

HIST 133J: Creation of the American Politician  
Professor Joanne Freeman

By submitting this essay, I attest that it is my own work, completed in accordance with University regulations. –Zoe Rubin

“The Tories of 1812”: Decoding the Language of Political Insults in the Early Republic  
by Zoe Rubin

A month after the United States declared war upon Great Britain on June 18, 1812, a mob descended on the Baltimore office of Alexander Contee Hanson, Jr., a provocative Federalist publisher.<sup>1</sup> For years, Hanson’s *Federal Republican* had denounced the prospect of war with Great Britain as an “unjust” and “disastrous” administration project, and Congress’s unprecedented application of the War Powers Clause had not altered the paper’s editorial line.<sup>2</sup> Republican newspapers, in turn, described Hanson’s controversial claims as “rash experiments on popular patience.”<sup>3</sup> But patience has its limits, and at dusk on July 27, the city’s long-brewing partisan tensions erupted into civil unrest.

Recounting the Baltimore riots, Federalist and Republican presses traded allegations over which party was to blame for the violence. Alluding to the violence of revolutionary Paris, Federalist papers described how the “Robbersperians [sic]” had attempted to assault the fortified house where Hanson and his “friends” had armed themselves in preparation.<sup>4</sup> The *New-York*

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<sup>1</sup> In his noted study of the emergence of newspaper-based politics, Jeffrey L. Pasley characterizes the *Federal Republican* as “the most extreme Federalist newspaper of them all” and deems Hanson “the most aristocratic of the Federalist editors.” See Jeffrey L. Pasley, “*The Tyranny of Printers*”: *Newspaper Politics in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 241.

<sup>2</sup> [Baltimore] *Federal Republican*, June 4, January 23, June 15, June 17, 1812.

<sup>3</sup> While my archival research has only indicated that this article appeared in the *Essex Register* and the *New-Jersey Journal*, the article’s byline suggests that it was first published in the Worcester-based *National Aegis*. [Salem, MA] *Essex Register*, July 15, 1812; *New-Jersey Journal*, July 21, 1812.

<sup>4</sup> “Extract of a Letter dated July 29,” *Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger*, August 3, 1812. In *The Civil War of 1812*, Alan Taylor notes that Hanson’s printing office and press had first been vandalized by a mob a month earlier, leading the Federalist publisher to secure a more fortified location and appeal to his friends for protection. Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 177. References to Maximilien de Robespierre,

*Spectator* framed the Federalist stand as a defense of the First Amendment, stressing that Hanson's supporters assembled "to support the liberty of the press, guaranteed to him by the constitution and laws of his country."<sup>5</sup> The following morning, the city's mayor appealed to the besieged men to seek shelter in the jail, where they would be better protected. His assurances, however, proved empty, as that night the "diabolical clan of political hyaenas" forced the iron doors of the jail open with sledgehammers, murdered one Federalist, and tarred and feathered another. In the ensuing melee, the mob brutally beat Hanson and his friends, torturing some with hot wax and condemning all as "Tories!"<sup>6</sup>

Republican papers charged Hanson with bringing violence upon himself and his allies, including the now-deceased General James Lingan. The *Baltimore Whig* described the crowd as simply "a parcel of boys and a few men..." who had been provoked and threatened by the "traitors" within the house.<sup>7</sup> Understandably, then, this "*unarmed* (and *then* inoffensive) populace" resolved to seek revenge on "the tory garrison."<sup>8</sup> Even as indignant Federalists claimed casualty counts in the high twenties, allegations which would later be proven false, the Republican writers described only how the "Tories" had supposedly killed one member of the crowd and mortally wounded several others.<sup>9</sup> The *Virginia Argus* stressed the unlawful actions of Hanson and Jacob Wagner, his coeditor, and blamed the *Federalist Republican* supporters for all wrongs committed. "The Rioters in the House at Baltimore were as much a mob as the populace," stressed one correspondent. "There is no doubt that every man of them was subject to

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the radical Jacobin leader, appeared frequently in the *Federal Republican's* attacks on the Republican leaders. See Pasley, "*The Tyranny of the Printers*," 242.

