive a regular commission into the British Army. He had coveted such a commission since he was a child, when Lawrence had regaled George with stories of his time as a British regular. However, this dream died with Braddock.<sup>10</sup> One wonders if the outcome of the Revolutionary War would have been different, had Braddock survived and fulfilled his promise to Washington.

Although Braddock's ill-fated campaign was a chink in the British military's armor on the continent, it was a boon to Washington's reputation as a hero-warrior.<sup>11</sup> His

fellow Virginians started to see Washington as someone who was destined for greater things. Samuel Davies, a Presbyterian Minister, predicted as much while preaching to a company of volunteers in Hanover County, Virginia. Davies proclaimed the heroism of Washington and predicted “Providence has hitherto preserved [Washington] in so signal a manner for some important service to his country.”<sup>12</sup> Once again, even with a significant military setback, George Washington’s reputation continued to flourish.

Washington’s political connections proved helpful as his newly acquired status allowed Lieutenant Governor Dinwiddie to place him in command of all military forces in Virginia and give him responsibility for the defense of his colony’s 350-plus miles of western border. However, one should not assume that Washington’s relationship with Dinwiddie during this time was perfect. In fact, the relationship eventually deteriorated into petty bickering. This occurred after it became progressively apparent to Washington that Dinwiddie, despite his affinity for Washington, would not support an appointment for Washington as a British regular. Through a series of correspondence with John Robinson, the speaker of the House of Burgesses, Washington made his frustrations well known and eventually fell out of the good graces of Robert Dinwiddie.<sup>13</sup> This was clearly an example of the sort of political “end runs” that characterized Washington’s inexperience in the area of civil-military relations. Having alienated his most powerful ally, Washington’s military service to Virginia came to an anti-climactic end. In closing the current chapter of his military service, Washington was part of an American and British force that maneuvered on Fort Duquesne only to find it abandoned and left in ruins in November 1758. This effectively ended Washington’s military service, as Virginia’s frontier borders were now secure.<sup>14</sup>

During a seventeen-year break from military service, Washington spent his personal time attending to his correspondence and to running the day-to-day operations at Mount Vernon. He gained full ownership of Mount Vernon when Lawrence's widow died childless. This is yet another example of how his ties to his half-brother served as a benefit for the future Command-In-Chief.<sup>15</sup> How he spent his professional life equally shaped his future as the Commander in Chief. While Washington honed his managerial skills and personal discipline by directing operations at Mount Vernon, he also benefited from his time spent as a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses. It is impossible to exaggerate the influence of these experiences on his development. These experiences, particularly as a legislator, were the key advantages he held over military contemporaries such as Charles Lee and Horatio Gates who were no less ambitious, and who had more recent military experience commanding armies in the field.<sup>16</sup> Simply put, as a commander, he knew exactly what he was asking of his civilian authorities every time he requested more funding or additional time. Concurrently, he understood what Congress was asking of him when it issued its various military directives and policies. In the end, it was his connections to Lawrence, his prior interactions with civilian authority, and his life after Braddock's campaign that most contributed to Congress's selection of him as the Commander in Chief.

### A People's Congress

Less than a month after the shot heard around the world, the delegates of the Second Continental Congress converged on Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As a wave of excitement engulfed the city, the men convening inside the Pennsylvania State House agreed on very little other than the order of business. The order of business was

independence. Every motion and every resolve touched upon independence in some way, shape, or form; yet, the Congress remained factious and split on the subject.<sup>17</sup> Generally speaking, Congress consisted of three factions regarding the issue of independence.<sup>18</sup> The three primary groups were the conciliationists, the militants, and the moderates. It is important to understand the three general factions within Congress because Congress was the source of Washington's authority as their Commander in Chief. Given the lack of an executive authority at the Congressional level, Washington had to placate a Congress that held a wide variety of varying political views and dispositions. Congress lacked a coherent civil-military structure and often failed to speak with one voice. This was a significant challenge for any general who answered to Congress.

The conciliationists were by far the smallest of the three groups. Given the recorded political views of the delegates, only nine counted themselves as conciliationists. That totaled about 16 percent. The primary strength of this group was found in the mid-Atlantic states.

The conciliationists were neither Tories nor supporters of the crown. However, they were certainly accommodating of British colonial policy. They felt the ideal solution was a return to the status quo ante; conciliationists preferred a return to the imperial relationship that existed before 1763. Their goal was a self-governed America within the framework of the British Empire, achieved through obedience and petitioning. When asked how many petitions Congress should send, they probably answered, "one more." They advocated the use of force only when needed for the defense of their personal property or general livelihood. Conciliationists were the least important of the three groups.<sup>19</sup>

The militants were at the opposite end of the spectrum. This faction included some of the more recognizable and noteworthy names of the time such as cousins Samuel and John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. At the time that the Second Continental Congress held its first assembly, this group totaled eighteen delegates—about one third of the Congress. Militants represented all geographic locales from New England through the southern colonies, including South Carolina; however, the balance of power in this group rested with New England’s delegates.<sup>20</sup> This group’s primary aim was absolute independence. They viewed it as an essential and inevitable outcome and the justification for military action. Having lost their faith in the system, the militants believed that Britain would not capitulate to conciliationists’ demands for a return to the status quo.<sup>21</sup>

As stated, military action was their primary means to the desired end state. Unlike the conciliationists who supported a defensive posture for the sake of their own personal security, the militants favored an aggressive offensive mindset. They saw military victory as a key component to independence, and given their limited resources argued that only an aggressive offensive approach that favored initiative could attain victory. Their goal was to strike a decisive blow to the British forces in Massachusetts before the crown could muster to full capacity. That said, they were sufficiently realistic to anticipate a long and protracted conflict and identified France as a key ally very early in the process.<sup>22</sup> Strangely enough, it was this faction that later most strongly opposed the formation of a standing army. For example, Samuel Adams was always highly critical of the notion of standing armies and did not hide his disdain for soldiers or the army as a whole as he referred to soldiers as “the shoeblacks of society” and often opined, “the sins

of America may be punished by a standing army.”<sup>23</sup> Their opposition to a standing army coupled with their support for the war’s end-state (i.e. independence) weakened their civil-military relations with George Washington.

The third faction of Congress was also the largest and most geographically diverse. The moderates comprised just less than half of the delegates to the Second Continental Congress with twenty-five of the fifty-five members. Although this faction of delegates most heavily represented the mid-Atlantic to southern colonies, men such as John Hancock, Silas Deane, and Thomas Cushing strongly represented the New England area. Other notable names were Robert Morris of Pennsylvania, who later provided a significant amount of his own fortune to George Washington for the army while serving as the country’s Superintendent of Finance, and Philip Schuyler of New York who later served as one of Washington’s generals in the opening years of the war for independence.<sup>24</sup>

The moderates were the fence sitters. Like the other delegates, the moderates supported American rights, but were not quite willing to disavow England and stand in the name of independence. However, they also felt that the continued petitioning was pointless and would not yield the desired results. They too maintained an offensive mindset when it came to the use of force but unlike the militants saw such force as the means to a different end. The desired end state was for Britain to call off its dogs of war and change its policy toward America. As the largest party in Congress, the moderates were responsible for determining its course. In the opening months of the Second Continental Congress, they strongly opposed any motion for a declaration of independence. However, they concurrently joined with the militants in building an army

for the sole purpose of prosecuting a war. The moderates made neither friends nor enemies of their fellow Congressmen but given their majority, they were able to authorize a standing army whose purpose was the prosecution of a war with Britain.<sup>25</sup>

Washington fell somewhere in between the moderates and the militants. Given the wealth he possessed and therefore stood to lose, he was hesitant to cast his lot with militant Virginians such as Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and Richard Henry Lee. He initially favored a course that was consistent with the moderates who continued to believe much of the hostilities were the fault of Parliament and not the fault of their king.<sup>26</sup> However, Washington's actions spoke louder than words as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress where he served on nine separate committees that dealt primarily in military matters. As events in New England and Philadelphia unfolded, Washington could no longer remain on the fence with regard to independence.<sup>27</sup>

These Congressional factions were not necessarily political parties per se, as they were informally organized without designated leaders. They were simply factions of people holding similar opinions on a particular subject. Political parties did not properly exist in 1775 and did not openly appear until Washington's first term as President. However, despite the lack of a coherent party organization, these factions were very partisan in nature. The partisan nature of these factions heavily influenced the health of Washington's civil-military relations with Congress throughout the war and contributed to the increased politicization of Washington and his officer corps.

In sum, most of the stereotypes of these men in Congress were true. A delegate's personal wealth and social standing largely dictated his political preferences for or against independence. For example, the conciliationists came from places such as New

York and Philadelphia where wealth and affluence depended upon fair and healthy trade with Britain. The moderates came mostly from the southern and mid-Atlantic states where their quality of life depended upon the strength of their relations with Britain. They were realists only to a point. For the bulk of the militants, who were from New England, the war was already on their doorstep. Thus, they were the only members of Congress who were personally affected by the policy decisions being made on the other side of the ocean.<sup>28</sup>

### A Revolutionary Civil-Military Relationship

The civil-military relationship between a commander and his civil authority was not a new concept at the time of the revolution; however, it was one that both Washington and Congress approached using caution. Washington hoped his prior experiences with civil authority were the exception and not the rule. Meanwhile, the British model was the one with which Congress most readily identified. Given the outcome of the English Revolution in the previous century and Cromwell's overthrow of Parliament, it is easy to understand why Congress was resistant to the idea of creating a standing army to fight against Britain. Certainly, the idea of creating an army for this purpose only to have that army and its commander usurp Congressional power was a cause of concern for the Second Continental Congress.<sup>29</sup> Accusations of Washington morphing into an American Cromwell were something that Washington continually addressed in his private correspondence throughout the war.<sup>30</sup> To steal a phrase from Peter Feaver, this was the first American civil-military problematique.

The colonial civil-military relationships, while echoing some of the British experiences, were very unusual for the time. When Congress elected George Washington



to lead the army, it elected one of its own. He was not the most experienced military officer available but the Congressmen readily identified the fact that they needed someone with more than just strong military experience. Only George Washington possessed the unique military and political skills to lead their army and preserve their civil authority. Aside from the political ramifications of electing a southern delegate to lead forces comprised entirely of New England militia, Congress sought to solve its own civil-military problematique.<sup>31</sup> With its political shrewdness on display, Congress elected someone it believed would not endanger its own existence. The members elected George Washington specifically because they felt he posed the least threat to their authority.<sup>32</sup> He was the perfect man for the job. He had the requisite military background to justify his selection to their constituencies and the political background that naturally subjugated his ambitions and interests to their own. His relationship with Congress ebbed and flowed like any other, but his steadfast loyalty and deference to civilian authority cemented their trust in him.<sup>33</sup>

Notwithstanding the personal relationships that Washington had with specific members of Congress, the progression of their civil-military relationship within the existing civil-military structure bears mentioning. The ever-present question of to whom Washington was accountable was not easily answered within the structure of his relationship with Congress. To start, Congress gave Washington his commission as a collective body, yet, it was the president of Congress to whom Washington addressed his concerns at the federal level. Furthermore, much to the detriment of Washington's situation, the presidency became a revolving door of delegates, changing annually after John Hancock's retirement to private life in 1777.<sup>34</sup> Boggled down by the details of

providing oversight of its military, it was not until a full year later that Congress made Washington accountable to an actual committee in the form of a Board of War and Ordnance.<sup>35</sup>

As the civil-military relationship between George Washington and his civilian authorities matured throughout the war, one can measure the health of the relationship with some key examples. One such occasion came early in the war, in July 1776, when the Howe brothers sent an envoy to Washington's headquarters with overtures of peace. After a comical game of protocol cat and mouse, Washington rejected their obvious attempts to circumvent Congress.<sup>36</sup> Washington declared that they needed to address their concerns to the president of the Congress, as it was not within the scope of Washington's congressional appointment to entertain peace offers. Actions such as these were indicative of Washington's adept handling of his duties as a Commander in Chief, and his sensitivity to the authority granted him by a higher civilian authority.<sup>37</sup>

Simple anecdotal evidence is not sufficient to illustrate Washington's obedience that was often careful and respectful to civil control yet some times very lenient. Four narratives bear further examination if one is to capture the essence of the turbulent relationship between Washington and Congress. First, his commission from Congress and the additional guidance that followed helped to set the stage and build a precedent by which the relationship evolved. In addition, the emergency powers granted by Congress in December 1776 were a landmark of trust between the two despite recent military losses. There were, however, significant setbacks along the way. The winter spent at Valley Forge did nothing for the health of the relationship as Washington was under constant attack both from Congress and from within the ranks of his officer corps.

However, having survived the winter of 1778, both physically and politically, Washington maintained a good overall civil-military relationship with his civilian authorities until the winter of 1783. The events commonly referred to as the Newburgh Conspiracy were a classic example of Washington's grasp for the moment. Once again, Washington served as the example of how a military subjugates itself to a higher civilian authority and firmly established civilian control of the military.

### Marching Orders

On June 15, 1775, Congress passed a resolution that appointed George Washington "to command all the continental forces, raised, or to be raised, for the defence [sic] of American liberty."<sup>38</sup> Four days later, Congress presented Washington with his official marching orders in the form of his commission. His initial commission from Congress was broad in its delegation of authority as they stated that Washington was "vested with full power and authority"<sup>39</sup> to act as he saw fit. They also cautioned him to take care in exercising the great trust reposed in him.<sup>40</sup> Although their trust in Washington was quite apparent, they took little time to exert their authority by providing him explicit guidance for the execution of his duties and responsibilities. In a document dated June 22, 1775, Congress, by way of a six-man committee, outlined six instructions for its new Commander in Chief.

