REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	**2. REPORT TYPE**	**3. DATES COVERED** *(From - To)*
20-03-2015	Master of Military Studies Research Paper	September 2014 – March 2015

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
An Early Test of America's National Security: The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
N/A

5b. GRANT NUMBER
N/A

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
N/A

6. AUTHOR(S)
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5d. PROJECT NUMBER
N/A

5e. TASK NUMBER
N/A

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
N/A

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
USMC Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Quantico, VA 22134-5068

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
N/A

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
N/A

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
N/A

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)
N/A

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
N/A

14. ABSTRACT

The first major test to American national security took root in 1791 when an association of violent rebels in western Pennsylvania refused to pay a federally mandated tax on the domestic production of distilled spirits. This rebellion in western Pennsylvania became an overwhelming national security crisis that challenged the authority of the Constitution, disrupted national progress, and created a breach in national stability that invited foreign attacks on American sovereignty. Recognizing that the Whiskey Rebellion was a grave threat to national security, and cognizant of the turbulent foreign security environment, President Washington harnessed the collective strength of all elements of national power to overwhelm the threat in November 1794. The Whiskey Rebellion marked the most perilous challenge to American security until the outbreak of civil war sixty-seven years later. The astute federal suppression of the rebellion set a precedent for the use of all instruments of national power, emphasized the significance of domestic stability in national security affairs, and ultimately became the springboard that propelled the nascent American republic to future prosperity.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
National Security, Whiskey Rebellion, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Economics, Information Operations, Diplomacy, Military

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			**17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**	**18. NUMBER OF PAGES**	**19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON**
a. REPORT	**b. ABSTRACT**	**c. THIS PAGE**			Marine Corps University
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass	UU	42	**19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER** *(include area code)* (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MLITARY STUDIES

TITLE:
An Early Test of America's National Security: The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 14-15

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Date: 3/16/2015

Oral Defense Committee Member
Approved: _____
Date: 18 March 2015 (DR. DONALD F. BITTNER)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: An Early Test of America's National Security: The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794

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Thesis: The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 was a seminal test of American national security that challenged the powers of the new federal government and stands as one of the most significant threats to the nation in its history.

Discussion: In the years following independence, American national security struggled under the Articles of Confederation, which was structurally incapable of managing national affairs and protecting the loosely joined community of states from external threats. In 1787, it became apparent that a revision to, or full replacement of, the Articles was critical to long-term security. The ratification of the Constitution in 1788 created a strong central government capable of establishing security and long-term prosperity. President George Washington and his Secretary of Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, were the principal protagonists in molding that new Constitution into an effective national security instrument that the state could wield to confront a growing list of threats in the early 1790s. The President promoted a national security strategy that emphasized the rule of law, economic development, and neutrality in foreign affairs as the pathway to cultivating national power.

The first major test to national security took root in 1791 when an association of violent rebels in western Pennsylvania refused to pay a federally mandated tax on the domestic production of distilled spirits. Though violent opposition to the tax had sprung out across the western United States, the movement in western Pennsylvania took on a unique character defined by anti-government rhetoric, revolutionary leanings, and threats of secession. This growing insurgency in western Pennsylvania became an overwhelming national security crisis that challenged the authority of the Constitution, disrupted national progress, and created a breach in national stability that invited foreign attacks on American sovereignty. Recognizing that the Whiskey Rebellion was a grave threat to national security, and cognizant of the turbulent foreign security environment, President Washington harnessed the collective strength of all elements of national power to overwhelm the insurgency in November 1794.

The Whiskey Rebellion marked the most perilous challenge to American security until the outbreak of civil war sixty-seven years later. The astute federal suppression of the rebellion leveraged all instruments of national power, emphasized the significance of domestic stability in national security affairs, and ultimately became the springboard that propelled the nascent American republic to future prosperity.

Conclusion: The Whiskey Rebellion was a formative event in the early American republic that offers contemporary readers with enduring lessons regarding the comprehensive use of national power and the importance of domestic stability in national security affairs.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEW OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

PREFACE

In late 2013, I read a biography on one of America's most distinguished founders, Benjamin Franklin. As I consumed the pages of that book, it occurred to me how little I knew about the founding of our nation. It was, therefore, after reading about Franklin's life, a life so profoundly interwoven with the story of America, that I gained an extraordinary penchant for early American history. Eager to learn more, I went on to read a biography on Alexander Hamilton. If I had not already been hooked on early American history after reading about the creator of Silence Dogood and *Poor Richard's Almanack* then there was no question that Hamilton's story had placed the finishing nail. Like Franklin, Hamilton was another gifted and industrious member of the founding fathers but with the added distinction of having fought in the revolution and having later served in the first executive cabinet.

It was in reading about Hamilton that I came across the Whiskey Rebellion. The event piqued my interest when I learned that the President and Treasury Secretary had personally travelled to Carlisle, Pennsylvania in 1794 to accompany the expedition of thirteen thousand federal troops as they postured for a showdown with citizen rebels in western Pennsylvania over a tax on whiskey. I thought surely there had to be something more to this seemingly insignificant uprising over taxes that would explain the use of federal force and rationalize why officials of such high position had taken the field in order to see through its suppression. It was with these curiosities in mind that I chose to investigate the Whiskey Rebellion further and make it the subject of a larger research paper on national security.

What I discovered was a penetrating period of American history, the early 1790s, that was home to a collection of captivating issues from debates over constitutional interpretations to early foreign policy decisions, many of which established precedents that remain in force today. I also discovered that there was much more to the Whiskey Rebellion than I had originally envisioned. The rebellion was a critical juncture in the development of America, so much so that it makes for an interesting thought experiment to consider what might have happened if the rebellion had been successful. How would the American story have played out if the western frontier had separated from the rest of the country, and how would the Constitution have fared in subsequent years if those in the west had been able to resist public law and federal enforcement? In the end, studying the Whiskey Rebellion from a national security perspective made for a rich research experience that ultimately uncovered what I consider to be one of the most underrated and formative events in the early years of the American republic.

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"If the laws are to be trampled upon with impunity and a minority is to dictate to the majority, there is an end put at one stroke to republican government."

- George Washington[1]

INTRODUCTION

In October 1794, a federal militia force of thirteen thousand men mustered in Carlisle, Pennsylvania in preparation for a march west over the Alleghany Mountains to suppress a rebel force of roughly six thousand fellow citizens.[2] Over the preceding three years, this group of western Pennsylvania rebels, not unlike other frontier communities in Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, and Kentucky had challenged federal authority by refusing to pay a tax on the domestic production of distilled spirits. The opposition to the excise tax, however, took on a more ominous character in western Pennsylvania. What began as a frontier grievance against the so-called whiskey tax in the four western counties of Washington, Alleghany, Westmoreland, and Fayette grew into a broader insurgency movement that threatened the very foundation of the America republic. In addition to the violent opposition to the excise tax, the rebels in western Pennsylvania boasted anti-government rhetoric, ransacked federal mail, threatened to march on Philadelphia, and made overtures towards revolution, independence, and secession. This domestic threat reached an apex in the summer of 1794 amidst an exceedingly turbulent period of American foreign affairs that together placed national security in imminent peril. President George Washington, dressed in his military uniform for the first time in over a decade, likely had mixed emotions as he reviewed the federal forces staged at Carlisle and Bedford that October; fearful of what might result from the use of federal force on domestic soil, but confident that the security of the nation had left the government with no other choice.

Contrary to modern interpretation, the Whiskey Rebellion was not a benign domestic event. Nor was it simply an expression of taxation, national finance, criminal justice, or defense of the Constitution. While these issues were relevant, and while they all appeared on the exterior to define the essence of this seemingly inconsequential event, there was in fact a much broader, complex, higher-stakes issue at play. It was an issue so important that the President, at the age of 62 and with his back twisting in pain due to an injury sustained earlier that summer, was adamant about making the long voyage from Philadelphia to provide direct executive oversight to the forces gathering at Carlisle.[3] The issue at the center of this domestic development was none other than the impending collapse of the American republic. In a single concept the Whiskey Rebellion, and the federal response that quelled it, was about American national security. That is the central theme and thesis of this paper. It argues that the Whiskey Rebellion was the first major test of American national security and that Washington, seeing the rebellion for more than its unassuming facade, responded to the event with the urgency, diligence, and calculation that the Constitution demanded of its lead executive and Commander in Chief.