<sup>5</sup> "From the Spirit of Seventy-Six. Baltimore Mob," *New-York Spectator*, August 5, 1812.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "From the Baltimore Whig, of the 28th July," *Rhode-Island Republican*, August 6, 1812.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

trial for murder on the first degree.”<sup>10</sup> In the resulting trial, the jury acquitted all but one of the Republican rioters. As one jury member reasoned, “the affray originated with them Tories... they all ought to have been killed.”<sup>11</sup>

Although the ferocity of the Baltimore mob was extraordinary even in the charged political climate of the War of the 1812, the language first employed by the Republican rioters and later by Republican commentators was not. Before and during the War of 1812, Republican newspaper writers, toasters, and letter-writers alike frequently labeled their Federalist foes as “Tories,” a charge laden with damning historical implications. Although the political insult had first arisen in the 1790s, its usage increased dramatically at the outset of America’s first declared war. Historians studying the evolution of partisanship during this period have acknowledged this trend, but none have examined it in considerable depth.<sup>12</sup> Why did the “Tory” charge have such particular power at this moment?<sup>13</sup> What did it mean, and how was it employed? And what does its popular usage suggest about the nature of partisanship during this era?

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<sup>10</sup> “To the People of Charlotte Prince Edward Cumberland and Buckingham,” *Virginia Argus*, August 6, 1812.

<sup>11</sup> Committee of Grievances and Courts of Justice of the House of Delegates of Maryland, *On the Subject of the Recent Mobs and Riots in the City of Baltimore, Together with the Depositions Taken Before the Committee* (Annapolis: Jonas Green, 1813), 101.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Onuf briefly examines Thomas Jefferson’s specific interest in provoking a new “Tory” diaspora in 1812, and Burton Spivak has traced the evolution of Jefferson’s ideas of “Tory Federalism” during the Embargo Crisis of 1807-1809. See Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire* (Charlottesville, V.A.: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 121-129; Burton Spivak, *Jefferson’s English Crisis: Commerce, Embargo, and the Republican Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1979). No study exists tracing the “Tory” charge in newspaper culture or examining its meaning and purpose to politicians other than Jefferson.

<sup>13</sup> Historians of early national America have found themselves at odds with one another over whether the War of 1812 would best be characterized as America’s second war of independence or the country’s first civil war, but few deny the existential nature of the conflict. For more traditional histories of the conflict alleging the former, see Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States, 1805- 1812*. (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 1961); John K. Mahon, *The War of 1812* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1972). J.C.A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983) is an especially meticulous treatment of the subject. Alan Taylor’s *The Civil War of 1812* provides a refreshing counterargument, one that stresses the recent and incomplete nature of national divides on the U.S.-Canada border and the deep-rooted antiwar sentiments that nearly brought New Englanders to the point of secession. See Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indians Allies* (Vintage Books: New York, 2010).

By 1812, the word “Tory” already had a long and nuanced history as a tool for political abuse. The Oxford English Dictionary dates the earliest usage of “Tory” to approximately 1646, tracing the term to the Irish *tóraidhe*, *-aighe*, meaning “pursuer,” and the Scottish Gaelic *tòrachd*, which meant, “pursuing with hostile intent.”<sup>14</sup> During the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, English settlers in Ireland first used it to describe the dispossessed Irish outlaws, mainly Papists and Royalists, who survived through plunder and banditry. The label “Tory” then acquired a political meaning as an insult for supporters of King James II, a Roman Catholic, during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century restoration of the English monarchy. As these supporters coalesced into a nascent political party championing the need to uphold established authority, the term “Tory” came to define its members. Since those loyal to the British monarchy during war for independence held conservative views analogous to those of British Tories, supporters of the Revolution referred to them derogatorily as American “Tories.”

Narrowly defined, then, the contemporary use of references to “Tories” and “Toryism” during the War of 1812 alluded to the Revolutionary-war era meaning of the terms.<sup>15</sup> But like its earlier forms, the contemporary word “Tory” was more than a mere descriptor. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a *New York Times* reviewer noted the deep fear conveyed by the term’s usage during the struggle for independence, likening the appellation to “an imputation that comprised within itself whatever was most terrible in proportion as it was vague and undefined.”<sup>16</sup> To use the word “Tory” in the early republic was to conjure up emotional associations of the terror and trauma

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<sup>14</sup> *Oxford English Dictionaries*, s.v. “Tory,” accessed December 10, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/203716?rskey=OUP8Yo&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>.

<sup>15</sup> “The Unanimous Address of All the Federalists, Who Met At the Late Session of the Legislature of Maryland, To Their Constituents,” *Alexandria Gazette*, July 22, 1812.

