

FOR THE GOOD OF THE NATION

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What became of Washington's proposed retirement in 1792?

George Washington only agreed to serve as the first President of the United States after much thought, doubt, reluctance, and convincing from his peers and friends. After declaring his retirement as General in 1783, he was reluctant to go back on his word and risk damaging his reputation. But the call of duty summoned him from Mount Vernon to Philadelphia in 1788. After many consultations with his close friends and associates, he realized that he would have to accept the position of chief executive, both because the new nation needed him and because rejecting such an offer would have devastating effects on his carefully crafted and guarded reputation.¹

When he did finally accept the position of President of the United States, Washington assumed that he would retire in four years' time, after he got the wheels of the newly-defined government turning. By the end of his second year, Washington recognized there was plenty of work left to be done and the end of his third year came with a similar realization.² By the beginning of 1792 though, Washington was determined to retire to his beloved Mount Vernon. After all, by this point Washington had

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completed a full four-year term of office and he wanted to set a precedent of rotating the office of the President. Furthermore, he worried that staying any longer would give him more opportunity to make himself unpopular or that he might risk being compared to a monarch, setting a dangerous precedent if he were to die in office during a second term.³

Despite these incentives to retire, by the end of 1792, Washington was persuaded to accept the Presidency for four more years. He was elected unanimously to that office and took the oath for the second time in February, 1793.⁴ After four more years, he submitted his famous Farewell Address and retired. What happened during the critical months of 1792 that convinced Washington to abandon his much-anticipated life at Mt. Vernon and stay on for another four years? The answer to this question is complicated and has as much to do with Washington's cabinet members and the political atmosphere at the time as it has to do with Washington himself.

To fully explore this question and understand the events of that year, it is necessary for us first to place our image of Washington in 1792 in the context of the day. When Washington first announced to his closest circle of advisors that he planned on retiring, Hamilton, Madison, and Jefferson all urged him not to, for the sake of the unity of the new nation. However, while each of these men argued the need for unity, each one was engaged in activities that drastically increased the factionalism and party spirit in the nation. Their cries for national unity in their letters to Washington point to their common perceptions of the nature of the party spirit and the factionalism they were involved in. Essentially, each faction needed Washington to stay in office for another term in order to buy time to overcome the opposition faction. The complete dominance of one faction would ensure the national unity that members of both factions deemed vitally important. Through his personal correspondence with these men, as well as through the battles that occurred between them in the newspapers during the summer of 1792, Washington became fully aware of and alarmed by the personal animosity and divisions that

fractured not only his own cabinet, but the American political world at large. Ironically, the calls for national unity in their letters convinced Washington of the dangerous and deeply-entrenched factionalism of the day. In the end, in a somewhat ironic policy move, Washington was finally convinced to stay in office, because he was the only one who could preserve true national unity, as defined in his own terms and not theirs. Ultimately he tried to hold the office of the President and the country above the active bickering of partisan politics.

Before exploring how George Washington came to this conclusion, we must fill in the situation as it stood in early 1792. The men who would end up influencing Washington more than any others were some of his most trusted advisors and closest friends, namely, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton. Not only did the relationship that each one of these men have with Washington change dramatically over the course of this critical year, but their relationships with each other shifted as well. These changes would define Washington's cabinet during his second term.

At the beginning of 1792, James Madison was Washington's confidante and one of his most trusted advisors. After Madison's heavy involvement in convincing Washington to accept the presidency, Washington consulted Madison frequently when setting up his first government and had Madison prepare his inaugural address.⁵ Furthermore, recognizing the advantages of having a friend and political ally in Congress and fearful of a strongly anti-Federalist Congress, Washington urged Madison to run for a seat in the legislature. After losing the Senate race, Madison went on to win the subsequent contest for the House and became the most prominent member of the House of Representatives.⁶ The friendship between Madison and Washington was close enough that Henry Lee and Alexander Hamilton speculated that even if Madison had lost the House race, Washington would have appointed him to the cabinet.⁷ Therefore, it makes sense that when Washington began contemplating retirement, Madison was the first person he turned to for advice.⁸

By the end of the year though, Madison would lose his spot as Washington's right hand man to the Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Washington and Hamilton had a close, though not nearly as personal or affectionate a relationship as Madison and Washington enjoyed. While Washington signed his letters to Madison "yours ever," he opted to use "yours sincerely" when writing to Hamilton.⁹ Washington came out of the Constitutional Convention with tremendous respect for Hamilton's intellectual abilities. He agreed with Hamilton's fundamental assessment that the nation needed a "strong" and "energetic" government, rather than a more limited one.¹⁰ The two men shared an intellectual bond, strengthened as Hamilton proved himself to be an ingenious Secretary of the Treasury. Washington supported nearly all of Hamilton's major political proposals, but the commonly-made assertion that Washington was Hamilton's puppet for much of his administration is patently false.¹¹ Washington remained in control, though claims to the contrary made it more convenient for Hamilton's enemies to attack the administration. Hamilton and Washington's intellectual and business-oriented relationship is obvious in their written correspondence. Washington's letters to Hamilton through late July of 1792 are strictly work and politics related, without any solicitation on Washington's behalf for advice on his retirement.¹²

