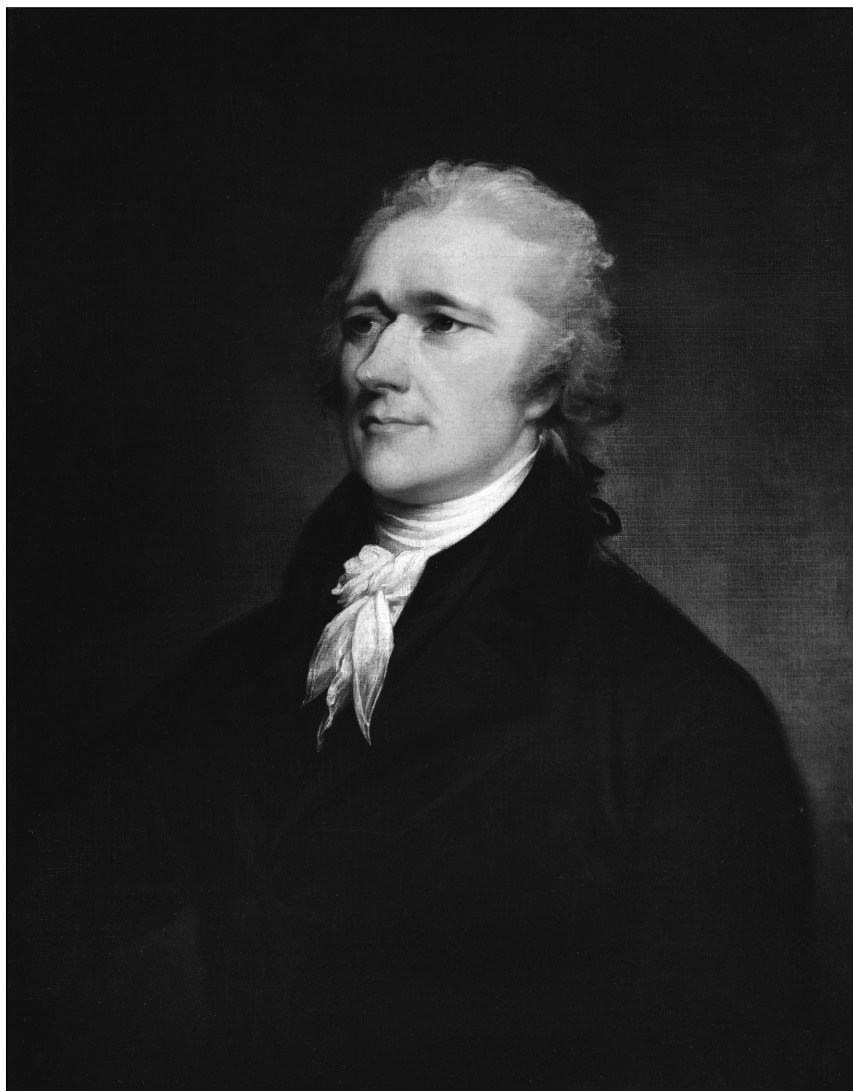


THE REVOLUTIONARY WRITINGS OF

Alexander Hamilton



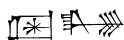
ALEXANDER HAMILTON

THE REVOLUTIONARY WRITINGS OF
Alexander Hamilton



Edited and with an Introduction by Richard B. Vernier

With a Foreword by Joyce O. Appleby



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CONTENTS

Foreword, <i>by Joyce O. Appleby</i>	vii
Introduction, <i>by Richard B. Vernier</i>	xi
Hamilton Chronology	xxiii
 A Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress, December 15, 1774	 I
 The Farmer Refuted, February 23, 1775	 41
 Remarks on the Quebec Bill	
NUMBER 1: June 15, 1775	141
NUMBER 2: June 22, 1775	145
 Publius	
LETTER 1: October 19, 1778	157
LETTER 2: October 26, 1778	159
LETTER 3: November 16, 1778	162
 The Continentalist	
NUMBER 1: July 12, 1781	169
NUMBER 2: July 19, 1781	172
NUMBER 3: August 9, 1781	176
NUMBER 4: August 30, 1781	182
NUMBER 5: April 18, 1782	187
NUMBER 6: July 4, 1782	194
 Index	 201