The story of the Whiskey Rebellion and its national security underpinnings effectively began after America's Declaration of Independence in 1776. It was then that the thirteen colonies set off on the arduous journey towards becoming a sustainable, sovereign state. To achieve lasting sovereignty required a national security agenda built on a firm political, economic, military, and judicial foundation. The first part of this paper will therefore chronicle America's struggle with establishing that groundwork during the years following independence until ratification of the Constitution in 1788. The second part will outline America's national security posture during Washington's presidency, beginning with his inauguration in 1789 and continuing up to the eve of the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794. In the third and fourth parts, the

paper will turn to the Whiskey Rebellion in order to establish how that crisis challenged the nation's newfound independence and ultimately became the first, and most significant, national security threat in the nation's history. The fifth part of the paper will recount the federal government's handling of the Whiskey Rebellion to demonstrate the President's conviction that the crisis in the western counties of Pennsylvania was more than just a simple domestic annoyance but rather a complex and insidious menace to the nation's security and long-term survival. Lastly, in conclusion the paper will submit that the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, much like the American Civil War that occurred sixty-seven years later, has relevant appeal to contemporary national security affairs and can provide modern day readers with a repository of enduring lessons.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

There was an abundance of material available to support the research of the Whiskey Rebellion. Two books provided exclusive accounts of the event from start to finish. Thomas Slaughter wrote the first in 1986 and William Hogeland wrote the other in 2006. Both were comprehensive descriptions of the ordeal that provided the vantage point of not just western frontier citizens, but also that of the state and federal government parties involved. Given that the paper focuses on the federal government's response to the Whiskey Rebellion, the research and analysis relied on books and biographies written on George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. For information about Washington, the analysis reviewed literature dating back to the early nineteenth century, John Marshall's biography, to as recent as 2013. In addition, the analysis also leveraged Washington's personal letters, diary entries, and other primary source correspondence.

In researching Alexander Hamilton's contribution to the rebellion, Ron Chernow's biographical work was significant for, among other reasons, its description of Hamilton's aggressive economic agenda that ultimately sparked the rebellion. The analysis also utilized Hamilton's personal letters and correspondence with the President, cabinet members, and other officials. The research further benefited from books written about James Madison, the most recent of which was a biography completed in 2014 by Lynne Cheney. The perspective of James Madison was important for two reasons. First, he represented the view of the Congress, which was responsible for the laws that influenced many of the events leading up to 1794. Second, he represented a differing political view from that of Washington and Hamilton, a view that was often consistent with Thomas Jefferson, who at the time of the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794 had recently resigned as Secretary of State. Other materials germane to the research included the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, the U.S. Constitution, the *Federalist Papers*, U.S. law, and various Presidential addresses and proclamations specific to the Washington administration. In the next section, the paper will illustrate the evolution of American national security in the years leading up to the Whiskey Rebellion in order to illustrate the relationship between national security and the threats that the rebellion imposed on American sovereignty.

AMERICAN NATIONAL SECURITY: 1776-1788

From the moment the founders signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the newly formed United States of America was a nation at war. While the thirteen states agreed unanimously on the matter of independence, structurally they were a loosely organized confederation. There would be no official constitution binding the states together until 1781 and even then the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, delayed four years awaiting

ratification, proved insufficient to support and resource national requirements during and after the American Revolution.[4] The Articles of Confederation leaned considerably, if not completely, on the side of states' rights, thereby vesting in the United States Congress minimal powers, especially with regard to financing war. Article 8, for example, stipulates that "All charges of war and all other expenses that shall be incurred for the common defence or general welfare…shall be defrayed out of a common treasury, which shall be supplied by the several states, in proportion to the value of all land within each state…"[5] Under this arrangement, one can see the inevitable disagreements that would ensue over what constitutes "common defence" and "general welfare" for all thirteen states. One can also diagnose the potential for disputes with regard to the distribution of those shared expenses to the member states based on the value of their land, a categorically subjective measure.

Further compounding the shortcomings of the Articles of Confederation was the requirement in Article 9, which established that the Confederation shall take no action "…unless nine states assent to the same…" which meant that the Congress could vote down a particular measure if just five of the thirteen states were opposed.[6] Therefore, a proposal that largely benefited the northern states, for example, would have little chance of success if southern states did not see it in their self-interest to support their northern contemporaries. Perpetual union was therefore hamstrung by State self-preservation; this was not a healthy recipe for an effective national security program. James Madison witnessed the glaring weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation first hand and thus lobbied relentlessly, as a member of Congress, for amendments that would provide the legislature with greater authority. One such amendment proposed that the Congress have the authority to employ force to collect revenue from delinquent states when necessary.[7] Washington and Hamilton were also no strangers to the challenges that a

weak central government under the Articles of Confederation posed to the effective prosecution of the war and collective security. The basic provisions needed to sustain the revolution, such as military clothing and gunpowder, were constantly in short supply. Pay for soldiers were also perpetually in arrears, placing an even greater burden on the shoulders of men fighting for independence while their families struggled to make ends meet at home. This was not an effective way to maintain morale, and it was clearly an inefficient model for fighting a war. While Washington and Hamilton would see the Continental Army prevail at Yorktown in 1781, their experiences in the revolution serving with limited means left a lasting influence that would color their opinions, motivations, and actions later in their public careers.

The postwar period was a trying time for the citizens of the United States. The economy was in depression, inflationary pressure on the Continental dollar was debilitating, and veterans of the war had remained largely uncompensated.[8] The inability of the Congress to make good on the nation's debts had once again revealed large holes in the nation's weak central government. By 1786 momentum had begun to generate for a major modification to the Articles of Confederation, with James Madison and Alexander Hamilton among those leading the effort.[9] In 1787, the Shay's Rebellion in Massachusetts was perhaps the straw that broke the camel's back. Citizens of western Massachusetts marched on local courts in an attempt to strong-arm judicial proceedings and prevent rulings on seizure of property and land for unpaid state taxes. A force commissioned by the Congress put down the rebellion in February 1787.[10] Yet the rebellion was a clear message that the current system of government under the Articles of Confederation was unworkable. If the independent and self-serving states of America were to sustain themselves then a stronger commitment of unity was essential.

The emergence of the U.S. Constitution from Philadelphia's Independence Hall in late 1787 was precisely the legal instrument needed to begin the nation's quest for sustainable national security. The new Constitution, much to the chagrin of states' rights advocates, placed substantial authority in the hands of the central government. Moving powers from the state to a central federal authority had solved the most critical issue that had plagued the nation under the Articles of Confederation. The Congress now had the express power to "…lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defence and general welfare of the United States…."[11] More importantly the Constitution provided the means with which to enforce that power of taxation. Article I, Section 8 gave the Congress authority to call forth "…the militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions."[12] Additionally, federal actions that had once required the agreement of nine of the thirteen states were now the duly recognized authorities of the legislative and executive branches that greatly helped streamline the processes of government.

Although the Constitution was an enormous improvement over its predecessor, the document was far from perfect. Closely contested state ratification elections illustrated just how split the nation was over the new Constitution. While Delaware, New Jersey, and Georgia voted unanimously for ratification, other states were much less decisive.[13] Rhode Island and North Carolina failed to ratify in 1788.[14] In New York, ratification passed by just two votes, 30 for and 27 against.[15] The state of Virginia ratified the Constitution by just a slim margin. How would the federal government define the "general welfare," and what would constrain the government from establishing laws that were considered "necessary and proper?" What would stop the federal government, having these broad authorities, from oppressing its citizens? These were but a few of the concerns that citizens held. Yet despite its ambiguities, the Constitution trumpeted a

logical argument for collective defense driven by an unshakeable unity that bonded states together in a true perpetual union. It was within this new contract, which clearly delineated the ends, ways, and means of government, that the national security posture of the nation could flourish. With ratification in 1788, the United States had officially established a trajectory that would allow the nation to ascend to limitless heights.