Washington's first term in office started with a degree of relative unity. With Madison supposedly representing the government's interests in Congress, Washington and Hamilton felt confident in their ability to implement their political agendas. However, over the course of Washington's first term, Madison became clearly allied with Washington's Secretary of State, Jefferson. The rift between the Madison-Jefferson team and Hamilton became ever more apparent. This was a result of policy disagreements and personal differences between the two antagonists, Jefferson and Hamilton.¹³

Madison and Hamilton, with the help of John Jay, wrote the *Federalist Papers* and worked closely to push the ratification of the *Constitution*. However, during Washington's first term in

office, Madison began to oppose many of Hamilton's proposed policies. Madison campaigned fiercely against Hamilton's Assumption proposal, although they finally settled the dispute through negotiations. Nonetheless, Hamilton had expected Madison to support Assumption, as Madison had expressed support of a similar proposal at the end of the war. Thus, Hamilton most certainly felt betrayed by Madison's surprise stance.¹⁴ Madison, who wanted the government to be confined to the role of a mediator, increasingly believed that Hamilton was moving too far in the direction of a centralized government with a specific commercial agenda. Madison's convictions and suspicions concerning Hamilton were no doubt strengthened when his mentor, Jefferson, returned from France in 1789. Jefferson disagreed with Hamilton's centralized and nationalist policies from their earliest days in the cabinet together. However, Hamilton's Report on Manufactures and his proposed Bank of the United States flew directly in the face of the localized and agrarian ideals that Virginians held so close to their hearts. Hamilton wasn't shy about voicing his opinions and once told Jefferson that, "Though our republic has only been in existence some ten years, there are already two distinct tendencies, the one democratic and the other aristocratic... [The people of the United States] are essentially businessmen. With us agriculture is of small account. Commerce is everything."¹⁵ Such statements not only distanced Jefferson from Hamilton, but terrified the Virginian as well. Despite a common recognition of the dangers of party spirit, by the end of Washington's first term two camps of political thought were developing. Jefferson was the head of the so-called Republicans and Hamilton of the Federalists.¹⁶

The political differences between Jefferson and Hamilton had their roots in opposing philosophical views as well as personality differences. Jefferson and Hamilton had quite opposite views on human nature. Hamilton was pessimistic about the subject, deeming human nature an enemy that needed to be dominated, while Jefferson's argument for limited government was based on his view of humanity as basically good and not in need of extensive checks.¹⁷ Further though, the divide between Jefferson and

Hamilton also stemmed from a personality clash between the two men. Hamilton did not mind inciting personal strife and conflict, while Jefferson abhorred such face-to-face confrontations. Thus, Jefferson not only disagreed with Hamilton's policy proposals, but was also repelled by Hamilton's presentation of such proposals. The latter had a knack for presenting his policies in a most aggressive manner, at times going out of his way to create contention.¹⁸ While the conflict between the two men began as a political clash of ideas (and largely remained one), it was exacerbated by personality differences and would ultimately become intensely personal throughout the course of 1792. The last important point to note concerning the Jefferson-Madison versus Hamilton conflict as it stood at the end of Washington's first term, was the gravity with which Jefferson and Madison viewed the perceived Hamilton threat. They not only thought that Hamilton was a threat to the security of the government, but to the existence of the Union. Thus, the two men began actively going out of their way to create an opposition to Hamilton.¹⁹

Upon hearing about Washington's proposed retirement, Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson, and other close advisors made many pleas to their President to stay in office in order to preserve national unity. Washington spoke briefly to Madison about retirement on February 19, 1792.²⁰ Between then and early May, the subject didn't come up in much detail, though Washington did mention the idea in some form to Jefferson, Hamilton, Henry Knox and Edmund Randolph—all of whom encouraged him to stay in office.²¹ The first evidence that we have of Washington seeking out advice and guidance at length on the matter was his May 5 meeting with Madison. During his conversation with the Congressman, Washington outlined his reasons for wanting to retire, citing that he was no longer necessary in the government, he lacked qualification (particularly legal expertise), his health was in decline, and "a spirit of Party in the Government was becoming a fresh source of difficulty." Washington was particularly aware and concerned about the last point, and elaborated that "he was dividing some (alluding to the Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury) more particularly connected with him in the ad-

ministration, and that there were discontents among the people which were also shewing [sic] themselves more and more..."²²

Madison jumped on Washington's obvious concern over the divisions in his own government to argue that such partisanship made Washington's presence at the head of the government "essential." He told Washington that the emerging factionalism was "an argument for his remaining, rather than retiring until the public opinion, until the character of the Government and the course of its administration should be better decided..."²³ Furthermore, Madison argued that each of Washington's most probable successors, Adams, Jay and Jefferson, would be unfit for the Presidency.²⁴ Although Washington listened to Madison, he still asked Madison to advise him on a time and mode most suitable for retirement. On May 20, Washington sent Madison a letter, further asking him to prepare a valedictory address.²⁵ When Madison replied to Washington, on June 20, he again cited the "interests of your country" as a reason not to retire.²⁶