The first of these five instructions were not unusual for a civil authority to its commander. These instructions detailed his reporting requirements, gave guidance on providing food and shelter for the army at Congressional expense, granted him the authorities to take prisoners and to promote officers up to a certain rank. This resolution also outlined his manning requirements and limited his total authorized personnel to

twice that of the enemy. However, the sixth point was curious given the authority Congress attempted to exert with this resolution. It essentially stated that if a situation arose that this guidance could not solve, Washington should simply use his best judgment for finding a solution.<sup>41</sup>

The resolutions granting Washington broad discretionary authority was a bold if not prudent step by Congress considering there was not an agreed upon civil-military structure per se. Command discretion simply did not exist in this regard in 1775. Although Congress had the best intentions, correspondence sent to Washington's camp was voluminous and often dictatorial. Despite the formation of a Board of War, the general Congress decided most military matters. Washington went to great lengths to keep both Congress and the surrounding colonial governments informed of his and the army's actions. In the first nine months spent in Cambridge alone, Washington penned fifty-one letters to the president of Congress and one hundred and four letters to the appropriate governing bodies in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.<sup>42</sup>

#### Desperate Diseases Require Desperate Remedies

Few episodes placed Washington's respect for civil authority on display better than his handling of the powers granted to him in December 1776. The war to this point was not going as planned and many in the army saw Congress as meddlesome and ineffective with its handling of the war. It was not until the British Army forced the representatives to flee Philadelphia that they decided to change their ways. Up to this point, they felt it necessary to manage the day-to-day details of the war themselves, a practice that frustrated the generals at every turn.<sup>43</sup> By December 12, 1776, following a disastrous campaign in New York, Congress found its army on the run with most

enlistments expiring at the end of the month. Congress acted decisively and changed the direction of the war with the following resolution: “until the Congress shall otherwise order, General Washington be possessed of full power to order and direct all things relative to the department, and to the operations of war.”<sup>44</sup> This resolution handed total and complete control of the war to its Commander in Chief.

For one of Washington’s generals, however, this resolution simply did not do enough to empower his commander. In a letter to John Hancock, Nathanael Greene encouraged Congress to give Washington “full power to take such measures as he may find necessary to promote the establishment of the new army.”<sup>45</sup> General Greene was one of Washington’s strongest advocates. However, Greene was very careful to avoid advocating a position that could put Congress in a weaker light concerning its civil authority. Greene understood he was asking Congress to forfeit one its most valued authorities: control of the military. He therefore suggested that Congress grant these emergency powers to Washington with the explicit understanding that Congress retained the authority to repeal any measures it deemed unnecessary.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, lest Congress be fearful of a military coup, Greene assured them that “that general will not exceed his powers...that there never was a man that might be more safely trusted.”<sup>47</sup>

Congress accepted General Greene’s proposals and passed an additional resolution on December 27, 1776. This resolution gave Washington “full, ample, and complete powers to raise and collect together, in the most speedy and effectual manner”<sup>48</sup> the army he needed to continue his mission. The resolution continued to grant Washington the power to commandeer anything he saw fit that would help the army no matter where he was. He also had the authority to arrest anyone who refused to comply

with his requests. Time was of the essence and Congress understood that in order to keep the enemy at bay, it had to place its trust in Washington. Oliver Wolcott of Connecticut best voiced this sentiment as he remarked “that the preservation of the civil liberties of the people, at the present time, depends upon the full exertion of the military power.”<sup>49</sup> However, Congress was always weary of granting too much authority to its military and understood the potential for controversy surrounding this final piece. Therefore, the representatives only granted Washington these powers for a set amount of time not to exceed six months.<sup>50</sup>

Washington’s response was a textbook example of a military professional taking great care not to abuse the authority granted him by civilian authority. In both words and deeds, he was careful not to usurp the authority of Congress and to stay within the limits of those given to him. In a letter to John Hancock dated December 20, 1776, he kept Congress well informed of his plans for the recruitment and enlistment of future regiments, officer promotions, and other administrative functions of the army. Commenting on the December 20, 1776 resolution, Washington wrote, “It may be said, that this is an application for powers, that are too dangerous to be intrusted [sic]. I can only add, that desperate [sic] diseases, require desperate remedies, and with truth declare, that I have no lust for power.”<sup>51</sup> In further explaining himself and his actions, Washington states, “It may be thought, that, I am going a good deal out of the line of my duty, to adopt these measures” however, “the inestimable blessing of liberty at stake, and a life devoted, must be my excuse.”<sup>52</sup>

Even with these newly found authorities, Washington continued to conduct his business as usual. Despite his vast autonomy, he continued to keep Congress informed

and forwarded appropriate items for their consideration. He did so even when these concerns fell within the authorities granted him from Congress. For example, when his chief surgeon sought permission from Washington for the establishment of military hospitals and cited the powers granted him on December 20, Washington was quick with his reply.<sup>53</sup> Washington carefully measured his response as he erred on the side of caution. He told the surgeon that although Congress would likely approve anything that Washington suggested, he could not give authorization for something so large in scope as the establishment of military hospitals without Congressional approval.<sup>54</sup> This was just one example of the numerous times that Washington declined to overextend himself with respect to his military authorities. Always aware that others viewed him as a danger to civil authority, he took several occasions to lecture his friends on the importance of civilian authority over its military, and the dangers of an empowered military.<sup>55</sup>

### A Winter of Discontent

If the winter of 1776 was a high water mark for Washington's relationship with Congress then his winter spent in Valley Forge was its opposite. Several factors contributed to the decline of the civil-military relationship between Washington and Congress during this period. Washington's campaign in 1777 started strong with his bold victory at Princeton but eventually ended in sequential defeats of his forces at Brandywine, Paoli, and Germantown, losses that allowed the British to capture Philadelphia in September of that year. Couple these defeats with the decisive victories of his chief rival, Horatio Gates, at Saratoga during that same time and it did not take long before questions about Washington's abilities arose.<sup>56</sup> Concurrently, ideologically driven factions within Congress conspired to weaken Washington's authority over the course of

the war as they increased the level of oversight imposed on him. Although he eventually marched the army from Valley Forge with his command firmly intact, this period of the war exhibited a very unhealthy and almost destructive pattern of civil-military relations.

Critics of Washington were not hard to find in the halls of Congress following their evacuation from Philadelphia. Many members were very outspoken in their criticisms of Washington, particularly Samuel Adams and James Lovell of Massachusetts.<sup>57</sup> Another outspoken opponent of Washington's leadership was Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant of New Jersey who seldom spoke with reservation on the matter. In a letter to Lovell, Sergeant claimed, "Thousands of lives and millions of property are yearly sacrificed to the insufficiency of our commander in chief...yet [we] are so attached to the man that I fear we shall rather sink under him than throw him off our shoulders."<sup>58</sup> The militant faction, into which Adams and others fell, was the most critical of Washington's performance. They were increasingly disappointed with the lack of military victories despite their early approval of his strategy to avoid direct action with the British military.

Disgruntled and disenchanted officers formed another group that openly challenged and criticized Washington's leadership. General Thomas Mifflin was highly influential in this regard. Mifflin was the former quartermaster general who quit the army after the British captured Philadelphia. Once an admirer of Washington, Mifflin painted a picture of an inept commander who surrounded himself with yes-men and who forced anyone out of the army who refused to pay him homage. At his estate outside of Reading, Mifflin often hosted fellow dissatisfied officers and members of Congress who had grown impatient with George Washington's leadership. In his correspondence with



Gates, Mifflin insinuated that Gates prepare himself for the eventual removal of Washington as a “mighty torrent of public clamor and public vengeance” was gathering.<sup>59</sup> Mifflin’s campaign gained momentum as Richard Henry Lee, a Congressman from Virginia and boyhood friend of Washington, wrote to Sam Adams that Mifflin thought “the military knowledge and the authority of Gates necessary to procure the indispensable changes in our army. I believe he is right.”<sup>60</sup>

As discontent with the commander and the popularity of Horatio Gates grew, Congress sought to weaken the authority of George Washington while strengthening the authority of Gates. Although some were not as visceral with their criticisms of Washington as James Lovell, others such as Richard Henry Lee and John Adams were nonetheless concerned with the perceived failure of leadership at Valley Forge. Their primary approach was to reaffirm the authority vested in a previously toothless Board of War.

A Congressional resolution passed on June 12, 1776, established the original “Board of War and Ordnance” with the intent of divesting Congress of the day-to-day management of the war. The original Board of War comprised five members of Congress.<sup>61</sup> However, on November 27, 1777, Congress passed a resolution that appointed General Gates the president of a reorganized Board of War and expressed the utmost faith and confidence in Gates’s abilities and went so far as to say that the American cause eminently depended upon his success.<sup>62</sup> Congress resolved that Gates had the authority to make a broad range of decisions for the army without consulting Washington. With this new Board of War, Congress came one step closer to supplanting Washington with Gates, if not by command then certainly by authority. In creating a

quasi-military executive authority over Washington, Congress continued to change the civil-military structure not for the sake of efficiency or clarity but for political reasons only.

In addition, appointment of an inspector general who was independent of Washington and answerable only to Congress signaled a clear decline in Washington's authority. Congress chose Thomas Conway, a chief antagonist and outspoken critic of Washington, as the new inspector general of the army. In a resolution dated December 13, 1777, Congress gave Conway sweeping powers to conduct inspections of the field armies before and after every campaign. These inspections entailed everything from soldier discipline to supply and financial accountability. They essentially granted him *carte blanche* to report all discrepancies to Congress via the Board of War. There is nothing in the resolution prescribing a requirement to inform Washington of the results of Conway's inspections.<sup>63</sup>

Although Congress did not specifically state it, the effect of these two developments was apparent to all; Washington was no longer in total command of the army. The president of the Board of War, Horatio Gates, now had the legislative authority to appoint officers, propose reforms, issue reports, and exercise supervisory authority over the quartermaster and commissary departments. He also had full authority to exercise these powers without any requirement to consult Washington.<sup>64</sup> By passing the resolution on November 27, Congress created another executive authority, aside from itself, to which Washington was accountable. As Congress debated and passed these resolutions, Washington busied himself by launching a political counterattack against his detractors.

Simultaneous to the various Congressional initiatives to strip Washington of both his credibility and his authorities, the commander hosted a six man Congressional committee at the army's camp at Valley Forge. Congress had directed this committee to investigate everything from a possible reduction in forces to the best way to obtain additional forces should they deem either necessary.<sup>65</sup> In three separate resolutions, Congress appointed Francis Dana of Massachusetts, Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania, Nathaniel Folsom of New Hampshire, Gouverneur Morris of New York, and John Harvie of Virginia. Francis Dana and Joseph Reed were skeptical of Washington and although they were not as hostile toward Washington as Folsom was, they were not necessarily sympathetic, and leaned more toward foe than friend.<sup>66</sup> Gouverneur Morris was a wild card as he was the newest member of Congress on the committee. Many New Yorkers favored Gates, and Morris was not someone upon whose support Washington could depend. Harvie, a fellow Virginian, was the only friendly face Washington saw on the committee.<sup>67</sup>

Washington's career as a politician was useful in his endeavors to persuade members of this committee to fall in line with his way of thinking. For months, he had warned Congress of his dire situation at Valley Forge. In response to these warnings, Washington's opponents in Congress publicly derided him for overstating the army's situation. They also chastised him for not using effectively the authorities granted him in previous resolutions.<sup>68</sup> They were essentially telling Washington simply to do his job. With the arrival of this committee, Washington called upon his political abilities for the sake of the survival of the army and his command. As financial accountability of the resources provided to Washington was of the utmost importance, the committee combed

through the army's books and interviewed every member of the commissary department in their first days at Valley Forge. Surprisingly enough for the committee members, they were unable to find any significant discrepancies in the department's carefully kept books.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Washington gave the committee free rein to inspect the conditions in camp and as Morris wrote to John Jay, the committee found a "skeleton of an army" that presented itself in a "naked starving condition" and one that was "out of health" and "out of spirits."<sup>70</sup>

The most compelling act taken by Washington and his staff came in the form of a letter to the committee in which he outlined his concerns with the shortcomings of the army. The letter also outlined his recommendations for rectifying these shortcomings, ranging from increased pay for officers to curb the mass resignations to a complete overhaul of the state based regimental system. He also took full advantage of his pulpit to lecture Congress on its inadequate handling of general officer promotions and appointments. The results of this letter to the committee were immediate, as their reports to Congress reflected many of Washington's recommendations.<sup>71</sup>

Having brought the committee to his corner, Washington took advantage of his rebounding influence and demanded the removal of Conway as the Inspector General and the installment of General Nathanael Greene as the Quartermaster General. Much to the dismay of his critics, Congress acquiesced.<sup>72</sup> The new inspector general was the famed Baron von Steuben who reported directly to Washington. Furthermore, although Congress retained separate control on the quartermaster general, there was no one more well suited for the job than Washington's most trusted general was. The political aftermath of the winter spent in Valley Forge was nothing short of miraculous.

Washington vanquished his political rivals one by one, effected significant change to the civil-military structure in his favor, and firmly retained full command of the army.

### A Final Lesson in Civil-Military Relations

The final episode illustrating the health of the relationship between Washington and Congress came in March of 1783 when hostilities had all but ceased.<sup>73</sup> The tensions were no longer between Washington and Congress, but between factions within Congress and factions within Washington's officer corps. Tensions had been mounting throughout the war, and although Congress approved half-pay for life for all officers in 1780, the officer corps did not trust Congress to keep its promise.<sup>74</sup> To further put this into context, the primary concern of Congress was the final disposition of the army and its leadership. Congress continued to fixate on the image of an American Cromwell despite Washington's constant reassurances to the contrary.