WASHINGTON'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: 1789-1794

On 30 April 1789, on the second floor balcony of New York's Federal Hall, George Washington took the solemn oath, as the nation's first President, to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.[16] Washington knew, being a pragmatic man and above all else a realist, that the sovereignty of the young republic hinged on its ability to protect itself against enemies both foreign and domestic. Building American national security was a critical priority and a gigantic undertaking. Three themes would dominate Washington's national security strategy during the early years of the republic: rule of law, economic prosperity, and neutrality in foreign affairs.

The first national security theme of Washington's administration was the rule of law. A nation governed by laws was without question the very foundation of the American democratic system. The Constitution was the supreme law of the land. It established that representatives of the states, elected by their constituents, served in the national Congress to establish policy deemed to be in the best interest of the country writ large. The separation of powers within the federal government ensured that those laws were just, necessary, and proper. Once enacted, only the highest and most sincere obedience to public statutes was the patriotic duty of all Americans. Only through a strong conviction in the rule of law would the nation be able to "establish justice" and "insure domestic tranquility." Anything less would fracture the nation's Government at its

core and extricate the capacity of the republic to, as Washington stated in his inaugural address, "…command the respect of the world." There was no one better qualified nor as competent than General George Washington to entrust the responsibility described in Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution, which required that the office of the President "…take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed…."[17] The state electorates knew precisely what they were getting when they voted Washington into the office of the President. They anticipated that Washington, being a strict disciplinarian, would preserve the Constitution at all costs, and not take lightly any unlawful attacks on the nation's central document.

Economic prosperity was the second theme of Washington's national security strategy. Upon assuming the office of the President, Washington had found the nation's finances in disarray. America was bankrupt.[18] The national debt stood at fifty-four million dollars, not including the twenty-five million dollars that the states owed to their creditors.[19] Furthermore, the economy had remained severely depressed in post-war America. Therefore the invaluable engine of national might, the horsepower by which to "provide for the common defence" and "promote the general welfare", was devoid of even the smallest trace of lubrication. While Washington fully recognized the dire circumstances confronting the nation, finance was not his area of expertise. It was at this time that Alexander Hamilton, then practicing private law in New York, again came to the service of his adopted country. On 11 September 1789, Hamilton was confirmed as the nation's first Secretary of the Treasury. No less than 24 hours later, Hamilton had organized a loan from the Bank of New York to the federal government for a sum of fifty thousand dollars. The following day, unwilling to rest while there was work remaining, Hamilton generated a second loan request for the same amount, this one destined for the Bank of North America in Philadelphia.[20] These were the actions of a public official that knew time was

not on the side of American security. For Hamilton, the nation was theoretically still at war, and he was determined to not waste a single moment in helping the republic gain its bearings and ascend to levels of national power that would rival the likes of those in Europe.[21] He would do this by pursuing a blitzkrieg of financial programs intent on spurring economic activity, industrialization, and technological growth that would help to raise the nation to a level of affluence commensurate with its demand for national security.

In late September 1789, at the behest of Congress, Hamilton began developing a comprehensive plan to retire the nation's war debt. He submitted the elaborate funding proposal, the Report on Public Credit, to Congress in January 1790.[22] The report consisted of three cohesive and interdependent measures. The first was a plan to retire the fifty-four million dollar federal debt, part of which the Government owed to veterans of the Revolution who held IOU notes issued during the war. Many of those veterans, in need of money after returning home, sold the notes to investors at a fraction of their face value. The Congress debated whether to pass the funding proposal as submitted, which would result in rewarding speculators who had purchased the notes cheaply; or instead trace the notes back to their original owners to ensure veterans were compensated for their service to the nation. Recognizing the damage that such a precedent might have on capital markets, the Congress voted to pay the full face value of the notes with interest to the current holders. This outcome would later add to the discouragement of veterans in the backcountry who felt penalized by a federal government that was out of touch with those in the west.

The second component of Hamilton's Report on Public Credit was the issue of assumption. This proposal suggested that the federal government shoulder the twenty-five million dollars of debt that the states had accumulated during the Revolution. Although initially

rejected, Congress eventually approved the assumption plan in exchange for an agreement that established the future site of the American capitol on the Potomac River.[23] The significance of the assumption measure was that it elevated the role of the federal government in America where states had previously commanded great power. It also gave the central government justification to expand its power of taxation over other sources of revenue in order to retire the national debt and generate wealth in support of prosperity and security.

The third and final part of Hamilton's plan was a natural progression of the assumption measure. With state debt subsumed by the federal government, the total federal debt increased to seventy-nine million dollars, an amount that impost taxes alone could not support. Unable to raise impost taxes any further and with a national aversion to a tax on land, income or wealth, the only palatable source of revenue available was an excise tax levied on distilled spirits produced in the United States.[24] The tax on distilled spirits, primarily whiskey, eventually passed through the legislature in 1791 despite having failed on previous occasions. In the end, each of the major fiscal measures contained in Hamilton's Report on Public Credit had passed successfully through Congress providing the framework for cultivating national wealth and with it security and sovereignty.

The Report on Public Credit was not the only financial project that the Treasury Department pursued during the first administration in the name of national security. In December 1790 as the Congress was revisiting the whiskey tax legislation, Hamilton submitted a request for the first national bank of the United States.[25] This request was just as critical to the administration's national security agenda as had been the plan for extinguishing the national debt. In fact, the two were interrelated. The bank request was for all intents and purposes about creating a world-class economy. Having studied economics extensively, Hamilton was keenly

aware that in order for business to flourish in America, the free flow of money through a robust banking system was essential. As the collective American business community grew, so too would the nation's capacity for industrial production, homegrown innovation, and technological advancements. And just as the export of goods to foreign markets would build national wealth, so too would an increase in the flow of imports that, driven by domestic consumption, would generate additional impost revenues that would funnel back to the federal government for distribution to national needs such as defense. While this capitalist, utopian vision was second nature to Hamilton, it was far from being a common virtue in Congress. In fact, it was James Madison who would lead the opposition against the request for a national bank, arguing that it was unconstitutional and would set a dangerous precedent for unlimited federal powers.[26] Madison lost that battle when the Senate approved the bank bill on 20 January 1791. By July of that year, the national bank offered stock to the public for the first time. Hamilton enjoyed tremendous success in the early years of the Washington administration, and as a result, the nation drew unlimited benefits as the prospect for sustainable national security through economic independence propelled forward in an extraordinary and unprecedented fashion.

President Washington's third national security theme was neutrality in foreign affairs. During the American Revolution Washington had a natural instinct for recognizing when the army was capable of pushing the offense and when it needed to retract and establish a defensive posture. That same instinct was now telling him that the nation was too little prepared to entangle itself in unnecessary conflicts. The young republic was in dire need of an extended period of peace and prosperity with which to build its economy and mature as a united nation.[27] The President's unilateral 1793 neutrality proclamation in response to the French conflict with Great Britain demonstrated his commitment towards American impartiality in international

affairs.[28] Sending John Jay to England to broker peace with Great Britain was yet another illustration of Washington's focus on keeping the nation out of messy entanglements. While Washington remained wedded to the concept of neutrality, there was no shortage of foreign pressures that were threatening to drag the United States into costly conflict.