For his part, Jefferson cited sectional divides between the North and South, in a May 25 letter to Washington, but concluded, "North and South will hang together, if they have you to hang on..."²⁷ On August 5, Washington's Attorney General Edmund Randolph appealed to him to stay in office because of the need of the court system to mature and stabilize. Randolph argued that this required Washington's presence for another four years to overrule the factionalism that promised to spread if Washington stepped down.²⁸

Hamilton wrote to Washington with his concern on July 30. In a calculated appeal to Washington's personal concerns, Hamilton offered that staying on another term would neither hurt Washington's reputation nor be perceived negatively in light of Washington's statements about his lack of interest in public life. Hamilton's personal concerns or agenda are found later in the letter. He wrote, "the affairs of the national government are not yet firmly established—that its enemies, generally speaking, are as inveterate as ever..."²⁹

This excerpt is telling and alludes to the true concerns of Hamilton—concerns that also drove Madison’s and Jefferson’s appeals to Washington. The underlying message behind this argument was that national unity was at stake because of the existence of enemy factions and that in order to preserve the nation, the opposing party had to be checked. Controlling the opposing party would take time, and Hamilton needed Washington to stay in office for a second term in order to buy this time.

Taking another look at the wording of Madison’s and Jefferson’s appeals to Washington, we can find partisan interests in them as well. Furthermore, putting these letters in the context of Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton’s other correspondences and activities, gives us a much clearer picture of what exactly each of them had on his mind during the spring and summer of 1792.

In Madison’s May 5 discussion with the President, it first appears as though Madison is concerned generally about partisan splits in the government and argues for Washington to stay in office another term so both the Federalist and anti-Federalist factions could be weakened. Madison told Washington that his presence was needed for “uniting all parties under a [Government].” After writing about the dangerous factional splits that were becoming apparent, Madison wrote that Washington’s “conciliating influence” would “before another term of four years should run out, give such a tone and firmness to the Government as would secure it against the danger from either of these descriptions of enemies...”³⁰ It becomes clear from the wording that Madison viewed any type of factional divide as an inevitable recipe to the disintegration of national unity and security. However, his line of thinking followed that the Federalist faction must be overcome to ensure the united rule of like-minded anti-Federalists. We see this development of thought in the following excerpt of his May 5 Memorandum:

The character of the Govt. and the course of its administration shd. be better decided, which could not fail to happen in a short time, especially under his auspices; that the existing parties did not appear to be so formidable to the Govt as some had represented and that in one party there might be a few who retaining their original

disaffection to the Govt. might still wish to destroy it, but that they would lose their weight with their associates, by betraying any such hostile purposes that altho' it was pretty certain that the other were in general unfriendly to republican Govt. and probably aimed at a gradual approximation of ours to a mixt [sic] monarchy, yet the public sentiment was so strongly opposed to their views and so rapidly manifesting itself, that the party could not long be expected to retain a dangerous influence...³¹

Madison's idea of a stable and united government was clearly one which was united behind anti-Federalism. He viewed any other existing parties as an inherent and intolerable risk to the existence of the government and consequently the nation. This line of thinking was not unique to Madison, but is also prevalent in Jefferson's appeals to the President. Jefferson's May 23 letter to Washington is riddled with partisan objectives. He lists his grievances with the Treasury Department and the "corrupt squadron" of Congress that constantly votes in line with Hamilton. He indirectly labeled Hamilton and his followers a direct threat to the country when he told Washington that only the General's presence for another term would "give time for trying others not inconsistent with the union and peace of the states."³²

It isn't that Madison, Hamilton, or Jefferson were trying to disguise partisan goals in cloaks of national unity, although the apparent hypocrisy makes such a conclusion tempting. Rather, the fact that they define national unity as the destruction of opposition "parties," shows how factionalism was viewed by those most active in creating it. Not only was the enemy faction viewed as dangerous to national survival, but any party rivalries were viewed as temporary battles, that were to be fought until one group prevailed and the other had faded away. This is significantly different than the way the factions eventually evolved into parties and the roles those parties play in today's political world. In retrospect, it's easy to assume that the founders meant to create what their work evolved into, however, with regard to parties, this is hardly the case.