In early January, a small contingent of officers sent Congress a list of their grievances in language that caused concern. Their primary complaint was pay. They asserted that their hardships were "exceedingly disproportionate to those of any other citizens of America" and complained "shadows have been offered to us while substance has been gleaned by others."<sup>75</sup> In essence, the officers claimed that if Congress or the states levied taxes in support of the war, the army had not seen any of it. Therefore, and in the clearest and most dangerous language yet, they warned, "The uneasiness of the soldiers, for want of pay, is great and dangerous; any further experiments on their patience may have fatal effects."<sup>76</sup>

Washington was not deaf to the grievances of his men and wrote to Alexander Hamilton on March 4, 1783, that "the sufferings of a complaining army, on one hand, and

the inabilities of Congress and tardiness of the state, on the other” were constantly at the forefront of his mind.<sup>77</sup> Although he admitted to having the same concerns that his men had, Washington held strong in his faith that Congress would do the right thing and that “the just claims of the Army ought, and it is to be hoped will, have their weight with every sensible legislature in the union.”<sup>78</sup>

The feeling of Congressional neglect peaked during the first week of March 1783 as a letter began to circulate around Washington’s camp in Newburgh, New York.<sup>79</sup> This document called for a meeting on March 10 to draw up one last protest for Congress and, in no uncertain language, called for the army to take up arms should this last attempt fail to spur Congressional action. It was no coincidence that the primary author of this implied call to arms was John J. Armstrong Jr., an aide to Horatio Gates. Gates was serving as Washington’s second in command at the time, having left his post on the Board of War shortly following the winter of 1778. This fact was not lost on Washington, who suspected Gates was attempting to undermine Washington’s command once again.<sup>80</sup> Washington decided to take immediate action and in his general orders issued on March 11, he forbade such a meeting to take place and rescheduled it for noon on March 15. He did this in order to allow cooler heads to prevail, but also to ensure everyone in his camp knew who their commander was. He further ordered Gates to serve as the presiding authority for the meeting, thus giving the impression that he would not attend.<sup>81</sup>

With a clear sense of the dramatic, Washington arrived shortly after noon and begged the assembly for a moment of their time. He then implored his men to listen to reason and to trust both him and Congress for the sake of the reputation of their army and for their country. He further stated that anyone who thought of taking up arms against his

country was neither a friend to the army nor his country but he was rather an “insidious foe . . . plotting the ruin of both, by sowing the seeds of discord and separation between the civil and military powers of the continent.”<sup>82</sup> He closed his address by insisting that his officers should express the “utmost horror and detestation of the man who wishes, under any pretences [sic], to overturn the liberties of our country, and who wickedly attempts to open the floodgates of civil discord, and deluge our rising empire in blood.”<sup>83</sup> It is important to note that Washington took great care in appealing to his officers as fellow citizens. He appealed to their sense of patriotism as fellow countrymen rather than appealing to their sense of professionalism. Upon Washington’s exit, tempers calmed and the meeting dispersed. George Washington averted a crisis in civil-military relations, and the Commander in Chief once again affirmed civilian control of the military.

### Conclusion

In charting the overall health of the civil-military relationship during the Revolutionary War, one sees it go from hopeful and optimistic to divided and pessimistic. In 1775, the relationship was strong and it generally remained so until late in 1777. Following the near collapse of their marriage during the winter of 1778, Washington and Congress maintained a strong relationship until the very end of the war at which time Washington’s strength of personality saved the relationship from near disaster. However, it is clear that Washington’s respect for civil authority continued throughout the war. Washington displayed this respect many times through his words and his actions. This respect for civilian authority and the military’s willingness to subjugate itself to civilian authority still exist. Washington’s reluctance to overstep his boundaries as the Commander in Chief continue to serve as a model precedent for today’s military leaders.

Notwithstanding the examples he set in 1776 and at Newburgh in 1783, the winter of 1778 was a significant misstep for Washington that certain aspects of modern civil-military relations theory help to explain. When viewed within the framework of the theories of Morris Janowitz and Samuel P. Huntington, the civil-military relationship between Washington and Congress during this time is a clear example of Huntington's idea about the dangers of subjective civilian control vis-à-vis a non-professional officers corps. Huntington asserts that a distinct separation between the military and its civilian authority must exist to achieve the ideal civil-military relationship. Accordingly, it takes a fully professional officer corps to maintain this separation lest it fall prey to the rapid politicization brought on by subjective civilian control. In the case of Washington and Congress, the constant interaction of competing factions within Congress to maximize their power with respect to the military serves as the best example of subjective civilian control during this period.

In *The Reconstruction of Patriotism*, Morris Janowitz laments the present day loss of civic education while praising the civic virtues of the concept of the citizen-soldier. A citizen-soldier, for Janowitz, is everything that Huntington's professional is not. Janowitz's citizen-soldier engrains itself within its society. Janowitz also goes on to state that the strongest expression of civic obligation is military service in defense of one's country.<sup>84</sup> A citizen-soldier is one who temporarily leaves his life of domesticity to fight for his country with every intention of returning to his previous way of life. This idea was not foreign to George Washington at the time of the Revolutionary War as he states his fervent desires to return to private life following a peaceful end to hostilities.<sup>85</sup> It is also clear in his writings that Washington believed that he was a citizen-soldier leading a



citizen army regardless of whether or not that army was comprised of state militia or full-time recruits.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, following Huntington's theory, one would expect to find all the elements of subjective civilian control in the relationship between Washington and Congress. The most dangerous element of subjective civilian control is the increased coercive politicization of the military's officer corps that was clearly present in the winter of 1778.

In *The Soldier and the State*, Samuel P. Huntington extolls the virtues of the military professional while he outlines the three characteristics of a professional officer corps. These characteristics are an expertise inherent from years of education and training, an inherent social responsibility that accompanies the conduct of its mission, and a sense of corporateness within the officer corps rooted in its collective feeling of separation from the rest of society. Unfortunately for the health of Washington's civil-military relationship with Congress, Washington and his generals adequately fulfilled only one of the three characteristics, at best. Although many of the senior ranking military men of the time had some limited expertise, they did not possess the type of expertise that Huntington describes. The only characteristic that remotely applies is the distinct social responsibility held by Washington and his generals in the due course of their execution of the war on behalf of the independence of their country. The most important aspect of Huntington's concept of a professional military's sense of corporateness is its own feeling of separation from society. Clearly, this does not exist during the Revolutionary War especially given the fact that there was no professional army upon which to build a proper civil-military structure.

During this period, Washington and the army's officer corps became increasingly political. The period from the end of 1777 through the middle of 1778 was the height of Congressional subjective civilian control over the military. Although Horatio Gates did not overtly campaign for Washington's job, it is clear that he sought the advice and counsel of those members of Congress that were more supportive of his cause.<sup>87</sup> Likewise, Washington spent the better part of the winter rallying support for his own cause and the better politician came out on top. This period of the war was a power grab by both the military and politicians alike and was the lowest point in the relationship between the two.

Washington's failures in civil-military relations during his time at Valley Forge were not all encompassing of his civil-military relations during the Revolutionary War. Therefore, it is important to examine some of the successes through another lens. Peter Feaver's client-agent theory is a useful framework to analyze the behaviors of Washington and his history with civil authorities. This framework is also appropriate for certain aspects of these relationships as well. One could argue that Washington was the perfect solution for Congress's civil-military problematique in that it found someone who was sympathetic to the political perspective yet was experienced enough to fulfill the fledgling government's military objectives. Given their own inexperience with providing oversight to the military, Congressmen emplaced several intrusive monitoring techniques on Washington and the army. These included but were not limited to the various committees sent to Washington's encampments throughout the war and the 1777 reestablishment of the Board of War. In Washington, Congress found someone who was

uniquely qualified to tolerate such intrusive monitoring and excessive guidance given Washington's previous experiences as both a legislator and a soldier.

Furthermore, given his failed relationship with Governor Dinwiddie earlier in his career, Washington must have been concerned with not appearing to "shirk" once again, in Feaver's sense of the word.<sup>88</sup> To this end, Washington spent endless hours writing Congress to keep it informed and there are few examples of him shirking his duties. There was rarely a moment in the war that Washington left Congress in the dark concerning the army's disposition. In fact, the only clear example of Washington shirking was the winter of 1778. During this time, the circumstances forced Washington to become a political general and thus shirk his duties as the army's Commander in Chief. The situation required Washington to maintain informal lines of communication with certain members of Congress who were sympathetic to his cause.<sup>89</sup> Again, for Feaver, Washington's covert appeals to other political actors whose goals are more in line with his own is a clear example of shirking. The very nature of this politicization for the sake of one's survival also illustrate the dangers that subjective civilian control pose to a healthy civil-military relationship.

Although, not perfect, Feaver's client-agent theory serves as an adequate framework when one is trying to understand the civil-military relationship during the Revolutionary War. This is not to say that selecting an experienced legislator as a country's top ranking military official is the solution for today's civil-military problematique. However, it was exceptionally appropriate and successful for the problematique in 1775.

In retrospect, perhaps the reason for Washington's continuous use of politics was the civil-military structure itself. The lack of a true executive authority muddied the waters as Washington spent a great deal of time trying to explain Congress to the army and vice versa.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, in the absence of a true executive authority at the Congressional level, Washington spent equal time in correspondence with the states in trying to garner support for the army and its mission. His frustrations doubled in this regard, as the states often felt that they were not answerable to Congress given their view that Congress was an extralegal assembly. Washington simply did not possess the civil-military institutional structure enjoyed by his successors today.<sup>91</sup>

The civil-military relationships between George Washington and the individual states were different from his relationship with Congress in both structure and nature. As previously discussed, a coherent civil-military structure did not exist before June 1775 and continued to evolve throughout the Revolutionary War. While George Washington received his command authority and direction from Congress, he received his personnel and materiel from the individual states. Congress established policies that placed it in the role most closely associated with that of an executive authority. However, Congress failed in multiple attempts to adequately fulfill this role and created more confusion for its Commander in Chief than was necessary.

Although Washington considered Congress his ultimate civil authority, both parties fully realized that Congress could provide only so much in support of the country's war efforts. From 1775 to 1783, the pattern of Washington's civil-military relationship with Congress ran its course through turbulence and prosperity; however, by 1779, Congress was no longer capable of providing sustained support to Washington and

the army. With a series of resolutions passed later that same year and in early 1780, Congress essentially handed over support requirements for the war to the thirteen individual state governments.<sup>92</sup> For Washington, his relationships with the states were now more critical than ever.

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<sup>1</sup>George Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 1:98.

<sup>2</sup>Don Higginbotham, "Essay Review: The Washington Theme in Recent Historical Literature," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 114, no. 3 (July 1990): 436.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York: Random House Inc., 2004), 8.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 9. It was through his brother's death that young George Washington benefitted the most. In 1751, George accompanied Lawrence to Barbados in search for a cure for his brother's tuberculosis. During this trip, young George contracted smallpox for which he developed a lifelong immunity that later benefitted his country as the disease ripped through its ranks in 1777. Lawrence Washington eventually died of his afflictions and bequeathed to his half brother the land later known as Mount Vernon. This is but just one example that though a series of tragedies marked his early years, around the corner from each one lurked a fortuitous opportunity.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 12-18.

<sup>6</sup>Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010), 41-51.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 50. Although Dinwiddie made Washington out to be the hero of Fort Necessity, the controversies surrounding the death of Jumonville and nine other Frenchmen at the hands of Indians under the watchful eye of Washington proved to be too much for him to overcome.

<sup>8</sup>George Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1982), 1:226. See Washington's letter to Col. William Fitzhugh dated November 15, 1754.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:343. In a letter to his younger brother John, Washington denies rumors of his demise during the campaign although he is quick to point out that his coat is riddled with bullet holes and that he had two horses shot from under him. See Washington's letter to John Augustine Washington, July 18, 1755.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 3:181. Dinwiddie supports this premise in his correspondence. See Ellis, *His Excellency*, 19-23, and Chernow, *Washington*, 60-63, for a synopsis of Braddock's Campaign along the Monongahela.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. Braddock's defeat was widely held as an embarrassment to British military superiority on the continent.

<sup>12</sup>Paul K. Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 48.

<sup>13</sup>Chernow, *Washington*, 73-74. Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series*, 4:360, 422; 5:3, 25.

<sup>14</sup>Curtis P. Nettels, *George Washington and American Independence* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1951), 62-64.

<sup>15</sup>Chernow, *Washington*, 98. Washington gained full ownership of Mount Vernon when Lawrence's widow died having left no children behind.

<sup>16</sup>Don Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, vol. 27 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 40-41.

<sup>17</sup>Nettels, *George Washington and American Independence*, 100.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 100.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 100-101.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 108-09. Even this group of militants was split by ideology. Largely, the New Englanders sought to establish a democracy whereas their fellow militants sought a republic. Ideologically speaking, the New Englanders did not seek independence for the sake of building a true democracy. These members already practiced a true democracy in their colonies. Independence for them was simply the next logical step. Whereas the other militants viewed themselves as revolutionaries, New Englanders viewed themselves as defenders of a way of life that was second nature to their being.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>23</sup>Thomas J. Fleming, "George Washington, Politician," *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* 18, no. 2 (2006): 20.