Perhaps the largest source of international contention during the early 1790s was Great Britain. The British refused to surrender fur outposts in the American Northwest, determined to hold out until the U.S. made good on its obligations under the Paris concessions. Great Britain further escalated tensions by demanding limits on American trade in the West Indies and by attacking U.S. ships in international waters. In addition to British provocations, Washington faced ongoing instability in the west that pitted American military forces against Indian tribes over contested land rights. Further complicating national order was the inability to arrive at agreeable terms with Spain over navigation rights along the Mississippi River, a matter that was spoiling America's much needed economic progress. Finally, the escalation of revolution in France, the Reign of Terror, and the subsequent declarations of war in Europe threatened to draw America into a conflict that it was unprepared to fight. The combination of these foreign relation distractions was a major influence on the state of domestic affairs and in particular the insurgency that was developing in western Pennsylvania.

REBELLION IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA: 1791-1794

Western opposition to the federal excise tax on domestic whiskey production began promptly in July 1791 when the first of Hamilton's federal tax collectors entered the backcountry to enforce tax policy that Congress and the President had signed into law.[29] The West's refusal to pay the tax was largely a matter of social and economic grievances. These grievances

crystalized in 1791, and eventually fomented into a regional insurgency by 1794 that threatened the legitimacy of American government and existence of U.S. national security.

To understand the social grievances underlying the Whiskey Rebellion one must first recognize the harsh living conditions and austerity of the western United States in the late eighteenth century. Life west of the Alleghany and Appalachian mountains was almost unrecognizable to those living on the eastern seaboard. One of the starkest contrasts between east and west was perhaps personal security. Indian attacks on American families in the west were often vicious, coming with no warning and leaving men, women, and children murdered simply because of their proximity to land, which Indian tribes claimed as their sovereign territory.[30] The fact that state and federal government was helpless in protecting communities spread across the vast hinterlands against such attacks bred deep-seated contempt for government bureaucracy.[31] 'Why pay taxes to the government when we have been left to fend for ourselves?' was likely the common narrative that played out in western frontier society.[32] Therefore, it was a feeling of government neglect that contributed to the ill will of those in the west who were required to contribute financially to the larger needs of the nation through the excise tax. Further adding to this social dissonance was the fact that the proceeds of the whiskey tax would pay off national debts that the government owed to veterans of the war but were now in the hands of investors, or in other words, the nation's upper class. The notion that national wealth would transfer from the poorest segments of society to the richest was one that naturally did not seem fair, just, or patriotic. In fact, it had a striking resemblance to the Stamp Act of two decades prior and therefore was not congruent with American ideals of liberty and justice.

Economic disparity was another western protest that drove feelings of indignation towards the east. Agriculture was a common profession in western society; it was also a

challenging industry given that farmers had to export a significant amount of their product outside the local area and that export options were limited. Ideally, farmers would have sold their product in local markets and then shipped any excesses west along the Ohio River to the Mississippi River and eventually to Louisiana. However, Spain controlled the Mississippi and it refused to allow American trade on this major maritime artery, which essentially denied westerns access to the lucrative Louisiana commerce center. The other option was to transport grain products eastward. Unfortunately, the high cost of transporting goods over the harsh mountain passes to access eastern markets drained profit margins significantly. To reduce the cost of transportation farmers distilled the grain into whiskey; by doing this, they were able to transport that same product over the mountains at a fraction of the cost. Whiskey production in the west, therefore, was more than just a luxury item.[33] For western farmers, whiskey production was their livelihood. Further amplifying their agitation was that the new tax was overly burdensome for small-scale distillers, of which most western whiskey producers were. Large-scale operations in the east, with their enormous economies of scale, had the capacity to absorb the tax without significant impact to their bottom line. Those in the west did not have the protection of large-scale operations, and thus the tax placed many of them in a moral predicament: either support the federal tax or provide for the basic needs of their family. However, a tidal wave of violent activity began to unfold in 1791 that forced the hands of law-abiding citizens who otherwise wished to support the federal government. This violence targeted both federal revenue collectors and those in the community who assisted them, as well as any distillers discovered complying with the new law.

The opposition movement to the federal tax on distilled spirits reared its head in July and September 1791 in the form of two western Pennsylvania meetings that established resistance

against national policies.[34] While these gatherings had a semblance of legitimacy in that their intent was to discuss grievances that western Pennsylvanians wanted brought before Congress, their validity quickly dissipated when they passed what Alexander Hamilton referred to as "intemperate resolutions."[35] These "resolutions," which later appeared in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, encouraged citizens of western Pennsylvania to withhold their support for the new law, suspend any cooperation with those charged to execute revenue collection, and to treat such officials with contempt.[36] To resist compliance with the nation's laws, as these meetings suggested, was nothing short of criminal. The western Pennsylvanian meetings did not just stop there. They also expressed disdain for several other federal issues that included excessive salaries for government officials, interest on the public debt, discrimination between original holders of war debt and investors, and establishment of the national bank. Hence, the tone of the meetings was not just anti-whiskey tax but also anti-government. It would therefore not be unfair to point to these meetings as the sparks that began the insurgency that Hamilton would later warn the President was threatening "the foundations of the Government and of the Union."[37]

The first act of violence perpetrated on account of the opposition to the whiskey tax occurred in September 1791 in Washington County, Pennsylvania. The victim was Robert Johnson, a newly appointed federal tax collector for the Pennsylvania counties of Alleghany and Washington. An armed group of approximately twenty men dressed in woman's clothing and faces painted black accosted Johnson in a desolate section of the woods. Having likely read the resolutions posted in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, it was clear to these men what they needed to do. They shaved Johnson's head, tarred and feathered him, and forced Johnson to walk back to town without his horse.[38] When the state sent a courier to the scene of the attack a month later to serve court warrants to the alleged attackers, the rebel syndicate tarred and feathered the courier as

well.[39] It was therefore as early as October 1791 that the western frontier had transformed into civil anarchy. A series of similar attacks on tax officials and civilians continued throughout 1791 and into 1792. After Congress passed an amendment to the excise tax law in May 1792, which lowered the tax rate, the government expected that compliance would improve.[40] In some parts of the country the amendment had a positive effect. However, for the four counties of Washington, Alleghany, Westmoreland, and Fayette the Congressional amendment had little influence. Western society was committed to ongoing opposition until the government completely eliminated the excise tax.

The fierce attacks and violence directed towards the collection of the whiskey tax in western Pennsylvania persisted unimpeded for the next three years despite equally persistent measures by Hamilton and his legion of revenue collectors to enforce the law. In addition to tarring and feathering helpless victims, the armed rebels threatened to kill, scalp, or destroy the property of anyone discovered supporting the whiskey tax. In April 1793, the rebels threatened and abused the family of a tax collector who at the time was away from his home. In early 1794, rebels set fire to the buildings of a local distiller, James Kiddoe, after learning that he had complied with the whiskey tax. Months later, in May and June 1794, Kiddoe again along with another distiller, Cochran, were subject to property attacks to their gristmills by the rebels. The personal attacks also continued; in June 1794, rebels tarred and feathered John Lynn, tied him to a tree overnight, and made him promise not to again house an office for federal tax collectors. Days later the rebels destroyed part of Lynn's home for good measure.[41] By 1794, the rebels of western Pennsylvania had a tight grip on the community and were not the least intent on letting go.

The crisis grew to a climax in July 1794. On 15 July, a group of approximately forty rebels attacked the Pennsylvania Marshall and the Inspector of the Revenue, Colonel John Neville, as they served warrants. That same group expanded to one hundred rebels the following day and launched an attack on Colonel Neville's estate. On 17 July, growing exponentially to approximately five hundred, the rebel force attempted yet another attack on Neville's home, this time successfully reducing the estate to ashes and taking both Neville and the Marshall captive for a period of time before they managed to escape. Following these events, there were a series of rebel conventions that escalated the conflict from tax opposition to calls for independence and secession as well as a threatened march on the nation's capital. Liberty poles and mock guillotines sprang up in western counties, symbols of the American and French Revolutions.[42] The rebels went so far as to communicate with the ministers of Great Britain and Spain requesting their alliance and support in parting with the United States.[43] And if leading up to that point there were any doubts as to the determination and ability of the rebellion to carry out its plans, then the assembly of approximately six thousand armed rebels at Braddock's Field in August 1794 should have altered that view.[44]

The long list of attacks, coercion, and threats of violence that transpired between July 1791 and August 1794 in western Pennsylvania demonstrated the gravity of the whiskey tax opposition movement. Citizens who felt an obligation to cooperate with the law were compelled to join the resistance or find themselves victimized by radical rebels. Civil authorities were mute in enforcing the law and establishing control. Foreign governments, though preoccupied with war in Europe, maintained a watchful eye on American revolutionary tremors that might develop into larger ground swells. A dangerous insurgency had emerged on domestic soil and with it America's vision for establishing a more perfect union was in grave jeopardy.