We can further examine the anti-Federalist partisan goals by exploring the state of Republicanism in early 1792 and Jefferson's and Madison's roles in shaping what would eventually

be seen as Jeffersonian Republicanism. A school of thought that embraced “republican ideals” had existed from the beginnings of the American experiment. However, it only became a distinct faction after Hamilton announced his Report on Public Credit and Madison responded by leading extensive attacks on Hamilton’s policy in Congress, in early 1790.³³ In late 1791 though, Jefferson and Madison made their first aggressive attempt at increasing the widespread popularity of Republicanism. Republican ideals included a broad philosophical approach to the American political system, but since Hamilton was viewed at the most obvious and imminent threat to these ideals, Madison and Jefferson focused these early campaigns on attacking the Secretary of the Treasury and smearing his image. Allegedly engaging in a botanical tour in May and June of 1791, Jefferson and Madison went north in search of Republican allies. During this outing, they struck a deal with the assistant editor of the *New York Daily Advisor*, Philip Freneau: he would start an anti-Hamilton newspaper in Philadelphia and Jefferson would provide him with a job as a translator at the State Department.³⁴ Freneau’s *National Gazette* would balance the major newspaper in Philadelphia, John Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States*. Fenno made a significant amount of money as a printer for the Senate and Treasury Departments and his paper was widely recognized as Hamilton’s mouthpiece.³⁵ Between November 1791 and April 1792 Madison wrote over 12 partisan essays, all under pseudonyms, for Freneau’s new publication.³⁶

Although Jefferson’s and Madison’s initiatives were certainly pushing the Republican agenda into prominence, what would later become the Republican Party was still a relatively new initiative and they needed time to develop it further. (It is important to note that neither Jefferson nor Madison recognized themselves as a separate party at this point, nor did they intend to create any type of permanent political party.) Approximately 1/4 of the members of the Second Congress, which served from October 1791 to May 1792, were loyal to Madison and another 1/4 were loyal to Hamilton. The remaining half could swing either way depending on the issue.³⁷ Thus, to ensure Republican success,

Madison and Jefferson needed to buy time. Another term under the nonpartisan leadership of Washington would be perfect.³⁸

The correspondence between Jefferson and Madison also gives more context and a better understanding about what their goals were during this era. The two men wrote to each other frequently and openly, oftentimes seeking out each other's advice and sending documents and drafts of letters back and forth. For instance, a copy of Hamilton's June 29 letter to Jefferson appears in Madison's papers, presumably because Jefferson regarded the letter as an example of Hamilton's currency manipulations and he wanted to share such evidence with his fellow Republican.³⁹ They consulted one another concerning their respective dialogues with Washington about retirement—collaborating in an attempt to get the General to serve another term.⁴⁰ Jefferson wrote Madison on June 4, asking Madison for a list of names of corrupt Congressmen in the legislature, in order to be able to present Washington with evidence of the "corrupt squadron" should he request it.⁴¹ In a July 3 letter to Madison, Jefferson further showed his concern about anti-Federalist prospects in the upcoming elections and speculated about the chances various Congressmen had at getting elected. He goes on with a distinctly Jeffersonian idea: "Could not a counter-bank be set up to befriend the Agricultural man by letting him have money on a deposit of tobacco notes or even wheat for a short time, and would not such a bank enlist the legislature in its favor against the Treasury bank?"⁴² It is hardly surprising that the logical and more practical Madison ignored such a proposition. Still, such partisan preoccupation, apparent in Madison and Jefferson's written correspondence, is telling.

Hamilton's correspondence was similarly colored with partisan goals. The foremost example of this is his May 23 letter to Virginia statesman Edward Carrington. Hamilton wrote his friend 6,000 words describing his position with regard to Madison and Jefferson. In this letter, Hamilton details his belief that Madison betrayed him by changing his position on policies the two men formerly agreed on.⁴³ Putting his discontent in strong terms, Hamilton wrote, "That Mr. Madison cooperating with

Mr. Jefferson is at the head of a faction decidedly hostile to me and my administration, and actuated by views in my judgment subversive of the principles of good government and dangerous to the union, peace and happiness of the Country.”⁴⁴ He further defended himself against charges brought against him by Jefferson and Madison and essentially declared political warfare on the two men.

Finally, the most obvious displays of the real sentiments and goals of Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison were in the so-called Newspaper Wars that took place during the summer of 1792 and the articles that lead up to this exchange. After Freneau set up shop in Philadelphia, Madison began writing politically charged articles under pseudonyms in the winter between 1791 and 1792.⁴⁵ In one such article, “Parties,” Madison’s opening line read, “In every political society, parties are unavoidable.”⁴⁶ This was a distinctly different line of thought than Madison espoused during his May conversations with Washington. Between May and September, Madison didn’t write anything for the *National Gazette*. However, throughout August of 1792, the conflict in the papers peaked when Hamilton published a series of articles in the *Gazette of the United States* under the pseudonyms “T.L.” and “An American” which attacked the origins of Freneau’s paper and exposed the publisher’s connection to Jefferson and Madison.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Hamilton attacked Jefferson’s character and career.⁴⁸ Freneau responded defensively and continued to publish articles that smeared Hamilton’s character and policies.⁴⁹ This back and forth exchange became known as the “Newspaper Wars” and was the most publicly partisan, dirty, and personal display of the Hamilton-Jefferson rivalry.