<sup>24</sup>Nettels, *George Washington and American Independence*, 111. Also, Chapter 4 of my thesis discusses Robert Morris's contributions to Washington in more detail.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 111-112. Nettels also asserts that the authorization for the formation of a standing army and the prosecution of the war were the two decisive actions that made independence inevitable.

<sup>26</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series*, 10:376. See his note to George William Fairfax on May 31, 1775.

<sup>27</sup>Chernow, *Washington*, 183-185.

<sup>28</sup>Although they were mostly seasoned and experienced politicians, merchants and businessmen, and represented every profession in between, they were all figuring this out as they went along. For example, Washington's extensive experience in the Virginia House of Burgesses varied greatly from the experience of John Adams and his time spent on the Massachusetts General Court. Every one of them had something to lose.

<sup>29</sup>Ellis, *His Excellency*, 138. Although this was not a primary concern of Congress at the start of the war, it was a significant concern toward the end of the war as many critics accused Washington of prolonging the war in order to extend his powers. See Christopher Hibbert, *Cavaliers and Roundheads: The English Civil War, 1642-1649* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 337, and Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: A History of England, 1603-1714*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1994), 185-277 to read more about the evolution of the British civil-military relationship vis-à-vis Cromwell and the British Civil War.

<sup>30</sup>George Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington: From the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799* (Washington: G.P.O., 1931), 16:39; 17:266-267; 25:287. See his letters to Reverend William Gordon as well as the editorial note in which John Sullivan warns Washington of an impending wave of further dissention towards Washington's growing influence.

<sup>31</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:12-13, 15-17, 19-20. Even Washington readily identifies this political truth and claims that the "partiality of Congress" and their "political motives" were a key reason behind his selection. These phrases appear in several of his letters to friends, family, and even to his military subordinates in Virginia. See his letters to Burwell Bassett dated June 19, 1775, John Parke Custis dated June 19, 1775, John Augustine Washington and his To the Officers of Five Virginia Independent Companies dated June 20, 1775.

<sup>32</sup>Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, 43.

<sup>33</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:1, 6-7, 15, 19-20. The word "Trust" appears several times in George Washington's correspondence in the immediate days following his appointment as the Commander in Chief. See his aforementioned letters to John Parke Custis and John Augustine. It also appears in his commission from Congress as well as in his address to

Congress following his appointment. These documents are dated June 16 and June 19, 1775, respectively.

<sup>34</sup>Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, 91.

<sup>35</sup>Worthington C. Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1937), 5:434. I discuss this in further detail later in the thesis. See note 59.

<sup>36</sup>Ron Chernow, *Washington*, 239-241; Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 5:304-307. Howe initially addressed his letter to “George Washington, Esq.” and refused to address him by his congressionally appointed rank since the king did not give it to him. After Howe’s emissary returned the letter to Washington a second time, his adjutant refused it once more after discovering the letter addressed to “George Washington, Esq., Etc., Etc.” Washington finally acquiesced after they addressed him as “His Excellency, General Washington” but still refused to open the letter from Howe after Howe’s man placed it on his desk. Washington also informed Congress of these events and his reasoning for not accepting the initial letter and for turning the British away. His description of these events is in a letter he wrote to John Hancock dated July 14, 1776.

<sup>37</sup>Glenn A. Phelps, *George Washington and American Constitutionalism* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 36-37.

<sup>38</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2:91.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:96.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:21-22.

<sup>42</sup>Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, 64.

<sup>43</sup>David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 143-144.

<sup>44</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 6:1-27

<sup>45</sup>Nathanael Greene, Richard K. Showman, and Rhode Island Historical Society, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), 1:370-372.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*



<sup>48</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 6:1045-1046. This new army included sixteen more battalions of infantry, three thousand light horse, three additional regiments of artillery, and a corps of engineers. Furthermore, it authorized Washington to appoint its officers, set their pay, and appoint all officers under the rank of Brigadier General.

<sup>49</sup>Paul Hubert Smith et al., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2000), 6:13.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 7:382.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 7:383.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 8:156-158.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 8:167-168.

<sup>55</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 11:485; 24:273n. For example, see his letters to Gouverneur Morris and Lewis Nicola dated May 28, 1778 and May 22, 1782 respectively. Both men advocated everything from a form of martial law to a military coup. Washington's responses were measured yet firm as he stated that any plans like these were not consistent with sound policy.

<sup>56</sup>Fleming, "George Washington, Politician," 18. A primary example is the so-called Conway Cabal named for Irish born French Major General Thomas Conway. The "cabal" was a covert scheme by certain members of Congress to discredit Washington in order to force his retirement and thereby give them the opening they needed to replace him with Horatio Gates. Following the latter's victories in Saratoga and with George Washington's reversals of fortune in Pennsylvania, there was strong support for the change in leadership. Some historians argue that the cabal was primarily a figment of the imaginations of George Washington's personal staff but some contend that Congressional correspondence proves otherwise. For an excellent synopsis of the Conway Cabal and its impact on Washington and the war.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 27. After Washington reestablished his authority as the Commander in Chief, Samuel Adams went through great lengths to avoid the controversy even given the evidence that he all but helped to champion the movement to remove Washington from his post. John Hancock, an ally of Washington's, led a Boston Town Meeting in the spring of 1778 that produced a denunciation of Samuel Adams for his role in the anti-Washington campaign that swept Congress earlier that year.

<sup>58</sup>Thomas J. Fleming, *Washington's Secret War: The Hidden History of Valley Forge* (New York: Smithsonian Books/Collins, 2005), 100.

<sup>59</sup>This letter was originally attributed to James Lovell and only just recently confirmed as having been written by Thomas Mifflin. For a more detailed explanation and for the letter itself, see Paul Hubert Smith et al., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1992), 8:315n5.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 8:314.

<sup>61</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 5:434.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 9:971.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 9:1023-1026. Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 9:387-388. Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 13:119. George Washington was also unabashed in his critique of Conway. In a letter to Richard Henry Lee on October 17, 1777, Washington stated that the rumored promotion of Conway to Major General was “as unfortunate measure as ever was adopted” and he even threatened to resign over the matter. Washington was also not afraid to admit that he saw Conway as his personal enemy. See his letter to Henry Laurens dated January 3, 1778.

<sup>64</sup>Fleming, *Washington's Secret War*, 121-122.

<sup>65</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 10:40, 65-67. The original resolution appointed three members of Congress and three members of the Board of War to this committee. The original appointees from the Board of War were Gates, Mifflin, and Timothy Pickering; none of who were sympathetic to Washington’s political and professional troubles. However, sensing the underlying purpose of this committee and wanting to avoid confrontation with Washington, Gates sought and gained approval for his removal from the committee. In subsequent a resolution on January 20, 1778, Congress replaced the three Board of War members with Morris and Charles Carroll of Maryland who was later replaced by Harvie.

<sup>66</sup>Joseph Reed was an interesting choice considering that he was a close and personal aide-de-camp for Washington earlier in the war. However, their relationship quickly fell into one of estrangement when Washington learned that Reed openly doubted Washington’s abilities as a commander. In the context of this committee, Reed was a fairly strong critic of Washington’s.

<sup>67</sup>Fleming, *Washington's Secret War*, 164.

<sup>68</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, vols. 11-13; Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 8:752-753; 9:905, 114. Washington’s correspondence in this regard is especially voluminous. All one has to do is to read anything written to Henry Laurens within this timeframe to get a sense for how desperate Washington saw the army’s situation. In resolutions on September 17, 1777 and November 14, 1777, Congress essentially ordered Washington to subsist off

local communities and take whatever he needed from its private citizens. This was an authority that Washington was very sensitive in executing hence his continued requests of Congress for supplies. On December 10, 1777, Congress passed a resolution that essentially told Washington to either do the job with the authorities given him or resign.

<sup>69</sup>Fleming, *Washington's Secret War*, 174.

<sup>70</sup>Smith et al., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, 9:4; Fleming, *Washington's Secret War*, 175, 363n16. Furthermore, if the dramatic appearance of the malnourished army was not enough to dissuade Washington's most ardent critics on the committee, his interactions with some of the individual members certainly helped his cause. In a dramatic story relayed from the committee's chair, Francis Dana of Massachusetts, to his son, on one particularly cold night, Washington confided in Dana, "Mr. Dana—Congress does not trust me. I cannot continue thus." Although no original record exists of this conversation, Mr. Dana's son continued to insist it was the proudest memory of his father's life.

<sup>71</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 13:376-404; Smith et al., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, vols. 9 and 10. The letter referenced is twenty-eight pages long. The most controversial recommendation was the immediate approval of half-pay for officers for life upon their retirement. This was one of the few suggestions of which Congress did not approve in the months following the committee's multiple reports to Congress.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 9:155, 169-175. In a letter to the president of Congress, Henry Laurens, the committee outlines its selection for Greene as the Quartermaster General. In previous correspondence, Laurens granted the committee full authority to appoint a new Quartermaster General in close coordination with Washington.

<sup>73</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 26:334-3337. Washington officially announced the cessation of hostilities on April 18, 1783 in his daily General Orders. As an aside, the sign/countersigns for April 19, 1783 was "peace" and "unity plenty" respectively.

<sup>74</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 11:503; 17:772-773; 18:958-960. On May 15, 1778, Congress approved half-pay for all officers who continued their service for the duration of the war. This pension was for seven years following the end of the war. Congress extended this benefit to widows or orphans of fallen officers on August 24, 1780. Congress further extended this pension from seven years following the war to a lifetime pension.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 24:291.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 26:186.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 26:187

<sup>79</sup>Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 18-29. From January to March of 1783, there was much back and forth between Congress and the officer corps encamped at Newburgh. The primary issue was trying to strike a balance between the unrealistic Congressional promise of half-pay for life and something more realistic.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 30. See also Washington's March 4 letter to Alexander Hamilton referenced in note 79.

<sup>81</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 26:308.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 26:225.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 26:227.

<sup>84</sup> Morris Janowitz, *The Reconstruction of Patriotism: Education for Civic Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 14.

<sup>85</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 25:287.

<sup>86</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:41; Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 26:185. See his address to the New York Provincial Congress in 1775 and his letter to Alexander Hamilton in 1783.

<sup>87</sup>Fleming, *Washington's Secret War*, Chapter 6 presents a full synopsis of Gates' continual efforts to usurp Washington's authorities.

<sup>88</sup>The word "shirk" in this sense refers to Peter Feaver's use of the word specifically in relation to his theories on civil-military relations presented in *Armed Servants*.

<sup>89</sup>Fleming, *George Washington, Politician*, 18. Washington's favorite backdoor to the president of Congress, Henry Laurens, was Laurens' son who as an aide for Washington during this time.

<sup>90</sup>Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, 87.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 90.

## CHAPTER 4

### GEORGE WASHINGTON'S CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE STATE GOVERNMENTS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

It is my constant endeavor to cultivate the confidence of the governments of the several states, by an equal and uniform attention to their respective interests, so far as falls within the line of my duty and the compass of the means with which I am intrusted.<sup>1</sup>

— George Washington to Joseph Reed,  
May 20, 1779

#### Introduction

The structure of civil-military relations during the war was triangular in nature in that Washington requested support from the states but through the authority of Congress. The states did not always take the Congressional demands of support to Washington seriously unless there was an imminent threat to their citizenry or livelihood. Although Congress provided Washington with the desired end state, they had no power to ensure that the states provided the means. To further confuse the situation, although Washington and Congress attempted to deal with the states as a collective body, each state viewed itself as a distinct and separate republic within a loosely collective body of other such states.

Always wary of centralized power, uncooperative state governments viewed Congress as an extralegal assembly; an attitude that further exacerbated the problems of an unclear civil-military structure. There were two aspects to this structure: organizational and personal. Although this chapter's focus is on Washington's relationships with the states, to ignore the role that Congress played would result in an

incomplete understanding of Revolutionary War civil-military relations. Therefore, in studying the structure of the civil-military relationships between the states and George Washington, one must also briefly consider the dynamics existing between Congress and the states during the war. One cannot overlook the impact of this relationship as it also influenced George Washington and his relationships with the state legislative bodies and their wartime governors. Notwithstanding the structure of the relationship, George Washington benefited from the nature of the personal relationships that he had with the states and particularly with the wartime governors. Although Washington endeavored to display the same deference for civilian authority in his civil-military relationships with the states as he did with Congress, these personal relationships with the states' authorities allowed him to spend some personal capital when a conflict in civil-military relations with the states occurred. These personal relationships allowed George Washington to firmly maintain Congress's own national level authority over the military.

The ability of the states to provide George Washington with adequate personnel and materiel was the focal point of the civil-military relationship. When examining the health and conflict of the civil-military relationship between Washington and the states, one must consider the impact that personnel issues had on that relationship. The states provided personnel for two different reasons. The first was to fill the ranks of the Continental Army. These were the personnel recruited directly by Congress or various Continental officers. George Washington established an early precedent that these soldiers did not belong to the states and did not fall under state authority. Washington's refusal to subordinate the needs of the states to the needs of the nation concerning the employment of the Continental Army frequently strained relations between him and state

authorities. The second manner in which Washington received personnel was through the call up of the various state militias. Washington's use of the state militias was often the source of conflict between him and the state governments. However, as the war evolved, so too did Washington's utilization of the state militias in support of the overall war effort. Although the limited number of personnel that the states were able to provide was always a source of contention, the manner in which Washington employed those militias eventually became a source of agreement between him and the states and contributed to the general health of the civil-military relationship.