FOREWORD

Joyce O. Appleby

AMERICANS HAVE an unusual relationship to the founding era of their nation. They not only revere their many Founding Fathers but study their lives and writings with great avidity. Curators, scholars, and popular writers respond to this taste with exhibits, books, videos, and conferences. Bicentennial commemorations of the American Revolution began in 1975 and continued annually with reenactments, tours, and TV shows. Alexander Hamilton's death at the hand of Aaron Burr prompted a major exhibit in New York City in 2005; the tricentennial of Benjamin Franklin's birth was marked by a year-long celebration in Philadelphia in 2006.

Skeptics can verify this fascination by "googling" George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Marshall, whose names pull up sites in the thousands. Online bookstores follow suit with hundreds of titles, many of which were written in the past decade.

Although most of the issues and values that divided America's leaders in the nation-building years of the late eighteenth century are remote from those that stir us today, the passions aroused by these old contests persist in the present. Readers often reveal a keen sense of partiality, if not partisanship, toward the revolutionary leaders. When Adams is riding high in popularity, esteem for Jefferson decreases. The same applies to Jefferson and Hamilton. As we move into a season of bicentennials of Marshall's great decisions, these too will probably provoke criticism of his rivals, Jefferson and Madison.

While clearly a Founding Father of great significance, Hamilton holds a somewhat eccentric relationship to these other central figures. He died young in a scandalous duel; he was never president; and his personal relations lacked the rectitude so noticeable in George Washington. He

might have fit in better in the British Parliament, where he could conceivably have found a place, given his birth in the Caribbean colony of Nevis. Yet few American leaders have ever been better loved than Hamilton was by the young Federalists who looked to him to carry them back to their rightful place at the head of the nation until death cut short his brilliant political career.

What Hamilton had was genius, conspicuous even as a teenager. Extraordinary talent always attracts notice. Hamilton collected powerful patrons the way other young men acquire bad debts. His abundant gifts, well wrapped in personal discipline, earned him a passage from the island of St. Croix, where he worked as a shipping clerk, to New York City to study at Columbia, then called King's College. There Hamilton's quickness, wit, charm, and diligence won him a new group of enthusiastic backers who felt their faith in him well vindicated by his writings in support of the Patriot cause.

In a few years Hamilton passed from an academic prodigy to the most treasured of George Washington's aides-de-camp. Making himself nearly indispensable to Washington through his management of headquarters and report-writing, he also put together an intelligence network of spies in New York City, which the British occupied throughout the war. Despite Washington's reliance upon Hamilton as a secretary of the first order, Hamilton yearned for military action. Elevated to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, he managed to lead both an artillery and an infantry unit in important battles and finished his army career with a daring attack on one of the British positions at Yorktown.

Given to neither the studiousness of Madison nor the wide-ranging intellectual curiosity of Jefferson, Hamilton gravitated to the technical issues of governance. His moment came when Washington organized the first presidential administration under the new Constitution and chose him as secretary of the treasury. No man in the United States was as prepared as Hamilton to use the new federal powers to craft a series of mutually enhancing statutes dealing with taxes, trade, and the revolutionary debt. He possessed a strong political philosophy, congenial to

the Federalists who gravitated around Washington but at odds with the increasingly popular democratic sentiments that triumphed with Jefferson's election in 1801 and the subsequent sweep of successive Congressional elections.

As the writings of this volume so well reveal, Hamilton was a natural rhetorician in the best sense of that word. He wrote to persuade, not to show off, and he mastered that indispensable skill of a popular author: knowing how to clarify complicated issues without yielding to distorting simplifications. His archrival in Washington's administration, Jefferson, paid reluctant tribute to Hamilton's gifts when, in urging Madison to take up his pen to answer Hamilton's newspaper essays, he called him a "mighty host." In the earliest pieces we see the foundations of that brilliant career being set down and the contours of his core commitments established. We can also begin to see how those commitments were gradually adapted to embrace a more energetic vision of government by the time of the *Continentalist* essays. Understanding something of Hamilton's early writings thus serves to illumine some of the reasons for the earliest political and constitutional controversies of the republic.