Both Hamilton and the Virginians thought that persuading Washington to stay on an extra term would mean victory for their party. The members of each faction assumed that Washington would either remain neutral or sway favorably to their side. Washington had given both the Federalist and Republican factions reason to believe this. During his first term in office, the President had supported most of Hamilton’s major policy initiatives,

including his Assumption plan and the National Bank, both of which Republicans staunchly opposed.⁵⁰ Additionally, Washington defended Hamilton's policies extensively when they came under attack and considered the written assaults on Hamilton's policy and character, in Republican newspapers, as personal attacks on himself.⁵¹ This gave Hamilton good reason to believe that if Washington swayed from his neutral position, he would lean Federalist. Yet, when the cabinet was split on the Apportionment Bill passed by Congress—Hamilton and Henry Knox for the bill, while Jefferson and Randolph opposed it (because it would have decreased the amount of representation Virginia enjoyed in Congress)—Washington sided with the latter group and vetoed the bill. Jefferson and Madison thus believed that if Washington were to choose sides, his sympathies would lie with the interests of his home state.⁵²

Washington's response to the events of 1792 was to stay in office. Washington heeded his advisors' urging to stay in office for the sake of the unity of the nation. However, it was also the partisanship displayed by his close cabinet members and friends that convinced him to make the personal sacrifice to remain for four more years. Their opposing views of what national unity meant—one being a Federalist reign, the other a Republican takeover—convinced him that the unity of the Union was truly at stake. During the spring and summer of 1792, Washington came to fully understand just how bad the "party spirit" in his cabinet had become. He put off making the decision to stay on another term by trying to mend the factional divide in his cabinet, but in the end, he came to terms with the Jefferson-Hamilton rift and resigned himself to remaining in office. This realization significantly altered his relationships with the key players involved and changed the way Washington ran his administration during his second term.⁵³

From the beginning, Washington knew that the preservation of the Union trumped any personal desires he had to retire. This is obvious from Washington's commitment to stay on as President for an unexpected second term.⁵⁴ He explicitly instructed

Madison to emphasize that the people of the United States were “*all* Children of the same country” with the “same [interest] in all the great and essential concerns of the Nation” when he had asked Madison to draft a Valedictory address in May.⁵⁵ When Washington proposed to retire in February of 1792, he was no doubt aware of the political differences between Jefferson and Hamilton, but he didn’t think of the divide as being dangerous and generally considered the nation to be well off.⁵⁶ Recognizing Washington’s position and priorities help us understand how the events of 1792 changed his perspective. The two major deciding factors that convinced him that the condition of the union was grimmer than he previously believed were his personal correspondences with Jefferson and Hamilton, and his witnessing of the Newspaper Wars.

We see Washington’s exploration and carefully calculated neutral reactions to the partisan rift in his government by following the trail of events prompted by Jefferson’s May 23 letter to the President. In this letter, Jefferson urged Washington not to retire because of the tumultuous state of the “public mind.” He further supported his position urging Washington to stay in office by rattling off a long list of grievances against the Treasury Department. These included his claim that Hamilton made the national debt larger than it should have been as well as complaints about the excise law. Jefferson also noted the corruption of the legislature, making reference to a “corrupt squadron” controlled by the Treasury.⁵⁷ Washington didn’t reply to Jefferson until July 10, during a conversation with his Secretary of State. Washington argued against most of Jefferson’s points. To Jefferson’s accusations of a conspiracy to create monarchy, Washington claimed that, “There might be *desires*, but he did not believe there were *designs* to change their form of government into a monarchy.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, Washington blamed Freneau’s paper for “exciting the opposition to the government” and claimed that the anarchic chaos espoused by that paper and anti-government Republicans was more likely to end up leading to monarchy in the long term than would a strong centralized government controlled by the

Federalists. He defended Hamilton's assumption and calculation of the national debt and claimed that Jefferson's discontent wasn't widespread.⁵⁹

Washington did not stop there, though. Even if he didn't agree with Jefferson's arguments, he took them seriously and wanted to judge them fairly. Therefore, Washington carefully condensed Jefferson's grievances of May 23 into 21 points. He then sent them to Hamilton, without specifying from whom these grievances came in an attempt to prevent further partisan bickering. (It was evident to Hamilton with whom such complaints had originated, though.) Washington prefaced his letter to Hamilton by writing that he endeavored to learn from "sensible and moderate men, known friends to the Government, the sentiments which are entertained of public measures." He went on to detail the complaints of "Others, less friendly to the Government" had.⁶⁰ Hamilton replied with a 14,000-word detailed defense of his policies and denial of a conspiracy to turn the government into a monarchy.⁶¹ This series of events illustrates Washington's thorough, careful, and balanced exploration of the divisions in his cabinet. He tried to judge whether or not his presence would be necessary to preserve national unity. From this exchange of ideas, Jefferson and Hamilton illustrated to the President that the divisions between them were extremely deep and defining, both on a political and personal level.