The issue of supply also plagued Washington and the army throughout the war. Not unlike the impact of personnel issues, supply problems were a constant strain on the civil-military relationship. After all, the thirteen colonies lacked the industry and infrastructure at the strategic level to adequately support the war against one of the greatest powers on earth. Furthermore, Congress constantly changed its policies for the provision of materiel, further exacerbating the problem at the national level. At the operational level, the enemy maintained control of the harbors and navigable inland waterways, which affected the army's ability to move supplies and materiel effectively. In many cases, there were adequate supplies with which to sustain the army but the supplies were in the wrong place at the wrong time. This eventually forced the army to reluctantly adopt a system of impressment. Although the term impressments implies the coercive recruitment of personnel in current military vernacular, Washington and his contemporaries used the term to mean the forcible requisitioning of supply; a practice despised by both local inhabitants and Washington alike. Coupled with the changing

Congressional directives, the adoption of impressment placed a significant strain on the relationship between the army and its citizenry.

There were common themes of Washington's civil-military relationships with the state governments throughout the war. One primary theme was a dysfunctional civil-military structure. As stated, the civil-military structure was such that Washington took his orders from Congress but received his people and supplies from the states. As mentioned earlier, the problem with all of this was that neither Congress nor the states agreed on the desired end state, nor did they agree on the proper ways and means to reach that desired end state. George Washington was the proverbial man in the middle and, in some instances, dictated the ways and means despite the lack of guidance from Congress or the states.

Another common theme of George Washington's civil-military relations with the states was the composition and disposition of the army. There were significant conflicts between Washington and the states about certain facets of personnel but there were also important points of agreement as well. Washington steadfastly disagreed with the militia regimental system but his ideas for the employment of the minutemen mirrored those of his state civil authorities. Washington also believed that the states' willingness to support the cause correlated to the proximity of British troops to a specific state or to the amount of Tory activity in any given area. Frankly, Washington believed that the closer the British were to a given state, the more likely he was to receive timely troops and equipment from that state.

An in depth study of the confusing civil-military structure between Washington, the states, and Congress is critical; Washington is responsible for establishing that civil-



military structure through his belief in civilian primacy and the very nature of his relationships with the states. In her 1995 book, Rebecca Schiff contends that the civil-military structure of separation that the United States enjoys today is effective because previous generations of military and civilian leaders laid the groundwork for its success early in the country's history.<sup>2</sup> The fact that George Washington and his contemporaries were responsible for the establishment of civilian control of the military serves as a key example of Schiff's reliance on the importance of a military's cultural heritage to include its institutions and traditions.

In trying to understand the factors that contributed to the dynamics of these civil-military relationships, Michael Desch's threat-based structural theory on civil-military relations seems most appropriate given its basis in the enemy threat. For George Washington, the external threat to the United Colonies was the British regular army while Tory factions posed the internal threat. In addition, Desch uses military doctrine as a foundation for determining the health of a civil-military relationship in a structurally indeterminate threat environment. Further, Desch contends that one determines the overall health of any given civil-military relationship by examining the nature of that country's threat at a specific point in time. However, it may not be that simple in some instances. When the threat environment is vague or structurally indeterminate, a closer examination of that country's military doctrine is a way to determine whose preferences prevail in these situations. Desch stipulates that good civil-military relationships exist when the preferences of civilian authorities prevail in cases where the preferences of the military diverge from the preferences of its civilian authority.<sup>3</sup> It is within this theoretical

framework in which this chapter attempts to determine the overall health of George Washington's civil-military relationships with the states.

Structure and Nature of the Civil-Military Relations  
Between Washington and the States

The civil-military relationships between George Washington and the states were those of mutual support and respect at their best and those of bickering and political backbiting at their worst. To further confuse the issue, Congress acted as a third piece of the civil-military puzzle and often served as an intermediary between Washington and the states.<sup>4</sup> Some scholars argue that, seeing the need for a sole executive authority, George Washington established the civil-military structure despite the lack of Congressional guidance on the matter.<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding the best efforts of the states and the lack of guidance from Congress, George Washington took every opportunity to establish Congressional executive authority over the army even when he did not agree with some of the initiatives that Congress passed.

Although he heavily relied on the states for the tools with which to execute the war against the British army and its supporters, Washington succeeded in establishing Congress as the sole executive authority over the military while still maintaining his deference for state civil authorities. Washington walked a fine line between asserting Congressional authority of the Continental Army and damaging his relationships with the New England governments at a very early stage in the war. A lack of firm Congressional action with respect to its authority over the military forced George Washington to define his own authority in relationship to the state governments. In doing so, Washington reluctantly established the parameters by which his civil-military relationship with

civilian authority developed. Furthermore, given the ambiguous nature of the civil-military structure early in the war, Washington fell back on his personal relationships with many of the state authorities to help solidify civilian and Congressional control of the army.

One example that encapsulates this came early in June of 1775 when Massachusetts took offense to Congressional appointments that placed retired British officers, such as Horatio Gates of Virginia and Richard Montgomery of New York, above many popular New England generals already in place at Cambridge.<sup>6</sup> Washington withheld the unpopular commissions after the Massachusetts government requested a change to the command structure dictated by Congress. Washington clearly felt that it was not within a state government's authority to interfere with Congressional direction of the military.<sup>7</sup> In the end, Congress did very little to assert its authority thereby allowing Washington the leeway to dictate the civil-military structure. With his General Orders published on July 22, 1775, Washington established the army by his own authority after prolonged Congressional silence on the matter. In doing so, he struck a reasonable accord between asserting the authority of Congress and appeasing state concerns.<sup>8</sup> This brief example is important because it demonstrates the cunning foresight with which Washington sought to establish civilian control of the military by a singular executive authority.<sup>9</sup>

Just as the civil-military relationship with Congress evolved, so too did the civil-military relationships between George Washington and the state governments. Before 1777, George Washington's relationships with the states centered on the various state legislative bodies such as New York's Committee of Safety or the Massachusetts Provincial

Congress. However, by the end of 1777, most states had constitutions in place and the focus of George Washington's civil-military relations shifted to the various governors.<sup>10</sup> George Washington's respect for the civil authority and sovereignty of the states was most evident through the nature of his communication with the governors. For example, once elected governor of a state, one could expect a congratulatory note from Washington as well as an introductory letter that clearly stated Washington's intent was to establish an open line of communication. The letter usually included a plea for mutual assistance.<sup>11</sup>

Washington's personal relationships with a number of wartime governors were also a factor in the nature of the civil-military relationships between Washington and the states. Most of these relationships dated back to before he took command of the army and well before any of governors occupied their political positions. For instance, many of his fellow delegates to Congress later became wartime governors such as Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia; Governors Livingston of New Jersey, Rutledge of South Carolina, and Hancock of Massachusetts.<sup>12</sup>

Aside from personal relationships that pre-dated the war, Washington established additional relationships with wartime governors because of their military service together. A key example of this was Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania. Reed was a close friend and personal confidant of Washington while Reed served as his aide-de-camp early in the war. Their professional relationship soured in early 1777 when Reed expressed personal doubt about Washington's ability to command the country's army, but Washington continued to show admiration and respect for Reed after the Pennsylvania legislature elected him as President of that state.<sup>13</sup> Reed was not the only one of Washington's subordinates who later became a wartime governor. George Clinton of

New York was a brigadier general in Washington's army before Clinton's election to the New York governorship. Washington gave him a ringing endorsement while also lamenting the loss of his services to the military. Washington wrote that it was "peculiarly useful" to Washington to have Clinton serving as the governor at a time when military operations in the Northern Department were becoming increasingly important.<sup>14</sup>

Given the personal nature of his relationships with many of the governors, Washington took care not to give the appearance of usurping gubernatorial power even if many of the governors may have allowed him to do so. Washington's preferred tack was to suggest or recommend a certain way of doing things in order to meet a particular end, and a preemptive apology usually accompanied these "suggestions". These proposals from Washington ranged from the employment of militia to the appointment of particular militia officers for their use in the Continental army. This practice of providing the governors "recommendations" was one that Washington began early in the war, and one for which he often received favorable feedback from the governors.<sup>15</sup>

Deference to state authority was also something that Washington tried to instill in his subordinates. Before taking command of a particular department, Washington directed his generals to visit the governors within their departments in order to introduce themselves and discuss further support requirements. Washington preferred to send letters of introduction ahead of his generals' visits and recommended that his generals meet with state authority in order to seek advice on upcoming campaigns when they lacked knowledge of the area.<sup>16</sup> This was the case in the Southern Department in 1777 and the Northern Department in 1780. The former involved a proposed attack on St. Augustine, Florida, while the latter surrounded the defense of West Point, New York.<sup>17</sup>

Although Washington often alienated the state authorities by supporting a civil-military structure that established Congressional preeminence over the military, the general's respect for the state governments was rarely in doubt. However, as the war continued and Washington's dependence on the states increased, he became progressively more frustrated with their failure to support fully the army and its mission. This was due in no small part to the systems Congress established to supply the army. But, by the end of the war, Washington pleaded with Congress to pass measures in order to compel the states to honor their duties to their country or to give up some of their powers.<sup>18</sup> If he was reserved in his public correspondence, he left no stone unturned on the matter in his personal correspondence. In a private letter to Benjamin Harrison<sup>19</sup> penned on March 21, 1781, Washington lamented, "If the states *will* not, or *cannot* provide me with the means; it is in vain for them to look to me for the end, and accomplishment of their wishes. Bricks are not to be made without straw."<sup>20</sup> Washington's primary concerns and the problems that vexed him the most were those dealing with personnel and supply.

### Three Armies In One

Three distinct types of forces comprised the overall force under the command of George Washington during the Revolutionary War. These were the Continental soldiers that Congress authorized and Washington and his generals directly recruited, the troops raised, organized, and provided to Washington by the state governments, and those personnel of the state militias who served as first responders, the minutemen, when British forces entered their localities. Washington fought the war with what were essentially three armies in one.<sup>21</sup> He established Congressional authority over the

Continental Army with the first of these three forces very early in the war. Although it briefly strained the civil-military relations between Washington and the states, the establishment of Congressional authority was essential. The real issue for the civil-military relations between Washington and the states manifested itself through the second and third of these three forces. Whereas Washington, the states, and Congress all agreed that minutemen remained under local control, the state organized troops served as a point of divergence for Washington and his various civil authorities. Washington's primary issue with the units organized by the states specifically for the use of the Continental Army was Congressional and states' insistence on maintaining a regimental system despite these units being under the command of George Washington. However, all parties involved shared the same vision for the use and employment of the minutemen.

Early in the war, Washington asserted Congressional authority over the first of these three "armies" and made it clear to the state governments that they held no control over the form or function of this nationally recruited Continental Army.<sup>22</sup> This particular force-in-being went through many changes throughout the period from 1775 to 1777 as Washington, Congress, and the state governments wrestled with the appropriate mix of forces to man this national standing army. What started out as a loosely controlled ad hoc organization of New England militia units in Boston ended with a coherent national level military structure with a Congressional resolution in December of 1776.<sup>23</sup> This resolution came as the result of multiple coordinating sessions between Washington and various Congressional delegations throughout 1776.<sup>24</sup>

The earliest example of Washington's assertion of Congressional authority over the Continental Army involved a request by Massachusetts that Washington detach forces

from his command to react to a potential threat that the British forces posed elsewhere in the state, particularly along the coast.<sup>25</sup> In his response, Washington cited his consultations with both Congress and his generals and denied the state's request. He stated that it was not "consistent with [his] duty to detach any part of the army" for "any particular provincial service" and continued to lecture the colony on the "necessity of conducting [the army's] operations on a general and impartial scale."<sup>26</sup> In other words, he possessed neither the Congressional authority nor the inclination to acquiesce to Massachusetts and that Continental soldiers could not respond to every threat of every colony. According to Washington, the Continental army could not be all things to all people<sup>27</sup> and this situation was clearly one of internal defense. Washington stipulated that the mission of internal defense of a colony belonged to that colony's militia forces.<sup>28</sup>

Another example of Washington asserting his command of the army came in September 1775 when he ordered Connecticut troops to join the Continental army. Washington had previously allowed these troops to remain in their home state for local defense, but the time had come for them to join the rest of the army in Cambridge.<sup>29</sup> Connecticut Governor Jonathan Trumbull denied Washington's request, but hoped that Connecticut's retention of the Continentals would not hinder Washington's operations.<sup>30</sup> Once again, Washington cited Congressional authority, lectured Trumbull on the proper use of Continental soldiers, and demanded they commence movement to Cambridge at once.<sup>31</sup> Trumbull complied with Washington's demands a week later.<sup>32</sup> As with the situation in Massachusetts, Washington diligently and respectfully established Congress as the ultimate authority of the Continental Army and thereby reinforced his own command as separate from the authority of the various states.<sup>33</sup> Both examples in



Massachusetts and Connecticut also illustrate the impact that an immediate British threat had on both Washington and the states. In both instances, the proximity of the enemy threat caused an unnecessary strain in the civil-military relations between Washington and the states, and caused a divergence of opinion with respect to the use of the Continental forces. Because the states thought of themselves as sovereign and considered Congress an extra-legal coordinating body, they had difficulty distinguishing between troops raised for the Continental Army and other troops used for their own defense. This theme persists throughout the war for the army and the various state civil authorities regardless of the type of forces involved.<sup>34</sup>

The troops recruited, organized, and provided by the will of the various states served as the second of Washington's three "armies." As the states and Congress were in constant fear of a consolidated national army, these forces came to Washington as a complete body of troops unless otherwise ordered by that regiment's particular state. These forces also served under Washington for a finite amount of time and their service usually fell solely within the confines of their respective state boundaries. The practice of maintaining regiments by state was one with which Washington adamantly disagreed even though it was authorized by Congress.<sup>35</sup> Although Congress passed a detailed resolution for the disposition and composition of the state militias, it had no power to compel the states to adhere to such a resolution. However, most state militia regiments coincidentally mirrored Congressional guidance on the matter. Washington's primary concerns with this regimental system were talent management and length of enlistments.