WHISKEY REBELLION AND THE THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Providing for national security and safeguarding the citizens of the state are the fundamental obligations of government. While threats from beyond one's borders are often the predominant concern, the dangers lurking from within the state are just as threatening to national sovereignty. External pressures no doubt challenged the desire for peace and prosperity in the early years of the American republic. However, those threats were manageable if the country remained unified, focused, and committed to the ideals of democratic self-government despite the system's perceived imperfections. The Whiskey Rebellion illustrated that American society remained skeptical of the new Constitution and its ability to serve the best interest of all classes of citizens. The same motivations that drove the structure of the Articles of Confederation, the desire for strong and independent states with little oversight from the central government, remained entrenched within segments of the American consciousness particularly those in the rural west who saw agriculture and not big-business as the way of the future. Therefore, the strained relationships characterized by the anti-whiskey tax faction had driven a wedge between national solidarity and the prospect for national security. This section offers five ways that the Whiskey Rebellion directly threatened the security of the nation: the insurgency challenged the efficacy of the Constitution, eroded public trust in government's ability to manage national affairs, obstructed the pursuit of economic independence, made possible a division of the union, and tarnished the international community's perception of American power.

First, the Whiskey Rebellion was a direct challenge to the young nation's central governing document and its underlying ideals. Although ratification of the Constitution occurred in 1788, it did not enjoy overwhelming approval in America. There were still a lot of questions about the degree of power that it vested in the federal government and the subsequent dangers

that such power would impose on states and individual liberties. Nevertheless, the Constitution was the supreme law of the land. It established a process to ensure that public policies and laws were fair and just and that the people of America had the ability, through their representatives in Congress, to advocate for their interests. When the citizens of western Pennsylvania were unsuccessful in repealing the whiskey excise tax through the legislative process, they resorted to criminal obstruction of the law and violence as a means to achieve their desired ends. The fact that western Pennsylvania was so effective at eluding the tax through violent measures presented a serious challenge for the country. Was the Constitution going to hold firm, or would a small segment of the population disregard the Constitution and seek their goals through force? If force was to be an acceptable form of negotiation then the Constitution, and the union of all states under one entity, would cease to exist. The Constitution was the glue that kept the states together marching in the same direction and speaking in one voice. Once that unity of purpose splintered, then the government's ability to maintain organization, prevent anarchy, and fend off external threats would subside. The United States would revert to state factions and suffer the same weaknesses of the former constitution under the Articles of Confederation. The anti-whiskey tax insurgency was a major test of the Constitution, American justice, and the rule of law; and the stakes for the young United States of America were indisputably high.

Secondly, the rebellion in western Pennsylvania threatened to erode the people's trust in national leadership. The American public, outside of western Pennsylvania, likely viewed the lawlessness of the whiskey rebels as a disruption to the good order and discipline of American society and an interruption to the broader national aims of prosperity and collective security. The federal government's inability to bring the insurgency to a halt and uphold local stability provided citizens with little reason to believe that its elected leaders were capable of fulfilling

their responsibility to ensure domestic tranquility. Therefore, if the rebellion persisted without appropriate government action, the American public might act out in frustration. It would have also encouraged some to test federal authority, which to them might have appeared to be asleep at the wheel. The growing insurgency in western Pennsylvania had upset domestic harmony. The people of America looked to the federal government to solve these types of problems. By 1794, with the rebellion in its third year, the urgency to quell the rebellion was weighing heavier and heavier with each passing month. What the country needed most was a period of peace, stability, and calm; not anarchy and revolt against the perception of feeble and unresponsive government.[45] The situation in America could easily spiral out of control leaving the nation in a condition of chaos and disorder that would surely have threatened unanimity and security of its people.

The third and perhaps most direct impact of the western boycott of the excise tax was on the nation's economic well-being. The enactment of the assumption bill added another twenty-five million dollars to the federal debt raising the total amount owed to nearly eighty million. Understanding the destructive nature of progressive debt on government sustainability, Washington was adamant that the nation should pay off its obligations without delay.[46] While the revenue stream expected from the whiskey tax was but a small portion of the total debt, the tax nevertheless remained a crucial component of the administration's broader finance plan.[47] The strength of Alexander Hamilton's economic agenda rested on a financial system in America that functioned free of impediments, had the highest level of legitimacy, facilitated the circulation of currency, and instilled trust and confidence in consumers, lenders, and creditors. The rebellion in western Pennsylvania was destructive of those aims. In Federalist Paper number twelve, Hamilton describes the pitfalls associated with insufficient tax revenue when he wrote,

"A nation cannot long exist without revenue. Destitute of this essential support, it must resign its independence and sink into the degraded condition of a province."[48] Opposition of the tax was also resurfacing the negative perception of public taxation. The pre-revolutionary hatred of taxation without representation, the Stamp Act, and other unpopular colonial tax measures were still lingering.[49] The separation from Great Britain and the conception of the checks and balances of the Constitution were an opportunity for a fresh start. However, the Whiskey Rebellion had risked allowing those old anti-tax grievances to creep back into the public conversation. In addition to repayment of the federal debt, there were other national security requirements that required funding, such as General Wayne's expedition against the Indians on the western frontier and the fortification of the eastern coastline against foreign assault. These necessities were vital to the nation's ability to protect its homeland. The Whiskey Rebellion, therefore, represented a major drain on the nation's financial system and by extension inhibited national security progress.

Fourth, it was clear early on that the rebellion in western Pennsylvania was after more than just a repeal of the whiskey tax. It had grown into a legitimate attempt at establishing an independent western society. The resolutions passed in late 1791 by a convention of western Pennsylvanians were portentous indicators of these nefarious intentions. The assembly, led by a number of accomplished members of the community, namely the future Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin, revealed hostility to nearly all the major policies that the new administration had endorsed through Congress.[50] The goal of redressing grievances was an entitlement guaranteed to them under the Bill of Rights; however, the notion that westerners could ignore the law and show contempt towards federal officials was certainly not. The agitators of violence and rebellion centered in the four counties of western Pennsylvania also

took efforts to increase their scope and potency by persuading other western territories to join the insurgency movement.[51] These attempts were not without success. A mob of anti-government protestors stormed a Maryland state arsenal in 1794: a precarious incident that the President and his cabinet likely viewed as a sign that the insurgency was gaining steam.[52] Similarly, the western insurgents, in a gesture of sovereignty, communicated with the ministers of Britain and Spain.[53] The rebels had offered to form an alliance against a common enemy. The audacity of this action demonstrated an escalation pointing towards secession. While Britain and Spain appeared unlikely to accept such an invitation now, over time that offer might become more enticing. It was a development that Washington could not afford to take lightly. Further escalating the tendency towards revolution and secession was the rhetoric of rebel leader David Bradford who used the populist movement of Marat, Robespierre, and the Reign of Terror as a means to mobilize allegiance against the aristocratic and urbanized eastern government.[54] Six-striped flags, liberty poles, and guillotines, seen by Attorney General Bradford outside the Parkinson's Ferry Congress in August 1794, were clear indications that Citizen Genet and the radical French movement was taking form in the western United States.[55] These were ominous signs that pointed to a tide of revolutionary sentiment that demanded federal action.