The Newspaper Wars further demonstrated to Washington just how bad partisan politics had become. The battle between the *National Gazette* and the *Gazette of the United States* during the summer of 1792 had two powerfully discouraging effects on Washington. More than just providing him with additional evidence of just how personal and bitter the bickering between the Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury had become, it was also through the course of these public battles that Washington became aware of Madison's partisan leanings and the extent of his involvement with Freneau's paper.⁶² In an August 11 article published under the pseudonym "An American" in the *Gazette of the United States*, Hamilton referenced Madison's involvement in bringing Freneau

to Philadelphia. He wrote, "It may be very true, in a literal sense, that no negotiation was ever opened with Mr. Freneau by Thomas Jefferson Secretary of State, and yet it may be very certain that a negotiation was opened with him directly or circuitously by a *particular friend* of that office and expectations given of his patronage and encouragement."⁶³ Hamilton's reference to Jefferson's "particular friend" was an obvious allusion to Madison for those involved with politics. There is no doubt that Washington, who had gone to Mount Vernon for the summer, read the series of articles that Hamilton published in Fenno's paper.⁶⁴ It is somewhat less likely that he read the responses in the *National Gazette*, simply because he regarded Freneau's paper as a dangerous agitator of Republican radicalism. Washington felt betrayed by Madison. The incident damaged the relationship between the two men. Madison would never again visit Mount Vernon and the only other time Washington would consult Madison was when he couldn't reach any other member of his cabinet during Philadelphia's yellow fever epidemic in 1793.⁶⁵ Washington's relationship with Hamilton became stronger after the summer of 1792, because even if Hamilton contributed to the factionalism of the day and resorted to newspaper attacks, he was doing so in support of Washington's administration.⁶⁶

After receiving the letters from Hamilton and Jefferson detailing their grievances with one another and watching the summer's battles fought out in the newspapers, Washington had a better understanding of how serious the divisions in his cabinet were. Yet, he made one last attempt to fix the problem on his own. On August 23 and 26 he sent nearly identical letters to Jefferson and Hamilton respectively, begging each to compromise. It was his final attempt to "treat the conflict as a fraternal spat between two of his surrogate sons," as Joseph Ellis described it in his biography of Washington.⁶⁷ Washington began his letter to Jefferson by briefly detailing the most recent occurrences concerning Indian affairs, but then went on to note, "How unfortunate, and how much is it to be regretted then, that whilst we are encompassed on all sides by avowed enemies and insidious friends, that internal dissensions should be harrowing and tearing our vitals."⁶⁸ He pleaded with

Jefferson, “My Earnest wish, and my fondest hope therefore is, that instead of wounding suspicions and irritable charges, there be liberal allowances—mutual forbearances—and temporising yieldings on all sides.”⁶⁹ In his letter to Hamilton, Washington similarly called for a need to compromise on *all sides* and criticized both *Gazettes* for “pushing matters to extremity.” He wrote, “When matters get to such lengths the natural inference is, that both sides have strained the Cards beyond their bearing, and, that a middle course would be found the best...”⁷⁰

Both Jefferson and Hamilton replied to Washington on September 9. Jefferson took the opportunity to again enumerate his grievances with Hamilton, recount the way in which Hamilton “corrupted” the legislature, and restate the danger Hamilton posed to subvert the *Constitution*. In an almost immature game of pointing fingers, Jefferson asked Washington, “By whose fault is it that Col. Hamilton and myself have not drawn together? The answer will depend on that to two other questions; Whose principles of administration best justify, by their purity, conscientious adherence? and Which of us has, notwithstanding, stepped farthest into the controul [sic] of the department of the other?” Jefferson went on to recall Hamilton’s attacks on his character in the *National Gazette*.⁷¹

For his part, Hamilton stated he agreed with Washington that the divisions between Jefferson and himself were dangerous to the Republic. But he went on to say that he had “some instrumentality of late in the retaliations which have fallen upon certain public characters that I find myself placed in a situation not to be able to recede *for the present*.”⁷² His basic line of argument was that Jefferson started the bickering and he hadn’t engaged in it until recently. Though he did, at the end of the letter, write that he would cooperate in a reunification plan if Washington took up such an initiative with his cabinet members, his proposed cooperation was dependent on Washington’s leadership.⁷³ These responses were exactly the opposite of the apologies and recommitment to unity that Washington sought. The letters were undoubtedly extremely disappointing to Washington and left him no room to imagine that the feud could be mended in the short term.

On October 1, Washington had another conversation with Jefferson. During this talk, Washington gave an honest and candid summary of his 1792 experience concerning the Jefferson-Hamilton rivalry. In his notes, Jefferson wrote:

He then expressed his concern at the difference which he found to subsist between the Sec. of the Treasury and myself, of which he said he had not been aware. He knew indeed that there was a marked difference in our political sentiments, but he had never suspected it had gone so far in producing a personal difference, and he wished he could be the Mediator to put an end to it.⁷⁴

Although Washington's concerns about the unity of the country are apparent here and in other places, it is impossible to say exactly when Washington made up his mind to take on the Presidency for a second term. He outwardly said he was still considering retirement in his October conversation with Jefferson. But by this time he clearly understood the seriousness of the rift in his cabinet and knew that the only chance at putting an end to it was for him to stay in office.⁷⁵ On November 6, 1792, Washington made his fourth annual address to Congress, as the new session opened up. He didn't mention anything about running for a second term or retirement.⁷⁶ Mentioning the former would have been in contradiction with the gentlemanly and disinterested character Washington consciously embodied. A few short months later, he accepted the unanimous vote to serve another four years in office with an unglamorous two-paragraph inaugural address.⁷⁷