Hamilton epitomized what Jefferson feared in Federalist politics. When Hamilton had the chance to draft the economic policy for the nation, he relied on what he called the "durable and permanent existence of rich and poor, debtor and creditor." The wealthy few would develop new enterprises for the poor, whose lives would be regulated through their economic dependence and, if necessary, the master-servant provisions of the Common Law. Convinced of the need for leadership from disinterested and educated gentlemen, Hamilton rejected the notion that ordinary farmers, storekeepers, and tinkers might just as effectively use their resources for new, unsupervised ventures as wealthy entrepreneurs would. Yet it was the pool of capital and financial stability that Hamilton created that enabled those petty entrepreneurs to prosper when Jefferson became president.

Illustrative of Hamilton's socially conservative attitudes was his reaction to the idea of trade having the capacity of self-regulation. He rejected

altogether the existence of a natural social harmony and called Adam Smith's conviction, worked out in *The Wealth of Nations*, that the nation could flourish without "a common directing power," "one of those wild speculative paradoxes, which have grown into credit among us, contrary to the uniform practice and sense of the most enlightened nations."

Like a master technician, Hamilton grasped the impinging details of things as disordered as the mishmash of state and national debts left after eight years of fighting the revolution. Even to speak of debts is to impose a stability on what was in fact a jumble of bonds, bank notes, IOUs, and requisitions of fluctuating value that had passed through hundreds of hands. Only a passion for this kind of fiscal management could entice anyone to take on such a staggering task as registering, calibrating, and streamlining this tangle of papers into a stock issue that would make the United States solvent. With supreme confidence in his proposed measures, Hamilton turned a mass of bad debt into an asset by converting the debt into interest-bearing bonds that people wanted to purchase.

The four geniuses of American nation-building—Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, and Marshall—found their way unerringly to their métiers: Madison, the constitution writer; Jefferson, the creator of a democratic polity; Marshall, the architect of liberal jurisprudence; and Hamilton, the fiscal wizard. All had interesting relationships with George Washington, whose great virtues were more personal and moral than intellectual. Their writings and stories reflect the character of the nation itself. It's hard not to share the public's delight in learning about them or, as in this case, in reading their own powerful words.

INTRODUCTION

Richard B. Vernier

CONSIDERING THE REPUTATIONS of all the Founding Fathers, that of Alexander Hamilton has taken the wildest swings. Over the past two centuries, he has by turns been vilified as a cunning, aristocratic cryptomonarchist out to strangle American democracy in its cradle, and hailed as a steely-eyed visionary who secured the economic foundations of the republic and fathered the modern American industrial state. How one views Hamilton will necessarily depend upon how one views the great debates of the early republic over the scope and nature of government power, and of its role in shaping American society. Too frequently judgment on these essential questions is formed with reference only to Hamilton's later works, most especially his contributions to the *Federalist Papers*. That is unfortunate, because such a reading necessarily slights the powerful commitment Hamilton made early in his career to the revolutionary cause. Considering his earliest public writings presented in this volume, the most lurid portrayal of Hamilton as hostile to the principles of American republicanism, as an ambitious opportunist who paid lip service to republican government but actively pursued a system of elective monarchy, is unsustainable. Indeed, Hamilton's revolutionary writings reveal the core values and beliefs of a young but genuine Whig. What they suggest is the substitution of a revolutionary's fears for his nation's liberty, with a patriot's desire for his nation's power. To compare *The Farmer Refuted* with *The Continentalist* essays is to be confronted by the very great changes which had taken place in Hamilton's thinking about the challenges confronting American Independence. To compare *The Continentalist* essays with his *Federalist* essays, and even more so his famous state papers on public credit, the bank, and manufactures is to be struck with how much the grand themes sounded there remained

central to his subsequent thinking.¹ By collecting his earliest public writings together in one volume, readers will be better able to assess for themselves Hamilton's core commitments and his place in the American political tradition. Did he remain constant in his most basic beliefs, or did he indeed undergo a radical reconsideration of the nature of American political and economic liberty?