The Congressionally imposed regimental system did not allow Washington to effectively manage his officers based on their capabilities. Washington felt that the

system was an impediment to the overall success of the army. For example, the regimental system did not allow for a more competent officer from one colony to command a formation of soldiers from a different colony because Congress insisted that an officer's promotion pass through that officer's respective state authority.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, if a state failed to send replacements for those who became casualties or completed their enlistment periods, that state's regiments would wither away until they were too small to function as tactical units. This was the case that Washington lamented in a letter to his aide, Joseph Reed.<sup>37</sup> Despite this problem, Congress gave Washington explicit guidance that he did not have the authority to task-organize these units. In other words, Congress forbade Washington from breaking up the units. To put it in modern doctrinal vernacular, Washington's command relationship with these units was that of tactical control, not command.<sup>38</sup>

Promotions were also an issue for Washington given that he did not have the authorization to brevet officers below the rank of colonel. Washington felt this system of promotion within the state regiments was a detriment to the long-term success of the army and that this system bred both personal and state jealousies. Washington's suspicions proved correct as this promotion system served as the impetus for Benedict Arnold's treason.<sup>39</sup> Although it did not threaten the overall health of Washington's civil-military relationship with the states, the promotion issue consistently came up through the course of the war and served as a point of divergence between the Commander in Chief and his civil authorities.<sup>40</sup>

The varied length of enlistments for the militia that fell under Washington's command authority was an issue for him throughout the war. It worried him constantly

and was a recurring topic of his correspondence with state authorities.<sup>41</sup> On several occasions, these enlistments threatened the outcome of the war as many militia formations left the Continental formations at the most inopportune times. One example of this was New Hampshire's John Stark. His regiment's defeat of Hessian forces in August 1777 served as the beginning-of-the-end for British General John Burgoyne's forces in the Northern Department. However, Stark's strict adherence to the terms of his militia's short-term enlistments frustrated Washington's generals as Stark marched his entire regiment back to New Hampshire on the eve of battle in October of the same year because their enlistments had expired.<sup>42</sup> Inconsistent enlistment length was a thorn in Washington's side throughout the war.

On July 18, 1775, Congress passed a resolution that outlined the organization, duties, and responsibilities of the state militias. In this resolution, Congress mandated that one out of every four militiamen serve as a minuteman, a first responder to an immediate enemy threat in that colony.<sup>43</sup> These minutemen were the third component of Washington's forces; a component of his forces for which Washington did not have a very high regard. Although Washington resented their lack of military discipline and felt that he could not depend upon them for any sustained period, he shared the opinion of the states and Congress of the primary mission for the minutemen.<sup>44</sup> Washington felt that the militias were best suited for the internal defense of their colonies, including combating the effects of Tory sympathizers.<sup>45</sup> In a letter to the Massachusetts General Court on July 9, 1776, Washington informed them that he planned to take three of their regiments in support of his upcoming defense of New York. Anticipating the state's response, Washington assured Massachusetts that their "militia independent of other troops" (i.e.

their minutemen) was more than capable and best suited “to all the purposes of defensive war.” He continued to remind the state of the resolution passed by Congress in which they themselves possessed the authority to raise additional state militia equal to that which Washington planned to move to New York.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the widely held belief that Washington disdained the performance of the militia as a whole, the minutemen served as a point of convergence for Washington and state civil authority. As previously stated, Washington felt the minutemen were best suited for internal defense. Washington’s strategy was to keep his main army intact and he needed the formations of minutemen to implement this strategy. Washington knew that if he were to respond to every British threat in every area of the colonies, his army would become spread out and thus easier for the enemy to defeat piecemeal.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, both Washington and Congress agreed that local defense of the colonies was the primary mission for these minutemen.

Throughout the war, Washington employed these minutemen in a variety of ways. Some experiments failed miserably, such as using minutemen to augment the Continental Army in a general engagement with the enemy. However, other uses of the minutemen proved an overwhelming success, such as using them to fight between the enemy and friendly lines by harassing both the British army and its Tory supporters.<sup>48</sup> Washington never changed his opinion of the reliability of these minutemen and their effectiveness as a regular army but learned to successfully use the strengths of these forces against the enemy. By the end of the war, although the Commander in Chief still felt the militia-based system was not a solution for sustainable national defense, he certainly recognized

their utility as a limited means to an end and his shared vision for their mission was a welcome respite from an otherwise contentious issue of personnel.<sup>49</sup>

### Supplying An Army

Supplying the army was a significant concern that irritated George Washington's relations with the states. The issue of supply spanned all levels of war and had the potential to greatly undermine the entire civil military structure. The issues surrounding supply were not unlike the issues of today's modern military; the problems centered on how to requisition the proper supplies, how to finance the requisitions, and how to get the resulting supplies to the right location in a timely manner.

Throughout the war, Congress attempted various methods to supply and finance the army. Initially, Congress relied on a cash based system whereby it issued paper money in order to pay for the cost of the war. Congress issued two million dollars in paper in June 1775 but that number climbed to six million by the end of the year. Congress foresaw the issues with depreciation and recommended that each colony annually remove its yearly quota of paper money from circulation. However, saddled with their own financial burdens to fund their militias, the states refused to do so. By the end of 1776, there were over 25 million dollars in circulation and depreciation set in despite Congressional efforts to avoid an increasing devaluation of its currency.<sup>50</sup> In an attempt to solve this problem, Congress passed a resolution on November 22, 1777, that strongly urged the states to levy taxes on their citizens in order to pay for the growing cost of the war. Like subsequent and similar Congressional resolutions, the states disregarded these "earnest recommendations" and the growing financial crisis continued.<sup>51</sup>

By early 1780, Congress established a new system whereby the responsibility of supplying the army fell on the states based on the number of soldiers each state provided to the Continental Army. Through a series of resolutions between mid-1779 and early 1780, Congress established the system of specific supply.<sup>52</sup> This system attempted to eliminate the issues of the cash-based system of payment by turning to a barter mechanism. Through this system of specific supply, Congress placed a quota on each state to provide a specific amount of a specific supply, (for example, beef, pork, flour, tobacco, and rum) based on the number of soldiers from that state and a state's particular resources. For example, one could not expect New Hampshire to provide tobacco given the fact that state did not grow tobacco. Congress would then credit the states for the money that it had called upon the states to raise in taxes. One major complication is that the states were still hesitant to actually raise the taxes in the first place. Once collected, the states would deliver their quota of their specific supplies to a location designated by Washington within their own state boundaries.<sup>53</sup>

The system never functioned as needed and there was enough blame at all levels with regard to the issues surrounding the system's failures. For example, the Delaware Assembly adjourned for sixty days in November 1780 having not provided any of the supplies requisitioned by Congress. On the other hand, there are plenty of examples where the system's failures rest solely with the army. Some states provided too much and the superfluous supplies were left to rot when Continental soldiers were not present at the designated location to receive the supplies. Inadequate storage and reckless handling of supplies were issues as well. A Treasury commissioner found large quantities of flour at various posts along his route from Philadelphia to New York. Full barrels of flour were

unattended, some open, and being handled indiscriminately. As a result, large amounts of flour became wet, moldy, and unfit for use. In another instance, Maryland attempted to deliver 500 head of cattle in response to an emergency Congressional requisition. However, when the agents delivered the cattle to the designated supply point, the Continental officers refused to receive the cattle on the grounds that they, the officers, were neither authorized to receive the cattle nor did they have the adequate funds with which to pay for the cattle.<sup>54</sup>

Washington openly criticized this new system of supply almost immediately. He painted a grim picture of the new system and stated that if he adhered to certain parts of this plan that “ruin must follow.”<sup>55</sup> Washington was also quick to point out to Congress that many of the supply quotas placed on the individual colonies neither met those states’ requirements nor did they appropriately support the current disposition of his forces. Furthermore, he complained that it was beyond the capability of the armies to provide adequate means of transportation of the supplies to the troops.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, neither Congress nor the states solved the problems of having the wrong amount of supplies at the wrong place at the wrong time. By the end of the year, the general gave up and was convinced that “besides the hazard and difficulty” of obtaining the supplies themselves, the system was “expensive and precarious” and that “necessity alone can justify the present mode of obtaining supplies.”<sup>57</sup>

With the army in winter quarters that spread from Morristown to West Point, Washington informed Congress that he held little faith in the states’ abilities to provide for the army. Therefore, his only remaining course of action was impressment.<sup>58</sup> Impressment was a practice that Washington turned to with great reluctance. He

adamantly believed that forcibly taking supplies for his army from his fellow citizens resulted in “souring [the] tempers” and “alienating [the] affections” of the people for whose independence he was fighting.<sup>59</sup> Despite having Congressional authority to do so, Washington continuously went to great lengths to avoid having to resort to military impressment.<sup>60</sup> During a particularly difficult time, Washington ordered Major General William Heath to use his “great personal influence with the eastern states” to visit the executives and legislative assemblies of several New England states to obtain provisions to help alleviate the army’s “embarrassed and distressed circumstances.”<sup>61</sup> Heath’s mission was a success as the New England states provided enough essentials to fill the gap until Congress determined how to fix the supply system once again.<sup>62</sup>

While Washington took steps to avoid impressment, Congress took steps to avoid using the system of specific supply to provide for the army for the upcoming campaign of 1781. Though the system of specific supply continued as the primary means of supplying the army, Congress eventually phased it out for a system based on the army’s local needs. They turned to Pennsylvania merchant Robert Morris to execute a system of contracting with locals for supplies. Although this system had its flaws, it managed to sustain the army for the rest of the war.<sup>63</sup> George Washington seemed quite pleased with the system as he wrote in early-1783 that he enjoyed “the satisfaction of seeing the troops better covered, better clothed, and better fed, than they have ever been in any former winter quarters.”<sup>64</sup>

Notwithstanding Washington’s opinions at the time, it is important to note that he wrote of his satisfactions well after the Yorktown Campaign determined the outcome of the war. That is to say, there was a decreased threat at all levels at the time that



Washington penned this particular letter. This is important to note because his uncharacteristic approval of the supply system came at a time when the British threat was decreasing and the Tory threat was almost non-existent. This bears mentioning to illustrate the influence that the external and internal threat had on the country's operational and tactical level of sustainment. Washington's observations following the Yorktown Campaign illustrate an increased efficiency during a period of decreased enemy threat.

### Analysis

George Washington's civil-military relationship with each state government was unique for a variety of reasons. To attempt to describe and analyze each one in detail is not within the scope of this study. Therefore, one must look at his relationships with the states collectively when trying to determine the impact that these relationships had on the civil-military structure today and how current theory helps to frame that discussion. Furthermore, given the evolution of civil-military relations during the Revolutionary War, there are also certain aspects of modern civil-military relations theory that help to illustrate the overall health of the relationships between George Washington and the states.

Rebecca Schiff argues that the United States and other mature democracies currently enjoy a stable pattern of civil-military relations because the culture of civilian control is embedded in our civil-military culture. However, the country was not a mature democracy at the time of the Revolutionary War. The civil-military structure in which Washington and his civilian authorities functioned did not always presuppose civilian control of the military and constantly evolved during the war. In fact, one of

Washington's most experienced generals, Charles Lee, was famous for circumventing civilian authority and was occasionally flagrant in his disdain for civil control of military matters.<sup>65</sup> Thus, to assume that civil control of the military was regarded as the proper way of doing business is to take the culture of civilian control for granted.

Washington used his personal relationships with the wartime governors to help frame a pattern for civil-military relations that evolved into the civil-military structure that the military and its civil authorities enjoy today. In doing so, he had to deal with state and Congressional authorities who had widely differing views of their authority and the role of Washington as Commander in Chief. Furthermore, Washington, while steadfast in his relationships with the states, established civilian control of the military vis-à-vis Congress. This is not to say that George Washington's successors such as U.S. Grant or George C. Marshall did not contribute to the maturation of the current system but to ignore Washington's contributions to its establishment is to ignore a significant catalyst to development of the current system of civilian control.

Throughout the war, the country faced a variety of threats. These threats were primarily the British Army and the Tory factions that littered certain urban centers and the rural countryside alike. The British regulars presented Washington and the colonies with an external threat while the Tories presented the internal threat. Michael Desch stipulates that a threat-based analysis is key to determining the state of a country's civil-military relations. For example, Desch asserts that if the external threat is low and the internal threat is high then the civil-military relations will be at its worst because the focus of the military is inward. Conversely, if the external threat is high and the internal threat is low, one is likely to see a very healthy pattern of civil-military relations because

the military's focus is outward. However, given that Washington and the army remained primarily in and around the middle colonies for much of the war, both types of threats were usually high in that region. Desch refers to this as a structurally indeterminate threat environment; a simple threat analysis is useless due to the varieties of threats. In these situations, Desch advises that one looks toward three aspects of a military's doctrine. The more agreement there is between the military and the civilians about these three aspects the more likely one is to find a healthy pattern of civil-military relations.<sup>66</sup>

The first aspect of a military's doctrine that Desch believes is key for a strong civil-military relationship is the military's focus. Where does a military spend its resources and what does it see as its primary mission? For George Washington, this was complicated because his focus was on both the external and the internal threats. Although it is common knowledge that Washington inwardly pined for a large-scale engagement with the British, he nonetheless developed a policy early in the war whereby the avoidance of such a meeting was central to survival of the army. This is not to say that this strategy diverted his attention but it is important to correct this common misconception. While his focus for the Continental Army remained on the British army, his focus for the minutemen was almost entirely on the internal threat posed by the Tories. Furthermore, Desch stipulates that an internally focused army has the potential to become instruments of internal repression. Washington's opinion of military impressment and his sensitivities to the value of positive local opinions established standard practices that largely avoided these trappings of an internally focused military. Normally, having to focus its attention on two distinct threats is an issue for any military but Washington, through Congress and with the personnel from the states, achieved a healthy balance.