The period from May to November of 1792 was an extremely important period of time in the political history of the United States. These few months set the stage for Washington's second term. Going into his second four years with a full realization of the conflicts within his cabinet, Washington adjusted the way in which he interacted with his advisors. While he had left them alone to argue and decide policy amongst themselves to a great extent during the first term, during Washington's second term he made sure to get opposing views from different members of his cabinet and then make a final decision himself, similar to the way he sought out Hamilton's and Jefferson's perspectives before making assumptions about the situation in the summer of 1792.

He also consulted Edmund Randolph, one of the least partisan cabinet members significantly more than he had in years past.⁷⁸ However, over the course of his second term, the factionalism only got worse—exacerbated by events like the Whiskey Rebellion and Jay’s Treaty. Washington grew more and more reliant on his relationship with and advice from Hamilton. It was Hamilton who would later help with his famous 1796 Farewell Address, a sign that by the end of his second term Washington had swung Federalist.⁷⁹

Although none of the key players meant for it to happen at the time, the first two-party system was largely shaped during the summer of 1792. The hope on both sides of the aisle to overcome the opposition and in this way regain national unity hasn’t come to pass in the 215 years since the Republican-Federalist divide developed. Perhaps the most important point to note, given everything that happened during 1792, was the importance of the character of George Washington. He was the perfect leader for the time. Without his character and leadership, it is unclear whether the Union would have survived its second four years of existence. However, having the respected Washington in office, solidifying the mechanics of the new system of government, during a time in which the party spirit only grew stronger and stronger, helped ease a widespread fear among citizens and politicians at the time. It proved that the national government could handle factional splits in the population and among its government officers. This created confidence in the government and set an important precedent in shaping parties into the political machines that we are familiar with today. National unity truly was at stake in 1792, and, in retrospect, Washington deserves much of the credit for preserving our nation.



¹ Gordon S. Wood, Revolutionary Characters (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006) pp. 47-50

² Victor Hugo Paltists, Washington's Farewell Address (New York: The New York Public Library, 1935) p. 17

³ "Memorandum on a Discussion of the President's Retirement, May 5, 1792," Thomas A. Mason and Robert A. Rutland, eds., The Papers of James Madison Vol. 14 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983) p. 299

⁴ Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington Vol. VI (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954) p. 384

⁵ Stuart Leibiger, Founding Friendship (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999) p. 101, 104; Gary Willis, James Madison (New York: Times Books, 2002) p. 41

⁶ Leibiger, p. 97

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 99

⁸ "Memorandum on a Discussion of the President's Retirement May 5, 1792," p. 299

⁹ Irving Brant, James Madison, Father of the Constitution (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950) p. 205

¹⁰ Richard B. Morris, "Washington and Hamilton: A Great Collaboration," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 102 (1958) p. 113

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-114

¹² Harold C. Syrett, The Papers of Alexander Hamilton Vol. 12 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967) pp. 1-129

¹³ Broadus Mitchell, Alexander Hamilton (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962) p. 206

¹⁴ Willis, p. 43

¹⁵ James Thomas Flexner, The Young Hamilton (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978) p. 438

¹⁶ Leibiger, p. 153

¹⁷ Flexner, p. 437; Wood, pp. 91-119

¹⁸ Flexner, pp. 439-442

¹⁹ Willis, p. 45

²⁰ Paltists, p. 9

²¹ "Memorandum on a Discussion of the President's Retirement May 5, 1792," p. 299

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 299-302

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 299-302

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 299-302

²⁵ "Letter from Washington to Madison, May 20, 1792," John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington

Vol. 32, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939) pp. 46-48

²⁶ "Letter from Madison to Washington, June 20, 1792,"

Mason and Rutland, p. 321

²⁷ "Letter from Jefferson to Washington, May 23, 1792,"

Paltists, p. 225

²⁸ "Letter from Randolph to Washington, August 5, 1792,"

Fitzpatrick, p. 135

²⁹ "Letter from Hamilton to Washington, July 30, 1792,"

Syrett, vol. 12, pp. 137-138

³⁰ "Memorandum on a Discussion of the President's Retirement May 5, 1792," Mason and Rutland, p. 302

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 302

³² "Letter from Jefferson to Washington, May 23, 1792,"

Paltists, p. 225

³³ Brant, p. 289

³⁴ Leibiger, pp. 154-155

³⁵ Freeman, p. 366

³⁶ James Meyers, ed., The Mind of the Founder (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1973) p. 181

³⁷ Leibiger, p. 156

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159

³⁹ "Letter from Hamilton to Jefferson, June 29, 1792,"

John Catanzarti, ed., The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Vol. 24 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) p. 131

⁴⁰ "Letter from Madison to Jefferson June 12, 1792,"