The Revolution produced an outpouring of thousands of tracts and newspaper essays, nowhere more ably analyzed and characterized than in Bernard Bailyn's classic *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*.² Hamilton's first tracts, written in the full flush of early Revolutionary fervor, strike most of the familiar notes of patriotic Whiggism delineated by Bailyn. There is the offhanded appeal to natural-law scholars—"I recommend Grotius, Pufendorf, Locke"—the assertion that government rests upon consent, for the protection of natural rights. Real Whig notions of the grasping designs of power against liberty leave Hamilton convinced that British imperial policy clearly indicates a plot against American liberty, that the "system of slavery" being "fabricated against America" is the "offspring of mature deliberation." And that the ultimate aim of the conspiracy was to fasten upon the colonies the system of heavy taxes and tithes, rule by standing army—in a word, to transform Americans into sheep to be shorn at will for the maintenance of a train of court dependents—is likewise assumed by Hamilton. The profound legalism and constitutionalism of the Revolutionary argument is also brilliantly displayed by the young Hamilton. The central Revolutionary claim that Parliament had no power to tax the colonies, either under the terms of the British constitution, or by the terms of colonial charters, is as ably handled by the teenager's sweeping survey of colonial charters as in Jefferson's *Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774).

There is another feature of the American Whig Revolutionary ideol-

1. See, on this transformation, Forrest McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Norton, 1979).

2. Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967).

ogy on display in Hamilton's writing which, I suspect, explains the manifest differences between the Hamilton of *The Farmer Refuted* and the Hamilton of the next two decades. Hamilton's argument is suffused with the conviction that the North American trade is indispensable to the well-being of Britain, and indeed, of the whole empire—that a boycott will produce redress, he announced, is a “near certainty.” British power was largely illusory, he assured his readers: while luxury was at a high pitch, the people were impoverished, and the country was loaded with taxes, with a staggering load of debt that would take 112 years to pay. The British would never be so foolish as to attempt to wage a war which would only ruin the colony it sought to hold; but if it did, America could field an army thirty times bigger than any the British might send. Moreover, Hamilton shrewdly predicted, Spain and France would both come to America's aid, guided only by national self-interest.

Sanguine visions of easy triumph soon gave way to “the times that try men's souls.” General Howe showed up, not with 15,000 troops, but 32,000, heavy artillery, and a massive naval force. In February of 1778 from Valley Forge, Hamilton wrote bitterly to New York Governor Clinton of the “degeneracy of representation in the great council of America. . . . By injudicious changes and arrangements in the Commissary's department, in the middle of a campaign, they have exposed the army frequently to temporary want, and the danger of a dissolution, from absolute famine. At this very day there are complaints from the whole line, of having been three or four days without provisions; desertions have been immense, and strong features of mutiny begin to show themselves.” It was only because the very best men eschewed positions in Congress, for places in state government, that the army was in such distress. “Men have been fonder of the emoluments and conveniences, of being employed at home, and local attachment, falsely operating, has made them more provident for the particular interests of the states to which they belonged, than for the common interests of the confederacy.”³

3. Alexander Hamilton to George Clinton, February 13, 1778, in Harold Syrett and

The inability of Congress to effectively manage an army in the field because of the centripetal force of state parochialism became Hamilton's *idée fixe*, and the spur to his studies of what effective power would look like. By the last year of his military service, the outlines of Hamilton's vision for the republic could be limned in a series of letters he wrote to James Duane and Robert Morris.⁴ Most of the ideas in those letters were developed further in *The Continentalist* essays.

The Revolution, he wrote in 1781, had begun without Americans' having an understanding of a government of the "enlarged kind suited to the government of an independent nation." Revolutionary fear of power had produced a "fatal mistake" in the want of power in Congress. Americans had been blind to the fact that "As too much power leads to despotism, too little leads to anarchy." Indeed, history shows that the want of power at the center also threatened liberty: the jealous rivalry of Greek cities led inexorably to internecine wars and foreign subjugation. This fact augured poorly for the republic, since it was in the nature of confederacies for the federal government to be at a disadvantage to its members, as members habitually favored their partial and parochial interests to the good of the whole. Self-seeking by states under the illusion of safety from European depredation would lead to the emergence of mutually rivalrous confederacies in America, each with its own European ally. Even with the country still at war, Hamilton fumed, the states had been loath to vest Congress with the means to fulfill its immense responsibilities, lulled by the illusion that European loans would obviate the need for Congressional revenues. "We did not consider," Hamilton ruefully reflects, "how difficult it must be to exhaust the resources of a nation circumstanced like that of Great Britain." It was urgent, as general European war loomed, that America quickly give Congress the powers it needed to gain decisive advantages on the battlefield, and to prevent "us from being a conquered people." Congress had to be granted broad

Jacob E. Cooke, eds., *Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1:425-27.