<sup>16</sup> “New Books.: Biographical Sketches of Loyalist of the American Revolution, with an Historical Essay. By Lorenzo Sabin. In two volumes, Boston: Little, Brown & Co.,” *The New York Times*, August 31, 1864, accessed online at <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/08/31/news/new-books-biographical-sketches-loyalists-american-revolution-with-historical.html>.

involved in the struggle for independence. And in an age when American politicians were still struggling to define the parameters of lawful political dissent, labeling the opposition as “Tory,” a term loaded with damning insinuations of disloyalty and monarchism, had a powerful condemnatory effect.

Far more than mere political insults, wartime allegations of “Tory” Federalism could connote morally treasonous behavior, factional self-interest, and ideological treachery. In broad strokes, Republicans, and to a lesser extent former Federalists, defined “Tories” in three specific, albeit sometimes overlapping, ways. Some commentators employed the term as a label for supposedly subversive Federalists, insinuating that the Federalists’ social organizing, and particularly the emergence of the Washington Benevolent Societies, could undermine an already imperiled government. Many defined “Toryism” as the existence of an illegitimate opposition in general and employed the charge against the Federalist movement as a whole. Others interpreted the term to mean Anglophile extremists, who treasonously harbored separatist and anti-revolutionary sentiments.

Tracing the different meanings and purposes associated with the “Tory” charge reveals deep underlying fears about the growing threat of internal political subversion, the rise of partisan interests, and the persistent existence of extreme monarchist thought in the early republic. By understanding the prevalence and potency of these charges, we can better understand the fluidity of American political identities during these years and the founders’ continued aversion to the increasing growth of partisan institutions. Men like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison had never envisioned the permanent existence of organized political parties; early Republican leaders refused to accept the legitimacy of the Federalist cause, while believing

their own to be a temporary necessity.<sup>17</sup> Once all vestiges of monarchist sympathies had been suppressed, the Republican Party's purpose would be fulfilled. Leveling various charges of "Toryism" against the Federalists, then, served as a means for leading Republicans and former Federalists alike to isolate what they perceived to be an illegitimate opposition, subdue its followers, and permanently degrade its leadership.

#### "Washingtonians in Profession and Tories in Practice": Denunciations of the Washington Benevolent Societies<sup>18</sup>

In the months leading up to and following the June 18<sup>th</sup> declaration of war, the Republicans frequently directed accusations of "Toryism" against the Washington Benevolent Societies, fledgling Federalist associations established in part to effect democratic change in the coming slate of elections. These charges implied that the Federalists' social organizing masked a subversive and shadowy intent; Republican writers painted the societies as potential conspiracies to enlist unassuming Federalist party members and even some Republicans under a separatist banner. Examining the language and implications of these allegations sheds light on early Americans' intense feelings of insecurity as the conflict approached and their genuine concern about the potential of a disloyal opposition to undermine the nascent republic.<sup>19</sup>

After the war broke out, Federalist leaders initially urged their party members to be cautious when voicing dissent for the Madison administration's bellicose policies.<sup>20</sup> They insisted that the impressment of American sailors did not amount to a just cause for war against Great Britain. Rather, impressment was a defensive gesture by Great Britain in response to the

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<sup>17</sup> Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 298.

<sup>18</sup> "Celebration of the Fourth of July," [Goshen, NY] *Orange County Gazette*, July 13, 1813.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the political mentality of the founders' generation and Republicans' enduring fears of Federalist domestic antagonism, see Lawrence A. Peskin, "Conspiratorial Anglophobia and the War of 1812," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 3 (December 1, 2011), 647–69; Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis*, 215.

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Delbert Cress, "'Cool and Serious Reflection': Federalist Attitudes Toward War in 1812," *Journal of the Early Republic* 7, no. 2 (July 1, 1987), 139.