Thus, this aspect of the army's doctrine was an overall strength to the civil-military relations with the states because Washington was able to balance these two requirements given the variety of forces at his disposal.

The second aspect of a military's doctrine that Desch describes is the military's organizational culture. More importantly, the more deeply embedded any given norm is within a military's organizational culture, the more impact it has on its behavior. For example, the more deeply embedded subordination to civilian authority is within a military's culture, the more likely that aspect of its culture is to be the norm. In this case, the colonies did not have a collective national military organizational culture per se, and the Continental Army was developing its organization and policies under the extreme stress of invasion. However, as previously stated, George Washington constantly sought to inculcate military subordination into both the military organizational culture and the national civil-military culture as well. In this aspect of Desch's litmus test, Washington thrives once again.

It is Desch's third aspect of military doctrine that Washington stumbles in his civil-military relationships with the states. The third aspect is a military's doctrine as a focal point of agreement or disagreement between the military and the civilian authorities. Does the military agree or disagree with civilian ideas about how the civilians want to use the military? For this study, given the impact that supply had on Washington's ability to conduct his mission, it is prudent to include logistics in this discussion as well. Did Washington agree with what the states viewed as the military's primary mission and did he agree with the overall system of supply? The results vary in both cases but overall, the tendencies and patterns of discourse lead one to conclude that

the military's doctrine was a focal point of disagreement between Washington and the states.

There was definite disagreement between Washington and the colonial authorities in terms of the mission of the Continental Army. Each colony believed Washington and the Continental Army existed to provide it with a quick reaction force to answer any threat or any potential threat, as was the case in Massachusetts in July 1775. Furthermore, the colonies also often believed that the Continental Army fell under their state command authority and were at their disposal despite Washington's overall mission. This was the case with Connecticut, also in July 1775. There were also fundamental disagreements between Washington and the states about the state regimental system, officer promotions, and terms of enlistment for the state militias. The lone issue that all agreed upon was the primary mission of the minutemen. Beneath the surface of these skin-deep issues was the larger issue of Washington's desire for, and colonial aversion to, a large standing army.<sup>67</sup> The only thing to save Washington's civil-military relationships with the states on this matter was the sheer power of his personality and the personal relationships he nurtured throughout the war.

Supplying an eighteenth century army was always a difficult task, but for the Continental Army this task was exacerbated by the economic weakness of the rebellious colonies and the political immaturity of their governmental system. In early 1780, Congress established a new system of supply whereby the responsibility for supplying the army fell on the states based on the number of soldiers each state provided to Washington. This new system of supply, albeit effective at times, had its limitations at the operational level as adequate throughput and transport of supplies varied greatly. The

lack of an adequate system of sustainment caused George Washington to constantly move the army and placed an incredible strain on his civil-military relations with the colonies despite his best efforts to do otherwise. As discussed, George Washington's disdain for the various systems of supply caused him to accuse the states of not supporting their own armies. The lack of supplies affected all of the general's operations at all levels of war and was a sore spot for the Commander in Chief. Once again, suffice it to say, this aspect of the military's doctrine served as a point of disagreement for Washington in his civil-military relationship with the states.

Having carefully analyzed George Washington's civil-military relationships with the states through Desch's threat-based structural theory and its reliance on the specific aspects of military doctrine, one could conclude that Washington's civil-military relationships with the states were overall fair to good. This was despite constant disagreement about the mission of the army, how to use the forces provided by the states, and how to supply them. Two key factors allowed for the relative success of these civil-military relationships despite these disagreements. The first factor was that Congress permitted Washington to establish the civil-military structure with the states. The second factor was his personal relationships with many of the key state leaders. These personal relationships allowed him to establish various precedents for the army despite the fact that many of these actions had the potential to greatly agitate and alienate the people on whom he depended for troops and supplies. Therefore, with the various conflicts with personnel and supply mitigated by Washington's own determined personality and the trust placed in him by the states, Washington's civil-military relationships with the states were not perfect but were very functional and can be seen as effective overall.

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<sup>1</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 15:109.

<sup>2</sup>Schiff, “Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered: A Theory of Concordance,” 7; Schiff, *The Military and Domestic Politics*, 173. The fact that Schiff contends that the current civil-military structure is not exportable to underdeveloped governments is not a point of discussion for this study. I review Schiff’s theory in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>3</sup>Desch, “Soldiers, States, and Structures: The End of the Cold War and Weakening U.S. Civilian Control,” 389-405; Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*, 184. I review the highlights of Desch’s theories in Chapter 2 of this thesis. For a good overview of his theory, see his 1998 article in *Armed Forces and Society*.

<sup>4</sup>In times when expediency was necessary, Washington often took his concerns directly to the states.

<sup>5</sup>John Todd White, “Standing Armies in the Time of War” (Washington, DC, 1978), 147-148. This is the base argument presented in Chapter V of White’s dissertation.

<sup>6</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 2:97, 103. See Congressional resolutions dated June 17, 1775 and June 22, 1775.

<sup>7</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:132. See his letter to Jonathan Trumbull Sr., dated July 18, 1775.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:153. See his General Orders dated July 22, 1775.

<sup>9</sup>One could argue that Congress did not necessarily represent a singular executive authority but as demonstrated in the previous chapter, it certainly functioned like one.

<sup>10</sup>Margaret Burnham Macmillan, *The War Governors in the American Revolution* (New York Columbia University Press, 1943), 114. Although this specific chapter in the book speaks to the nature of the Congressional relationships and correspondence with the state governments, it is clear through George Washington’s correspondence that his communication with the states followed the same pattern.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 152-153.

<sup>12</sup>Chernow, *Washington*, 184-185. Macmillan, *The War Governors in the American Revolution*, 134-190. The case of John Hancock is curious in that most of Congress knew at the time of Washington’s nomination as the Commander in Chief that Hancock expected this honor to become his despite his lack of military experience. Margaret MacMillan argues that this is the reason that Washington’s relationship with Hancock soured while the latter served as the governor of Massachusetts. Although this argument is not without merit, Hancock’s hesitance to provide support to Washington’s army later in the war was probably due to the decreased British and Tory threat to Massachusetts rather than some perceived bitter rivalry between the two. She makes the

argument for Hancock's jealousies throughout chapters 7-9 of her book. However, the strength of Hancock's relationship with Washington while the former served as the President of Congress speaks to a relationship whose foundation was one of professional admiration and mutual support. Washington's early relationship with Hancock during this time was key to the health of the civil-military relations between the two during the early years of the war.

<sup>13</sup>Chernow, *Washington*, 257-269.

<sup>14</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 10:504. See Washington's letter to New York's Council of Safety dated August 4, 1777.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 3:484, 11:137, 151; Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 17:252-253. See his letters to Governors Cooke of Rhode Island, Johnston of Maryland, and Clinton of New York dated March 17, 1776, September 3, 1777, and December 13, 1779, respectively. Also see his letter from Virginia Governor Patrick Henry dated September 5, 1777 in which Henry states, "In that, as in every military measure I shall be solely guided by your opinions." Henry's comment stems from a series of correspondence between he and Washington in which they discuss the nature of the system by which Virginia provided Washington with personnel.

<sup>16</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 20:276, 284-286. See his letters dated October 23 and November 03, 1780.

<sup>17</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 8:590, 592-594; Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 18:494-496, 19:14-15, 30-31, and 47-50. In reference to the proposed attack on St. Augustine, see Washington's correspondence with Governor Bryan of Georgia, Brigadier General Robert Howe, and Governor Rutledge of South Carolina. With regard to the defense of West Point, see his correspondence with (now) Major General Robert Howe and Governors Clinton of New York Trumbull of Connecticut. The fact that it is the same general officer in both instances is purely coincidental.

<sup>18</sup>Phelps, *George Washington and American Constitutionalism*, 50.

<sup>19</sup>Perhaps it was not a coincidence that Benjamin Harrison was then Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates but the nature of this letter lends its reader to believe that this particular piece of correspondence was strictly personal in nature.

<sup>20</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 21:342. Italics are not my own and are found in two separate sources. Neither source indicates whether or not the italics are original.

<sup>21</sup>Phelps, *George Washington and American Constitutionalism*, 52-53. Although the structure and organization of these forces evolved throughout the war, this very



simplistic view of it is the most holistic and true to form representation of the total sum forces under Washington's command.

<sup>22</sup>White, "Standing Armies in the Time of War," 149-152; Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 2:190-205; Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 3:320-327. In addition, Congress authorized the formation of this army because of a four-day conference in Cambridge in October, 1775. Washington, his primary generals, and several politicians from the surrounding New England colonies sought to flesh out the national requirements and forwarded these recommendations to the Continental Congress. Congress acted upon the results of this conference and passed a resolution that approved all of the conference recommendations.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 6:1043-1046.

<sup>24</sup>Robert K. Wright and Center of Military History, *The Continental Army* (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1983), 451. The brief synopsis of the formation of the Continental Army presented in this thesis does not do justice to the complexities of the military during the time period studied in this thesis. See Wright's work for a more holistic and detailed explanation.

<sup>25</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:205. This request from the Massachusetts General Court appears chronologically after Washington's response. This is due to the unclear nature of the actual date of this letter. However, it is very clear that Washington's response of July 30, 1775 is to this particular piece of correspondence.

<sup>26</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 3:379-381; Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:195-196. The two primary sources cited for this letter conflict in terms of addressee and the date that George Washington actually wrote the letter. An earlier source shows that George Washington addressed this to the Massachusetts Legislature and dated the letter, July 31, 1775. However, the *Papers of George Washington* provides a more accurate account of the correspondence as George Washington actually addressed the letter to James Warren and dated it July 30, 1775. The author also provides a brief explanation for this discrepancy in the endnotes of the letter.

<sup>27</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 15:96. This sentiment did not dissipate with time. In a letter dated May 18, 1779, Washington lectured John Armstrong, a Pennsylvania Congressional delegate, that if the general were to attempt to please everybody, he would ultimately please nobody. He continued to state that he would endeavor to pursue "one steady line of conduct for the good of the great whole."

<sup>28</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:195-196. I discuss this aspect of Washington's response to John Warren and its ramifications on the civil-military relations in further detail later in this chapter.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 1:405. See his letter to Connecticut governor Jonathan Trumbull, Sr. dated September 2, 1775.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 1:416. Trumbull's response is dated September 5, 1775.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 1:437.

<sup>32</sup>Mark V. Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War, 1775-1783* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1996), 13-15; Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:468; White, "Standing Armies in the Time of War," 152-153. Kwasny offers a brief synopsis of this episode with Governor Trumbull. For the text of Trumbull's final response on the matter, see George Washington's letter to Trumbull dated September 15, 1775. To elaborate on the tone and intricacies of revolutionary era correspondence is not within the scope of this study, however, John White offers a detailed explanation for why this back and forth with Governor Trumbull had the potential to alienate Washington from the wartime governor in his dissertation.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 153.

<sup>34</sup>Glenn A. Phelps, *George Washington and American Constitutionalism* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 51.

<sup>35</sup>See Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2:103-104; Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:21-22.

<sup>36</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series*, 1:360-363; Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:84-92, 372-375, 384, 2:334-336. Washington firmly believed the authority to appoint and promote officers belonged to him as the Commander in Chief. This was a long held belief dating back to his command of the Virginia Regiment. See his letter to Warner Lewis, dated August 14, 1755. See also his letters to John Hancock, Richard Henry Lee, the Delaware Delegates, and Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Reed for some of his thoughts on the Congressionally imposed state regimental system and its impact on the good order and discipline of the army.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. See his to Lieutenant Colonel Reed dated November 8, 1775.

<sup>38</sup>*Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 2008), App. B, 212.

<sup>39</sup>Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, 54-55; Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War*, (New York: H. Holt, 1997), 545. General John Stark of New Hampshire also served as an example of how this promotion system degraded the capabilities of the army's senior leadership. Stark reluctantly left the Continental Army after Congress passed him over

for promotion. He returned to New Hampshire where he served as a militia commander throughout the war to great acclaim.

<sup>40</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 18:828; Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington, 1745-1799*, 20:397-398, 488-491; Smith et al., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, 16:402, 541. For example, on September 15, 1780, Congress confirmed Maryland's nomination for Brigadier General Smallwood's promotion to Major General. This served as a catalyst for a series of correspondence between John Sullivan and George Washington. Washington feared that politically based regimental promotions had the potential to alienate Continental officers he viewed as more talented than those from the states. This was a sentiment that John Sullivan understood but was politically helpless to aid the Commander in Chief.

<sup>41</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 9:12-13, 146-148, 11:151. See his correspondence on the matter with Virginia Governor Patrick Henry.

<sup>42</sup>Don Higginbotham, *Reconsiderations on the Revolutionary War: Selected Essays*, Vol. 14 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 83. John Stark was a Revolutionary War hero of the highest degree and historians often hold him as the personification of the colonial fighting spirit. However, his departure from camp on the eve of battle was unconscionable and fueled the flames of Washington's discontent with the nature of short-term enlistments for the militia.