4. Jacob Ernest Cooke, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Scribner's, 1982), 22-26.

tax powers, since “Power, without revenue, in political society is a name.” By 1781, Hamilton’s view of Britain’s public debt has reversed: far from betokening weakness, it is the sign of immense strength, since all countries borrow money to fight war. The size of Britain’s debt was merely testimony to its enormous credit-worthiness, and to the need for government in America to embrace policies like a national bank which united “the influence and interest of moneyed men with the resources of government” which alone “can give it that durable and extensive credit of which it stands in need.”

Hamilton’s revolutionary writings, then, are not only important for illuminating the issues at stake in the break with Britain, but for the course the nation would take in the aftermath of independence. In them he gives a foretaste of what is to come, and why.

Hamilton’s place in American history as one of its leading figures is not suggested by the circumstances of his birth and early life. He was born on the tiny sugar island of Nevis in the British West Indies, and even his date of birth is uncertain, either January 11, 1755 (the scholarly consensus) or 1757 (Hamilton’s own claim). Because his mother failed to obtain a legal divorce from a previous husband who abandoned her, years after Hamilton was born his parents’ marriage was voided. Within a year of learning his wife was a “bigamist,” and his offspring “whore children,” James Hamilton abandoned the family, and Alexander bore the stigma of illegitimate birth—John Adams privately taunted him as “the bastard brat of a Scotch peddler” after decades of distinguished national service. Orphaned in 1768 by the death of his mother, Hamilton was sent to work as a clerk in a St. Croix merchant’s store. There his intellectual gifts made such an impression that in 1772 his employer, together with a Princeton alumnus, Rev. Hugh Knox, arranged to send him to the mainland to be educated. After little more than a year of formal prefatory schooling, Hamilton forsook Princeton to enter King’s College (Columbia University), because it acceded to his plans to fly through his studies at his own frenetic pace. It was as a college sophomore that he wrote *A Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress* and *The Farmer Refuted*.

The outbreak of fighting between colonials and the British army led

to Hamilton's quick progression from New York militia artillery officer to General Washington's staff in March of 1777. In that capacity, Hamilton made a favorable impression on the future president, as well as on his future father-in-law, Phillip Schuyler, a wealthy New York landowner and major political figure. His marriage to Elizabeth Schuyler in 1780 provided an entree into the highest levels of New York legal and political circles. More importantly, however, his military career shaped his emergence as a proponent of strong national union under a radically reconfigured government with all of the appurtenances of European nation-states. Despite a crushing burden of official duties, Hamilton in this period undertook a self-directed course of wide reading in political economy, public finance, history, and European politics. He came to view the Continental Congress as fundamentally defective in its ability to fund and administer an army, as well as to guarantee the union of states and the direction of America's place on the world stage. The *Continentalist* essays published after he left service are merely ruminations on subjects which he treated at length during this period in an extensive private correspondence.

In February of 1781 he abruptly left Washington's staff in a fit of pique to seek a battlefield command. He acquitted himself bravely at the Battle of Yorktown, left the army, and began legal studies. With blinding speed, after a mere three months' preparation, he passed the New York Bar exams. By 1782, Hamilton was a practicing lawyer, and was tapped by the New York legislature to serve as a delegate to the Congress. During his months in Congress Hamilton was at the forefront of the struggle to vest the government with an import tax, but the plan was defeated by the opposition of Rhode Island and Virginia. Congress's inability to secure permanent revenues led disgruntled army officers in Newburgh, New York, into a conspiracy to threaten mutiny to force payment of back pay. Although Washington defused that crisis in March 1783, by June angry soldiers surrounded Congress in Philadelphia, demanding back pay. Hamilton and the rest of Congress were forced to retreat to Princeton, New Jersey, when the Pennsylvania assembly refused to use the mi-

litia to disperse the soldiers. Soon thereafter, Hamilton quit Congress in disgust, to return to the practice of law in New York.