Catanzarti, vol. 24, p. 70

⁴¹ "Letter from Jefferson to Madison, June 4, 1792,"

Catanzarti, vol. 24, p. 25

⁴² "Letter from Jefferson to Madison, July 3, 1792,"

Catanzarti, vol. 24, p. 151

⁴³ "Letter from Hamilton to Edward Carrington, May 26, 1792," Syrett, pp. 427-428

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 429

⁴⁵ Leibiger, p. 155

⁴⁶ "'Parties' for the National Gazette, January 23, 1792,"

Mason and Rutland, p. 197

⁴⁷ "'An American, No. 1' for the Gazette of the United States, August 4, 1792," Syrett, p. 158

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160

⁴⁹ Syrett, p. 224

⁵⁰ Morris, p. 114

- ⁵¹ “Notes on Conversation with George Washington, July 10, 1792,” Catanzarti, vol. 24, p. 210
- ⁵² Leibiger, p. 156
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 166
- ⁵⁴ Paltists, p. 17
- ⁵⁵ “Letter from Washington to Madison, May 20, 1792,” Fitzpatrick, p. 47
- ⁵⁶ “Notes on Conversation with George Washington, July 10, 1792,” Catanzarti, vol. 24, pp. 210-211
- ⁵⁷ “Letter from Jefferson to Washington, May 23, 1792,” Catanzarti, vol. 23, p. 535
- ⁵⁸ “Notes on Conversation with George Washington, July 10, 1792,” Catanzarti, vol. 24, pp. 210-211
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 210-211
- ⁶⁰ “Letter from Washington to Hamilton, July 29, 1792,” Fitzpatrick, p. 95
- ⁶¹ “Letter from Hamilton to Washington, August 18, 1792,” Syrett, pp. 228-258
- ⁶² Leibiger, p. 155
- ⁶³ “‘An American No. II’ on August 11, 1792 for the Gazette of the United States” Syrett, p. 188
- ⁶⁴ Richard Brookhiser, Alexander Hamilton, American (New York: The Free Press, 1999) p. 108
- ⁶⁵ Leibiger, pp. 156, 166
- ⁶⁶ Morris, p. 114
- ⁶⁷ Joseph J. Ellis, His Excellency (New York: Random House, Inc., 2004) p. 215
- ⁶⁸ “Letter from Washington to Jefferson, August 23, 1792,” Fitzpatrick, p. 130
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 131
- ⁷⁰ “Letter from Washington to Hamilton, August 26, 1792,” Fitzpatrick, p. 132
- ⁷¹ “Letter from Jefferson to Washington, September 9, 1792,” Catanzarti, vol. 24, pp. 351-354
- ⁷² “Letter from Hamilton to Washington, September 9, 1792,” Syrett, pp. 347-349
- ⁷³ Ibid., pp. 347-349
- ⁷⁴ “Notes of a Conversation with George Washington, October 1, 1792” Catanzarti, vol. 24, p. 434
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 434
- ⁷⁶ “Fourth Annual Address to Congress, November 6, 1792,” Fitzpatrick, p. 205
- ⁷⁷ “Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1793,” Fitzpatrick, pp. 374-375

⁷⁸ Leibiger, p. 166

⁷⁹ Flexner, p. 442

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9 January 2006

Will Fitzhugh
The Concord Review
National Writing Board
730 Boston Post Road, Suite 24
Sudbury, Massachusetts 01776

Dear Mr. Fitzhugh,

I would like to thank you for publishing my essay [Bloody Sunday, 1905] in the Winter 2005 issue of *The Concord Review*. My essay existed in rudimentary form from junior year of high school as the term paper for my European History course, however it was only through my preparations to submit it to *The Concord Review* that my final paper actually took shape. With the assistance of my teacher, Ms. Joan Traffas, I revisited my topic during my senior year. After re-researching Father Gapon and Bloody Sunday in Russia, I rewrote my paper entirely, even changing my thesis. **Challenged to emulate the high quality of writing included in *The Concord Review*, I endeavored to improve not only my specific argument but also my writing style as a whole. I had the opportunity to consider my thesis from a new perspective and with the inspiration to achieve a much more scholarly level of writing than that to which I would have otherwise aspired.** Through the research process, I also learned a considerable amount about how to locate and use credible sources in the library, a skill that has been invaluable to me during my first year of college at Johns Hopkins. Having to write an essay of considerable length that formulates a coherent and valid argument has also greatly improved my writing overall, making it much easier for me to communicate my theses clearly in my papers for college.

The opportunity to be published in *The Concord Review* provided me, as it has many other students, with a way in which I was able to significantly expand both my knowledge of history and my writing skills. Placing so much effort and attention on my topic awakened in me an interest in Russian history, and strengthened my desire to study history in college. **Thank you for the chance you afford students to challenge themselves and learn more about history, and for the opportunity for students to share their conclusions with others through publication.**

Sincerely,
Kirsi Tuomanen Hill
Johns Hopkins University, Class of 2009
St. Mary's Episcopal School, Memphis, Tennessee