The fifth and final threat to American national security triggered by the Whiskey Rebellion was the degradation of America's image abroad. The United States of America was in its fifth year under the new Constitution, just over a decade separated from the Treaty of Paris, and roughly two decades removed from its initial pronouncement of independence. While the country's strength grew with each passing year, its longevity and resiliency remained unproven. The nation was fragile, vulnerable, exposed, and susceptible to decline. England, Spain, and France were fully aware of this. England's eagerness to see American democracy fail was

evident in its attacks on American shipping in the Atlantic, impressment of American sailors, and support provided to Indian assaults in the west.[56] By November 1793, the British Navy had begun attacking American commercial vessels operating in the French West Indies, and eventually seized more than 250 American commercial vessels. Though this had much to do with Britain's war with France, it nonetheless suggested that Britain was mindful that domestic instability was beginning to wear on American power. Spain's fervent preservation of unilateral navigation rights on the Mississippi was another indication that American ascendancy was waning in the eyes of its peers. The Spanish perhaps saw no advantage in conceding navigation privileges to America when internal turmoil was threatening national cohesion. Even France, itself in great turbulence, was brazen enough to assume that it could strong arm American executive leadership into joining it in a war against the rest of Europe. This was yet another example of foreign nations looking down on the perceived inferiority of American power, a sentiment not helped by the unimpeded rebellion growing in western Pennsylvania. America's internal strife thus gave it a dramatic limp that European peers could not help but notice. This glaring evidence of weakness was a tremendous threat to national security. It invited subtle, even overt, attacks on American sovereignty by competitors who took such weakness as an opportunity to expand their interests in North America.

FEDERAL RESPONSE TO THE WHISKEY REBELLION

For all the reasons mentioned in the previous section, President Washington was likely convinced by August 1794 that the future of American security rested on an overwhelming and conclusive strike against the malicious spirit of rebellion concentrated in western Pennsylvania. The government's response would not to consist of force alone, nor would it usurp constitutional authority as notable historian Harlow Unger suggested.[57] In fact, the restraint, patience, and

calculation that Washington exhibited in dealing with the build up of the Whiskey Rebellion proved that he was indeed the right person for the demanding position of America's Commander in Chief and lead executive for domestic and foreign affairs. Furthermore, Washington's prudent and decisive executive actions demonstrated his recognition that the circumstances were of grave consequence to the fate of the nation. Washington illustrated this sentiment in applying all four elements of national power, diplomatic, informational, military, and economic, against what he likely believed to be the most dangerous threat to the nation in its short history.

The first element of national power employed by Washington against the Whiskey Insurrection was diplomacy. A diplomatic and peaceful resolution to the obstruction of the whiskey excise tax was always first and foremost on the President's mind. There were two explicit conciliatory measures taken to prevent escalation and bring the event to a reasonable conclusion. The first was a series of publicly released Presidential proclamations, three in total. Washington published the first proclamation in September 1792 and the subsequent two in August and September of 1794. Critics could argue that there was not much in those proclamations resembling diplomacy; they were indeed strict admonishments of the unlawful conduct in the west and they left little room for rebel maneuver other than to submit to the law and pursue proper legislative means to communicate their grievances. However, what the proclamations achieved was a legally framed argument that created the opportunity for rationality to prevail over emotion, for order to subsume violence, and for the aggressors to recognize the proper channels with which to legally protest the tax. That the whiskey rebels refused to adhere to the proclamations indicated that peaceful means of resolution were unlikely.

The second conciliatory measure was that of allowing the state of Pennsylvania the time and opportunity to resolve the issue at the local level. While the excise tax was a federal

mandate, which gave the President jurisdiction, the state of Pennsylvania had the implied responsibility to maintain order and ensure the members of the state adhered to both state and federal laws. When the President met with the Pennsylvania Governor on 2 August 1794 to discuss solutions, a bitter debate over jurisdiction ensued.[58] The meeting ended in a stalemate and left the President more convinced than ever that the calamity in western Pennsylvania was spiraling out of control. In a third and final attempt at diplomatic resolution, and at the suggestion of Secretary of State Edmund Randolph, Washington established a peace commission that traveled to western Pennsylvania in an effort to negotiate with the rebel forces.[59] The presidential commission, headed by Attorney General William Bradford, was unsuccessful. While the commission offered the whiskey rebels both amnesty and an opportunity to provide recommendations for acceptable alterations to the whiskey tax law, in the end key leaders of the rebel group were obstinately opposed to any form of settlement. Despite Washington's inability to achieve a diplomatic solution, his repeated attempts to peacefully resolve the national crisis were a reflection of his forbearance, moderation, and pragmatism.

Washington's information campaign was the second element of national power that he employed to subvert the rebellion and its separatist inclinations. The aforementioned presidential proclamations were the cornerstone of Washington's approach towards influencing rebel ideology. Each proclamation emphatically espoused the rule of law, duty, patriotism, and due process. The proclamations also sent a clear message to western tax evaders that violation of the law came with legal consequences. As the presidential proclamations attempted to sway rebel thought, Hamilton's four essays published in the *American Daily Advertiser* under the pen name Tully, were an attempt to garner public support for federal government suppression of the western rebellion.[60] These essays, addressed to the "People of the United States" in late August

1794, were exceptionally successful in building patriotic fervor and nationalist enthusiasm against the damaging insurgency across the Alleghenies.[61] The public excitement generated by these propaganda pieces surely had a demoralizing affect on the whiskey rebels.

The last and perhaps most influential component of the information campaign was the President's decision to accompany the federal force to Carlisle and Bedford, Pennsylvania in October 1794. Washington was aware of the extraordinary impact that his presence generated, both for supporters of the federal suppression as well as for the rebels waiting anxiously in western Pennsylvania. The President's choice to travel west with the federal militia was a dramatic pronouncement of his convictions to law and order, responsibility, sacrifice, and national unity. Though he certainly had other concerns that propelled him to make the trip west, the discipline of the troops being one of them, his commitment to duty and his sense of obligation were without peer. That a sitting president would take the pains of leading a military deployment was also evidence that Washington was not the least bit willing to underestimate the severity of the developing insurgency and its threat to national sovereignty.

Military force was the third element of national power used to quell the Whiskey Rebellion. Washington was exceedingly reluctant to use force as a means of establishing order in west Pennsylvania, but not entirely opposed.[62] Hamilton had suggested raising a federal force to stomp out opposition in the west as early as 1792.[63] The aggressive build up of British troops two decades prior in Boston must have gone through the President's mind as a measure that smacked of haste, folly, and absurdity. It was an example that he surely was not intent on emulating in the western frontier. Instead Washington used patience and prudence in the place of haste and overzealousness. That the insurgency was in its infancy and foreign affairs relatively benign in 1792 may have also contributed to the President's decision to hold in reserve

the use of force at that point. But by the summer of 1794, there was no question that national affairs had become a powder keg led by revolution in France, British provocations, and an insidious insurgency veiled perhaps by a grievance on the whiskey tax.

The Militia Act of 1792 provided the President with the power to raise a federal force under certain emergency circumstances, thereby enabling the executive branch, with a certification by a Supreme Court Justice, to swiftly act without the delay associated with recalling the Congress while on recess.[64] Such was the case in the summer of 1794. Despite this authority and a certification by Justice Wilson that the state of Pennsylvania had proven incapable of establishing order in the western counties, there was a resounding opposition in Philadelphia to the President's decision to mobilize the militia to quell the rebellion. Critics argued that the State of Pennsylvania were not given sufficient time to resolve the matter locally and that the President's haste in employing force was nothing short of a usurpation of constitutional authority. Both sides of the debate had legitimate points. However, it was this particular decision by the President, to override opposing arguments over constitutionality, which revealed the gravity he judged the crisis to be for national security. This was a President who had great esteem and respect for the Constitution. The notion that Washington would make a decision hailed by some as unconstitutional revealed that he was either convinced that no such suspicion existed or that the circumstances demanded an immediate and decisive act by the Commander in Chief in the name of national security. With his cabinet split over the issue of constitutionality, it was likely the latter that drove the President's decision.