After several years as a successful attorney in important civil litigation, and a founder of the Bank of New York, Hamilton returned to politics when he was selected as one of New York's delegates to the Annapolis convention of 1786 for consideration of amendments to the Articles of Confederation. Since less than half the states had sent delegates to the convention, Hamilton drafted the Convention's call for a second meeting to be held the following year in Philadelphia. Elected to the New York Assembly from New York City in 1787, he was selected as a delegate to the Philadelphia convention. Hamilton was not among the more influential delegates at the Constitutional Convention. His major contribution, a speech on June 18, 1787, argued that nothing short of total sovereignty in the hands of a national government could prevent eventual disunion. Moreover, he urged, a model for such a national government could be found in Britain's: "the best in the world," he declared, in "his private opinion." He therefore offered a republicanized copy, consisting of lifetime tenure for the indirectly elected executive, and a legislative composed of an indirectly elected upper house with life terms, and a popularly elected lower house of three-year terms.⁵ Despite its brazenly Anglophile tone—he admitted it "went beyond the ideas of most members"—the speech seems not to have shocked his colleagues, although they paid no heed to his model, but preferred to overhaul Madison's. At the end of the convention, Hamilton, like most of his colleagues, voted in favor of the Constitution as probably the best frame attainable at the time. Indeed, once the Constitution was signed, Hamilton became devoted to the cause of its becoming the basis of national unity and national power.

A little over a month later Hamilton undertook to defend the Constitution against its New York critics (such as Governor George Clinton

5. James Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1966), 129–39.

and fellow delegate Robert Yates) by enlisting New York legal eminence John Jay and the brilliant Virginian James Madison to join him in authoring *The Federalist Papers* under the collective *nom de plume* “Publius” (previously employed by Hamilton in a pamphlet reprinted in this collection). Hamilton’s first essay, addressed to the citizens of New York, appeared in New York’s *Independent Journal* on October 27, 1787. Writing with lightning speed, Hamilton and Madison—Jay was limited by health problems to just four essays—produced two or three articles every week, sometimes with the author finishing an essay as the first pages were set in type. Despite the lack of close editorial collaboration, the eighty-five essays appeared in up to four New York papers over the next ten months, systematically countering the critics of the proposed government, and sketching its superiority over the existing Articles of Confederation. His service to the cause of the Constitution went further than *The Federalist*. As a member of New York’s constitutional ratifying convention, Hamilton’s pro-Constitution delegates were outnumbered by anti-ratifiers by more than two to one, but there his deft political maneuvering, and impassioned defense of the Constitution’s republican character, seem to have helped sway many delegates. There is no question, however, that his resolution at that convention calling for the amendment of a Bill of Rights to the document secured its narrow approval, against what had seemed like hopeless odds.

The newly elected president, George Washington, picked his old *aide de camp* to fill the position of secretary of the treasury, and it was here that he left his most lasting stamp on the republic. The measures he pursued as treasury secretary all aimed at the construction of national unity, and the construction of the instruments of national power sufficient to the needs of a world of nation-states. Thus, in his Report on Credit (1790), he wanted domestic securities paid at face value, despite the fact that most had been obtained at steep discounts. He also proposed that the debts of the states be assumed by the Treasury. In the former case, he aimed at winning moneyed and mercantile wealth to the cause of the new government, to ensure a reliable source of government credit

for future exigencies. In both cases the tax requirements of debt service would justify a panoply of federal taxes for a long period of time, thus solidifying the essential powers of the new government. Rather than conceiving of the federal government as a tool to enrich the moneyed men, Hamilton was convinced that their favor, and the nation's credit, were essential "as long as nations in general continue to use it as a resource in war. It is impossible for a country to contend, on equal terms, or to be secure against the enterprises of other nations, without being able equally with them to avail itself of this important resource."⁶