<sup>43</sup>See Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 2:187-190.

<sup>44</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 1:90. See his letter to John Hancock in which in which he states, "no dependence can be put on the militia for a continuance in camp, or regularity and discipline during the short time they may stay."

<sup>45</sup>Higginbotham, *Reconsiderations on the Revolutionary War: Selected Essays*, 90.

<sup>46</sup>Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, 5:250.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:195-196. See his letter to John Warren.

<sup>48</sup>For a more detailed synopsis of the successes and failures of the militia, see Don Higginbotham's essay on militia in Don Higginbotham, *Reconsiderations on the Revolutionary War: Selected Essays*, 83-103. Also, for a more detailed analysis of Washington's use of militia in the middle states of Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, see Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War, 1775-1783*, 425.

<sup>49</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 18:138. See his June 8, 1783 Circular to the States where he refers to the militia as the “palladium of our security, and the first effectual resort in case of hostility.”

<sup>50</sup>Erna Risch and Center of Military History, *Supplying Washington's Army* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, G.P.O., 1981), 17-18.

<sup>51</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 9:955-958.

<sup>52</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 15:1371-1372, 1374-1381; 16:196-205. There are numerous resolutions that established this system. For the most concise resolutions, see the Congressional resolutions passed on December 11 and 14, 1779 and February 25, 1780.

<sup>53</sup>For a more detailed explanation of this system, see Risch, *Supplying Washington's Army*, 230-231.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 238-239.

<sup>55</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 18:138. In his letter to Philip Schuyler dated March 22, 1780, Washington did not reference the specific parts of the plan to which he opposed the most. However, he offered a scathing review of the new system of specific supplies.

<sup>56</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 18:152-157.

<sup>57</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington, 1745-1799*, 21:14-15. See his letter to James Duane dated December 26, 1780. For other great examples of the conflicts caused by the system specific supplies, see Risch, *Supplying Washington's Army*, 238-239.

<sup>58</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 20:312-313, 411-414; 21:1. *Ibid.*, 239. See his letters to the President of Congress, Udney Hay, Governor Clinton of New York on the matter.

<sup>59</sup>George Washington, Donald Jackson, and Dorothy Twohig, *The Diaries of George Washington* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 3:356.

<sup>60</sup>Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 3:323, 4:1028. For examples of Congressional authorities for impressment, see resolutions passed on November 4, 1775 and December 15, 1777.

<sup>61</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 22:58-59. Washington sent Major General William Heath of Massachusetts. See his letters to Heath dated May 8 and 9, 1781.

<sup>62</sup>Risch, *Supplying Washington's Army*, 241.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 246-258. Quality assurance of the supplies for which the army contracted was always an issue.

<sup>64</sup>Washington et al., *The Writings of George Washington*, 26:97. See his letter to Major General William Heath.

<sup>65</sup>White, "Standing Armies in the Time of War," 158-169. J. Todd White offers a detailed account of one such instance when Lee attempted to circumvent the authority of both Congress and the state of New York. It was through Washington's calm demeanor and steady leadership that guided the army through this provincial conflict.

<sup>66</sup>Desch, "Soldiers, States, and Structures: The End of the Cold War and Weakening U.S. Civilian Control," 389-405; Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*, 184. I review the highlights of Desch's theories in Chapter 2 of this thesis. For a good overview of his theory, see his 1998 article in *Armed Forces and Society*.

<sup>67</sup>This was a point of contention for Washington throughout his time as Commander in Chief and his presidency.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In an essay review written for *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Don Higginbotham asserts that George Washington's relationships with Congress and the state governments are aspects of the Virginian that many overlook and are "much in need of treatment."<sup>1</sup> Given the scope and magnitude that such a study presents, this thesis focused on one specific aspect of Washington's civil-military relations with his civilian authorities, an aspect that many currently take for granted in American society: civilian control of the military. Civilian control of the military is a given as the norm within the contemporary American civil-military culture and it began with George Washington in the early years of the Revolutionary War. This is not to say that George Washington is solely responsible for the health of current civil-military relations but one should not overlook his early contributions to the establishment of civilian control. Therefore, there is utility to studying and understanding his contributions to the maturation of today's American civil-military experience and the insight his experiences bring to the study of civil-military relations.

Several recurring themes evolve from this study of Washington's relationship with Congress and the states. These themes illustrate why George Washington and his contributions are relevant for today's senior military leaders. First, George Washington laid the groundwork for military subordination and helped to establish the societal and cultural norms upon which civilian control matured to where it is today. Also, senior military leaders must possess the political astuteness to effectively fulfill their assigned duties and responsibilities; the politics of generalship are important and senior military

leaders cannot ignore them. One must understand the political environment in which one operates in order to foster a healthy pattern of civil-military relations. Washington also contributes to the discussion of the importance of the citizen-soldier and his role in society. This is an important contribution because most senior leaders often set the citizen-soldier aside for the perceived need of an apolitical and solely professional military force. Regardless of politics, citizen-soldiery, or any number of factors discussed in the multiple theories of civil-military relations, there is one overarching aspect of George Washington that contributes to this discussion more than any other: character. A leader's temperament and the personal relationships cultivated by that leader play an important role in the development of any civil-military relationship. It is personal character that many theorists tend to shy away from when searching for a quantifiable explanation for why leaders interact with each other the way that they do. George Washington continues to contribute to the civil-military discussion because of his contributions to civilian control, his astute political awareness, and his embodiment of the citizen-soldier. Most importantly, his personal character and the care with which he cultivated his personal relationships with civilian authority continue to be his greatest contribution to today's civil-military discussion.

Although there is no overarching theory on civil-military relations that explains Washington's behavior, there are aspects of certain theories that contribute to a greater understanding of his contributions. Likewise, George Washington's contributions and experiences help to explain, justify, and give a deeper understanding of particular theories on civil-military relations as well. Rebecca Schiff's concordance theory, for instance, claims that a country's pattern of civil-military relations depends upon that country's

military cultural and institutional traditions. If a country's military embeds civilian control into its traditions, culture, and societal customs, then civilian control becomes the norm. It is for this reason that Schiff contends that the separation between the military and civil authority is so effective in American civil-military relations. Given this particular foundational aspect of her theory, the connection between today's civil-military structure and George Washington is seamless in that he helped establish the traditions and culture of American civil-military relations. Whether it is through his correspondence, his guidance to his generals, or his actions in places like Massachusetts and Newburgh, George Washington's contributions to the establishment of civilian control as the underpinning of America's civil-military culture in Rebecca Schiff's concordance theory are incontrovertible.

Samuel P. Huntington asserts that a military professional is, by definition, politically neutral. This political neutrality results from a professional satisfying all of Huntington's criteria for a military professional. A failure to meet Huntington's criteria results in an increased politicization of the military's officer corps. Washington and his generals met only one of these three criteria for a professional and therefore Huntington cannot consider them military professionals by his definition. Clearly, George Washington's political successes undermine Huntington's imperative of an apolitical military professional. The successes of George Washington illustrate the need for a politically engaged leader rather than one who divests him from politics altogether. Although today's military leaders should be scrupulously non-partisan, to expect them to ignore the political climate in the due course of their employment is naïve and belittles their intellectual capacity to solve the complex problems all senior leaders face today. An



apolitical professional, in Huntington's model, cannot effectively execute the duties and responsibilities given him by his civil authorities if he cannot successfully navigate within today's political arena.

Of Huntington's three criteria for professionalism, George Washington and his generals only fulfilled the requirement for a professional to possess a certain level of social responsibility and to execute professional duties and responsibilities for a socially acceptable purpose. Strikingly enough, this purpose goes hand in hand with Morris Janowitz's need for a military professional to exude the qualities of the citizen-soldier. A citizen-soldier is a part of society and understands society's perspective, their wants, and their needs. What better way as a professional to understand your social responsibilities than to actually engrain yourself within society?

In today's society, the military is trusted as a responsible steward of the taxpayers' dollars. As our country and its military slowly step away from ten or more years of persistent conflict, the military and its civilian authorities seek to balance the need for security with the need to meet its other financial goals. In other words, the military's financial resources will become increasingly constrained as our leaders wrestle with finding the ultimate cost-benefit ratio of security needs to fiscal responsibility. Washington strengthens Morris Janowitz's imperative of the citizen-soldier by possessing those societal bonds that some of his military contemporaries lacked. As a citizen of the country for whose independence he fought, Washington understood the fiscal ramifications of war and its personal impact on his country's citizenry. The Revolutionary War was not unlike any of America's wars since in that it increasingly strained and stretched the economy to its breaking point. Washington understood, as a

citizen-soldier, his society's perspective on the military. This understanding was key to the long-standing overall health of his civil-military relationships with his civilian authorities. The study of Washington teaches leaders the necessity to avoid becoming wrangled into partisan politics yet they also need to have a strong connection to society to understand the strain war places on society and therefore help balance the requirement for security with the need for fiscal responsibility.

Washington's embodiment of Janowitz's citizen-soldier is also the key to him serving as Congress's answer to Peter Feaver's civil-military problematique; Washington was a military subordinate with whom they could entrust the security of their country without compromising the stability of their government. To take it a step further, Feaver's explanation of the civil-military problematique is a simple way to illustrate the reasons Congress elected George Washington to lead its army in 1775. In short, he was uniquely qualified to adequately perform the duties given him by Congress yet, given his social, military, and political background, he was not a threat to their political sovereignty. Washington's peers such as Horatio Gates and Charles Lee were foreign military officers with no experience in either American politics or society. In addition, even Washington's primary antagonist, Thomas Conway, returned to France for continued military service following an embarrassing exit from the American stage. Simply put, these men of singular military background had much less at stake in maintaining any semblance of civilian control given their complete disconnectedness from American society. Washington, on the other hand, was a fourth-generation American whose civic duties to his country were foremost in his mind. The social cause for which he fought was independence; his independence and his country's

independence. Again, for Congress, Washington was the perfect man for the job.

Washington continues to illustrate the reasons that senior military leaders should be more of a politically engaged citizen-soldier and less of a faceless apolitical professional.

Today's National Guard undoubtedly embodies Janowitz's ideal whereas the active duty army strives to embody Huntington's professional. Although military professionals currently strive to personify Huntington's ideal, it is clear from the study of Washington within the framework of civil-military relations theory that today's military must endeavor to achieve and maintain a healthy balance between the two ideals. A military professional must maintain a certain level of objective separation from society while still maintaining a balanced level of connectedness in order to understand and fulfill its social responsibilities.

George Washington's experiences also give insight and credence to Michael Desch's structural threat-based analysis. This is because Desch asserts that civilian control is a function of the location, intensity, and nature of the threat or threats a country faces. George Washington always kept a keen eye on the state governments and sought to avoid alienating them from the larger cause of independence while seeking to establish civilian control of the military, particularly that of Congress. Washington needed support from the state governments but not at the expense of establishing Congress as the sole executive authority of the Continental Army. In several instances, George Washington succeeded in walking this fine line by cultivating and relying on his personal relationships with the various state governors and members of the state legislative bodies. Whether these relationships were old or new, Washington paid careful attention to personalize his message to the state entities when there was a potential for a conflict in

civil-military relations. The role Washington played with respect to the thirteen sovereign states most closely resembles that of a modern day coalition commander. Like a modern coalition, countries supply troops and materiel based on their perception of the severity of the threat to their country. This is not unlike the state governments during George Washington's time as a commander as Washington typically received the preponderance of supplies and men from the governors in whose states the army spent the most time. To this end, present day military leaders should take great care to bear in mind the example set by Washington and the attention he paid to nurturing personal relationships with civil authorities. For George Washington, people mattered.

Civilian control reigns supreme in American culture because George Washington went to great lengths to embed it in the civil-military structure. This was due in no small part to his connection to the society in which he lived and worked. He, more so than his military peers such as Horatio Gate and Charles Lee, had a vested interest in helping to create a society in which an army subordinate to civil authorities balanced the need for the protection of society's collective and individual freedoms. Despite the opinions of modern theorists, military professionals may be political but not partisan and they must have a connection to society in order to maintain a key aspect of their own profession. Many followed George Washington as the commander of American armed forces and all of them subsequently contributed to the establishment of civilian control but none more so than him.

Although George Washington's contributions to the successful establishment of civilian control help to frame the discussion of civil-military relations, there is a certain quality that collective theory seems to quietly dismiss in their pursuit of the ideal civil-

military explanation. If George Washington can teach today's leaders anything, it is a lesson on the importance of character. Although all of the theories previously discussed address the human aspect of the civil-military paradigm, the discussion of an individual's character seems lacking. In times of great stress to the civil-military system, George Washington relied on his personal relationships with civil authorities. The weight of his personality and character often carried the day; a leader's character and his ability to maintain strong personal relationships matter. It was with military leaders of high moral character that this country continued to grow and prosper following George Washington's example and it is with leaders of character that this country will continue to thrive and succeed in its future endeavors.

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<sup>1</sup>Higginbotham, "Essay Review: The Washington Theme in Recent Historical Literature," 436.

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Jonathan M. House, Ph.D.  
Department of Military History  
USACGSC  
100 Stimson Ave.  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

Donald B. Connelly, Ph.D.  
Department of Joint, Interagency and Multinational Operations  
USACGSC  
100 Stimson Ave.  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

Janet G. Valentine, Ph.D.  
Department of Military History  
USACGSC  
100 Stimson Ave.  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

Michael A. Wooten  
Department of Logistics and Resource Operations  
USACGSC  
100 Stimson Ave.  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301