Hamilton and the Secretary of War, Henry Knox, recommended a militia force of twelve thousand men in an effort to force the western rebels into compliance.[65] Both were aware that the enemy had mustered six thousand men at Braddock's Field on 1 August 1794. Therefore, in

essence, Hamilton and Knox had designed a force so large and so intimidating that it would compel the whiskey rebels to surrender without a fight. Hamilton exemplified this when he said "Whenever the government appears in arms, it ought to appear like a *Hercules* and inspire respect by the display of strength."[66] Furthermore, if a battle ensued, the superior numerical advantage of the federal militia would likely prevail by attrition. Therefore, Hamilton and Washington were convinced that no such kinetic engagement would ensue, or at least they had taken every precaution to minimize the chance of blood shed. This reasoning suggests that the march west was a form of psychological warfare, a message to aggressors both domestic and foreign that America was resolved to employ military force when and where required to protect national security. It was also a warning to the outlaws of western Pennsylvania that if violent obstruction of federal law and disregard for the Constitution and democratic government persisted that the nation would counteract with overwhelming force in an effort to restore order.

To touch again on the constitutionality of the President's decision to wield the military element of national power, Harlow Unger would argue that Washington had violated the first amendment rights of western Pennsylvanians to "…petition the Government for a redress of grievances." However, Washington would likely argue that it was not the right to petition that the federal force was attempting to suppress but rather the enforcement of that obligation of the citizenry to do so "peaceably." The laundry list of violent rebel activities leading up to the summer of 1794 demonstrated that peaceful redress was not their modus operandi. For that reason, Washington chose to employ military force, or at least the threat of force, as a means to safeguard national security.

The final element of national power that the President applied towards the Whiskey Rebellion was economics. Taxation and economics were the sparks that incited the rebellion;

therefore, it was in the tax legislation that Congress and the Executive focused their early strategy. In May 1792, Congress amended the excise tax law, a move that was touted as providing concessions to small distillers in the west. Among other changes, the amendment established a one percent decrease in the whiskey tax and provided distillers the option to purchase a less expensive monthly license. However, the amendment did little to balance the competitive lopsidedness that angered small western distillers. The large whiskey producers continued to manipulate manufacturing processes in order to underprice their smaller competitors. In a separate endeavor to improve conditions for small whiskey producers, Hamilton organized government contracts to purchase whiskey for western army contingents from small operators in western Pennsylvania. While it lasted, this practice benefited westerns that had the good fortune of dealing with the government. Unfortunately, the contracts migrated to larger producers in 1792, further compounding indignation of western farmers.

The last economic measure employed by the government occurred in 1794. As the presidential peace commission, steered by Attorney General Bradford, prepared to travel to western Pennsylvania to meet with the resisters, Secretary Hamilton armed Bradford with the authority to offer "reasonable alterations" to the whiskey tax law in a spirit of conciliation.[67] Hamilton extended this olive branch in hopes of pacifying the rebellion. Had the rebels taken the opportunity, it might have led to modifications in the tax law that evened the playing field for western distillers. Instead, the move emboldened the rebels to resume their agenda sensing blood in the water. Therefore, the President, after exhausting all diplomatic, information, and economic levers, had no option but to follow through with military force.

Washington's use of the economic element of power was in some respects a meager showing. After all, the 1792 amendment to the excise tax left western distillers no better off than

they had been before, and the offer sent with the presidential commission was arguably too little too late. However, this uninspired showing was not a matter of the President being disingenuous, but rather a hard fact that the long-term security needs of the nation were more important than short-term socio-economic conditions. The reality was that in order for the nation to grow and become a powerful state capable of defending itself from external threats, it needed to foster a thriving capitalist ecosystem that could propel America to greater affluence. The unfortunate consequences were that the larger and more efficient businesses would subsume smaller, less capable, ones. The agrarian society envisioned by Jeffersonians did not fit within the realist paradigm that federalists were adamant was driving national and foreign affairs. Washington and Hamilton, therefore, believed that the world of realpolitik required an aggressive economic agenda that would relieve the nation of its debt, grow the national economy, and raise the posture of the country towards greater stability and security. Therefore, while the economic power of government may have had little effect in preventing the use of federal force during the Whiskey Rebellion, its limited influence was a result of constraints imposed by the greater needs of the economic and security demands of the nation.

President Washington's conviction that the Whiskey Rebellion was a credible danger that threatened the republic compelled him to bring every element of national power to bear upon the western insurgency. The President's comprehensive approach in quelling the rebellion supports this paper's thesis that the Whiskey Rebellion was a monumental national security crisis for the fledgling American republic. It is difficult to conceive that Washington would have gone to such lengths as to issue three presidential proclamations, commission a peace delegation, raise a federal militia, and personally lead that force on the battlefield if the threat in question was not of the highest matter of national interest. In total, the President's strategy was the embodiment of

patience, discipline, and when national security was at stake as it had been in 1794, overwhelming decisiveness.

For all the suspense generated in the lead up to the federal militia's march on western Pennsylvania, the episode ended in a rather unremarkable fashion. Washington, having made his presence felt and confident he had admonished the militia forces sufficiently on the importance of discipline and restraint, left the army in the hands of Henry Lee and Alexander Hamilton, and returned to Philadelphia.[68] The federal militia discovered no rebel forces when they reached western Pennsylvania. As Hamilton had anticipated, the rebels fled the scene, unwilling to stand toe to toe with the oversized federal force. With the physical threat dispersed, Hamilton and Lee oversaw a callous campaign of interrogations that led to the arrest of approximately one hundred and fifty rebels, of which twenty later stood trial in Philadelphia. Of those twenty, only two were found guilty and both eventually received Presidential pardons.[69] The collection of the excise tax on distilled spirits in western Pennsylvania improved very little in the aftermath of the rebellion, this despite fifteen hundred militia forces remaining in the region through 1795. The Congress terminated the excise tax law during the Jefferson administration effectively placing the final nail in the coffin of the whiskey tax saga.

If collection of the excise tax on distilled spirits in western Pennsylvania had been the major policy goal, then the federal response to the rebellion would have been considered a major failure. But that wasn't the President's core target. The rebellion was an insidious threat to Constitutional government, national unanimity, and the future of the American republic. By quelling the insurgency, Washington saved the country from its eventual demise. That the whiskey tax remained largely uncollectable in subsequent years in the west was irrelevant to the degree that western conditions had transitioned into acts of subversion that no longer stemmed

from an organized movement aimed at bringing down the government. All of this is to say that the federal defeat of the Whiskey Rebellion was not defined by the unsuccessful collection of taxes on distilled spirits but by the suppression of that threat which the rebellion cast on national security and American sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

To claim that the Whiskey Rebellion was a monumental national security crisis requires a few words as to why the event in 1794 has not achieved greater acclaim. There are at least two reasons that help to rationalize why. The first of which is that the rebellion never escalated to an actual battle. Neither side fired a shot during the federal occupation of western Pennsylvania. There were no military flanking movements, no artillery fire, and no glorious strategic victories by triumphant Generals with which to document. Had the six thousand rebels remained at Braddock's field to fight Washington's militia, perhaps history would have promoted the rebellion to greater interest. However, what history has failed to recognize was that the bloodless consequence of the federal government's response was precisely what the President intended; and that the gamble of committing forces to a potential battle that was otherwise undesirable, was a masterful stroke of military strategy that has been undervalued, if not completely unobserved. Therefore, the absence of a major military engagement seems to have relegated the Whiskey Rebellion to an event of little consequence to national security. This paper has argued that such a conclusion is misleading and fails to appreciate the nearness to which the nation flirted with ruin.