The Bank of the United States, for all that Hamilton's Report portrayed its benefits to commerce in general, was first and foremost an adjunct of federal finance: by 1796, more than 60 percent of its capital had been loaned to the government.⁷ And his defense of its constitutionality, which marked the appearance of his doctrine of implied powers, was perfectly congruent with his previous claim that "there is no rule by which we can measure the momentum of civil power, necessary" and that the union must therefore "possess all the means and have a right to resort to all the methods with which it is entrusted."⁸ His Report on Manufactures explicitly endorsed their promotion by the government to "render the United States independent of foreign nations for military and other essential supplies." By this Hamilton meant more than cannon and musket works; he meant "the means of subsistence, habitation, clothing, and defense." "The extreme embarrassments of the United States during the late war," he reminded his countrymen, "from an incapacity of supplying themselves, are still a matter of keen recollection; a future war might be expected again to exemplify the mischiefs and dangers of a

6. Alexander Hamilton, "Second Report on Public Credit" (December 1794), in Henry C. Lodge, ed., *Works of Alexander Hamilton* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 295-96.

7. Edwin J. Perkins, *American Public Finance and Financial Services, 1700-1815* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994), 240-44.

8. Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist Papers," quoted in Cooke, *Alexander Hamilton*, 57.

situation to which that incapacity is still, in too great a degree, applicable, unless changed by timely and vigorous exertion.”⁹

The effect of these policies, and their rationales, upon the young nation was to create deep divisions between those who saw them as essential and those who saw them as irrelevant, indeed, inimical to the emergence of a free social order. Hamilton’s vision of national strength depended above all on the endless attentions and devotions of statesmen to actively design and execute the nation’s interest. Nowhere is this clearer than in his argument in *Continentalist V* that among the powers that Congress had to obtain were broad powers to regulate economic activity for the common good. Indeed, Britain’s prosperity was the consequence of the growth of its trade, which was due to “the fostering care of government” beginning in the reign of Elizabeth. His Democratic Republican opponents, seeing what he wrought to make the nation strong, complained he was re-creating the very European models the Revolution had fled. On his return from Europe, one writer expressed his “mortification” that as European nations were “sick at length at their enormous and perpetual taxes, and struggling to get rid of them . . . I find we are pursuing the mad policy of increasing and perpetuating both.” Similarly, just when European nations were finally learning “to unshackle commerce . . . from excessive burdens and galling restrictions,” America was busy “overloading it with duties, and forcing ourselves into impolitic regulations.”¹⁰

By 1792 the divisions had hardened to the point that a newspaper duel of polemics occurred between essays appearing in the Hamilton-backed *Gazette of the United States*, and the Jefferson and Madison-created *National Gazette*. The French Revolution, and the outbreak of war in Europe, inflamed partisan divisions in America to a fever pitch, with Fed-

9. Alexander Hamilton, “Report on Manufactures,” in Samuel McKee Jr., ed., *Papers on Public Credit, Commerce, and Finance, by Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 70, 135–36.

10. “Observations on the present state of affairs . . .,” *American Museum* (August 1792), 108–9.

eralists seeing their Republican adversaries as incipient Jacobins, and Republicans viewing the Federalist administration as toadies of the British. Hamilton stepped into the fray with gusto, writing tracts defending abrogation of the treaty with France, calling for the suppression of whiskey tax rebels, and arguing that the deeply unpopular treaty with Britain negotiated by John Jay was in fact the best deal which prudence allowed. Hamilton retired from office at the start of 1795, but continued to be at the center of the polemical warfare that grew increasingly shrill in the last years of the eighteenth century. He was by far the most prolific pamphleteer of all the Founding Fathers. Unfortunately for his political career, he employed his pen in the last years of Adams's presidency in splenetic attacks on the leader of his party. The Republicans won victory in the presidential election of 1800, but produced a tie between Jefferson and Burr which threw the election into the House of Representatives. Hamilton now turned his venom on Burr, whom he reviled in a letter-writing campaign to House members as an unscrupulous, dangerous Catiline. Jefferson won. It was Hamilton's last service to the republic. In 1804, the bad blood between the two stirred mysteriously again, and Burr shot him dead in a duel in New Jersey.