The second reason is that political suspicions overshadowed the rebellion and in turn muted the legitimate danger that the ordeal presented to national security. Critics of Alexander Hamilton, for example, suggested that the whiskey tax was a cunning scheme employed by the

Federalists to incite violence in the western territories in order to justify a standing national army.[70] Though there was no doubt that Hamilton and the President greatly favored a standing army for national security purposes, the Whiskey Rebellion was by no means a grand strategy orchestrated to justify such an end. British and Indian attacks in the Northwest coupled with the war in Europe were more than enough to justify the need for a federal army without having to provoke a domestic insurgency. Another political machination that helped cloud the rebellion's true character was Washington's unwavering belief that a certain group of democratic societies, an implication on the anti-federalist party, was responsible for inciting the anti-government and separatist inclinations of the western territories. Washington made this view clear in his sixth Annual Address to Congress when in reference to the whiskey rebellion he said, "…let them determine whether it has not been fomented by combinations of men who, careless of consequences and disregarding the unerring truth that those who rouse can not always appease a civil convulsion, have disseminated, from an ignorance or perversion of facts, suspicions, jealousies, and accusations of the whole Government."[71] Washington was further convinced of political plots against the government after discovering that his Secretary of State had spoke disparagingly to the French regarding the President's handling of the rebellion.[72] Nevertheless, the allegations from both sides of the political aisle were largely unfounded and unfortunately complicit in helping to diminish the Whiskey Rebellion's image as a national security event of historical significance.[73]

The thesis of this paper also demands a final word regarding the claim that the Whiskey Rebellion was a national security crisis of monumental proportion. To demonstrate this, it is instructive to view the rebellion through the lens of foreign affairs in 1794. In this regard timing is critical. If the Whiskey Rebellion had occurred later in Washington's second term, the federal

response would have likely been less comprehensive. Before Washington left office, the many challenges facing the country had been resolved. The Mississippi River was open to navigation, the British outposts in the Northwest had been vacated, American forces had overwhelmed Indian enemies that were holding back western expansion, and American neutrality had succeeded in keeping America out of foreign entanglements. In such a benign national security environment the rebellion of western Pennsylvania would have looked less menacing to the federal government, and the people of the United States would have been less concerned with anti-government rhetoric in the far off part of the country. Therefore, in many respects the state of the union in 1794 represented a window of opportunity that the rebels were able to exploit in pursuit of their interests. Timing was also relevant from the perspective of the nation's life cycle. For example, when the American Civil War began in 1861, the country had seven decades of experience under the Constitution as well as a mature federal legislature and national character; all of which was a valuable source of federal power that helped maintain the union. In contrast, 1794 America was in its infancy, with a marginal approval rating for the Constitution and an untested government. Therefore, the early American republic was overly susceptible to internal and external threats unlike any other time in its history. That vulnerability illustrates why the Whiskey Rebellion presented a credible threat to American survival and why the event should assume greater significance.

In addition to describing the importance of the Whiskey Rebellion and its value as a seminal national security event, there are many instructive lessons that contemporary readers can draw from the federal government's suppression of the insurgency. Two of which include the primacy of the whole of government approach to national crises, and the importance of domestic stability in national security affairs. While the executive branch in 1794 pales in comparison to

the size of today's catalogue of executive departments, Washington employed his modest cabinet judiciously and to great effect against the insurgency. He used all elements of national power, and took great pains to ensure that he exhausted all peaceful forms of influence and persuasion before resorting to force. Washington's information campaign, for example, was extraordinarily persuasive; the Presidential proclamations, Hamilton's Tully Essays, and Washington's trip to Carlisle and Bedford to personally review the troops were exceptional examples of leveraging the full spectrum of national resources to combat an enemy of the state. This methodical and astute use of all levers of national power is even more critical in today's complex and dangerous security environment.

An essential source of state power resides within its domestic stability and the values, ideals, and principles that bring a nation together. Washington perhaps understood this better than anyone did. His advocacy for the Constitution and rule of law was the method by which he safeguarded justice and domestic tranquility in America as a means to facilitate national progress. Washington knew that the Whiskey Rebellion threatened national stability because of its attack on the Constitution and government authority. He also recognized that divisions in American politics, a period known as the "age of passions", were ruinous to national interests. Twenty-first century America is not much different. Factional divisions exist across political and socio-economic agendas that often incite vociferous debates over healthcare, immigration, and foreign policy. While a spirited national debate can be healthy, it is prudent, as the Whiskey Rebellion revealed, to remain vigilant against a national discourse that might foment into a destructive movement against national stability.

Of the many notable wars and national security events that mark American history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Whiskey Rebellion is likely the least renowned. Yet its

significance to the nation goes far beyond its undersized acclaim. The Whiskey Rebellion solidified America's newfound independence by providing the strength, character, and unity needed to make it a viable power in the world community. The Whiskey Rebellion should therefore be remembered for the ominous threat it presented to American security, the astute federal suppression of the insurrection that leveraged all elements of national power, the significance of domestic stability in national security affairs, and ultimately as the event that propelled the nascent American republic, armed with a resilient commitment to the Constitution, to future prosperity.

END NOTES

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[2] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 470.
[3] William Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty* (New York: A Lisa Drew Book/Scribner, 2006), 1.
[4] Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2003), 314.
[5] Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay* (New York: Signet Classic, 2003), 536.
[6] Rossiter, *The Federalist Papers*, 540.
[7] Lynne Cheney, *James Madison: A Life Reconsidered* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 90.
[8] Alan Axelrod, *Political History of America's Wars* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2007), 41.
[9] Charles Cerami, *Young Patriots: The Remarkable Story of Two Men, Their Impossible Plan and the Revolution That Created the Constitution* (IL: Sourcebooks Inc., 2005), 51.
[10] Axelrod, *Political History of America's Wars*, 42.
[11] Rossiter, *The Federalist Papers*, 546.
[12] Ibid., 547.
[13] Bernard Bailyn, ed., *The Debate on the Constitution: Federalist and Antifederalist Speeches, Articles, and Letters During the Struggle over Ratification, Part Two: January to August 1788* (New York: The Library of America, 1993), 1064.
[14] Bailyn, *The Debate on the Constitution*, 1066.
[15] Ibid., 1068.
[16] Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010), 566.
[17] Rossiter, *The Federalist Papers*, 552.
[18] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 280.
[19] Ibid., 297.
[20] Ibid., 288.
[21] Ibid., 294.
[22] Ibid., 301.
[23] Ibid., 324.

[24] Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 63.
[25] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 344.
[26] Ibid., 350.
[27] Ibid., 435.
[28] Chernow, *Washington*, 691.
[29] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 343.
[30] Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 57.
[31] Marie-Jeanne Rossignol. *The Nationalist Ferment: The Origins of U.S. Foreign Policy, 1792-1812*, trans. Lillian A. Parrott (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 2004), 20.
[32] Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 164.
[33] Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 63.
[34] Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, *vol. 17, August 1794–December 1794* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-17-02-0017, 24-58.
[35] Alexander Hamilton, *Alexander Hamilton: Writings*, ed. Joanne B. Freeman (New York: The Library of America, 2001), 823.
[36] Syrett, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 24-58.
[37] Hamilton, *Alexander Hamilton*, 825.
[38] Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 20.
[39] Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 113.
[40] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 468.
[41] Syrett, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 24-58.
[42] Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 132.
[43] Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 199.
[44] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 470.
[45] Ibid., 468.
[46] Ibid., 480.
[47] Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 96.
[48] Rossiter, *The Federalist Papers*, 91.
[49] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 468.
[50] Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 114.
[51] Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 57.
[52] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 473.
[53] Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 16.
[54] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 470.
[55] Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 192.
[56] Ibid., 57.
[57] Harlow Giles Unger, "Interview with Harlow Giles Unger" interview by National Constitution Center, C-SPAN, December 15, 2014, http://www.c-span.org/video/?323167-4/book-discussion-john-marshall-chief-justice-saved-nation.
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[59] Ibid., 190.
[60] Ibid., 195.
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[62] James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell (1793-1799)* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 167.
[63] John Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009), 335.
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[65] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 471.
[66] Harlow Giles Unger, *"Mr. President": George Washington and the Making of the Nation's Highest Office* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2013), 196.
[67] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 471.
[68] Chernow, *Washington*, 725.
[69] Ibid., 726.

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