Napoleonic wars, a policy that the Madison administration lacked the capability to influence. Since America's national honor was not in peril, the consequent war would be inherently offensive in nature and thus illegitimate, as honorable nations pursued war solely as a means of self-defense.<sup>21</sup> Such a futile course of action would only provoke economic losses, social chaos, and ultimately anarchy.<sup>22</sup> Like the Jeffersonian Republicans before them, the Federalists assumed that peaceful revolution through electoral change was inevitable. Yet, having witnessed firsthand the effectiveness of the Republicans' political mobilization in the elections of 1800, the Federalists now tentatively began to emulate their rivals' model of partisan organization by establishing social groups of their own, such as the Washington Benevolent Societies.<sup>23</sup>

Modeled after the Democratic-Republican clubs of the 1790s, the Washington Benevolent Societies were voluntary associations, ostensibly founded to promote ideals of dignified republicanism and civic virtue among the nation's youth.<sup>24</sup> Yet the societies' professed emphasis on character building and charitable work obscured their true purpose, to expand the Federalist Party's grassroots appeal and improve its electoral prospects. Open to men from all classes of society, the first Washington Benevolent Society was founded in New York in 1808.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>22</sup> Cress, "Cool and Serious Reflection," 124-126.

<sup>23</sup> Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 256.

<sup>24</sup> Cress, "Cool and Serious Reflection," 144.

<sup>25</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 116. Some historians, such as Jeffrey J. Malanson, date the creation of the first Washington Benevolent Society in New York to 1809, but most cite the correct year as 1808. The choice of an appropriate date comes down to a debate over what constitutes the watershed moment in the formation of a social group. As the existence of the societies' records and various medals indicates, a group of New York Federalists decided to establish a voluntary association in early 1808. That year, they began making the necessary financial arrangements and political connections to launch the organization, which held its first public meeting the following year. See Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism*, 115-116; Richard Buel, Jr., *America on the Brink: How the Political Struggle Over the War of 1812 Almost Destroyed the Young Republic* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 9; Jeffrey J. Malanson, "If I Had It in His Hand-writing I would Burn It": Federalists and the Authorship Controversy over George Washington's Farewell Address, 1808-1859," *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, No. 2 (2014), 224; John P. Kaminski, "Washington Benevolent Society," in *The Encyclopedia of New York State*, ed. Peter R. Eisenstadt and Laura-Eve Moss (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 1660.

By 1812, similar political groups had sprung up in eleven states, including New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maryland, and Ohio.<sup>26</sup> Although local traditions varied, most societies orchestrated elaborate public spectacles, such as celebrations for the Fourth of July and George Washington's birthday, portraying contemporary Federalists as the direct political heirs to the first president's legacy. In his authoritative study on Federalism, David Hackett Fischer has argued that these associations, like the numerous other kinds of free associations that arose during this period, served to cultivate a sense of communal purpose within an American society increasingly pulled apart by the forces of individualism.<sup>27</sup> Beyond providing symbolic support for the Federalist cause, the Washington Benevolent Societies directly funded Federalist county leaders and publishers, enabling them to circulate Federalist speeches and toasts more widely.<sup>28</sup> And where the Federalists' local presence was lacking, the societies acted as a direct extension of the party apparatus, nominating Federalist candidates and directly campaigning on their behalf.<sup>29</sup>

Republicans, however, steadfastly portrayed the Washington Benevolent Societies as seditious schemes to indoctrinate unsuspecting youth, including honorable Federalists and Republicans, into the "Tory" fold. The Republican presses frequently stressed the "old Tory" origins of the Washington Benevolent Society. Warning that no "friends" of the Madison administration had been admitted to the societies, the *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette* observed, "It is a fact, that persons who were Tories in the revolution, who then wished Washington hanged, are not only admitted, but take the lead in these Societies."<sup>30</sup> The New York

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<sup>26</sup> Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism*, 116. Pasley notes that Hanson was instrumental in the establishment of the Washington Benevolent Society of Maryland. See Pasley, "*The Tyranny of Printers*," 243.

<sup>27</sup> Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism*, 128. Fischer also argues that the Societies served to assuage concerns about the elitism of Federalist cause by uniting the middle and upper classes in a shared social project.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>30</sup> "Washington Benevolent Societies," *New-Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, April 7, 1812.



group's founding president, the *Essex Register* claimed, had been "the agent of the Jersey prison ship," while the *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette* traced the Societies' leadership back to "the British minister" in Whitehall.<sup>31</sup> *Patriot* writers and political elites, such as Benjamin Waterhouse, a leading Massachusetts physician, framed the groups as "Jacobinic Clubs," employing an accusation first marshaled by the Federalists against the Jeffersonians' own grassroots political organizations in the 1790s.<sup>32</sup> Like the radical French demagogues, they suggested, the Societies aimed to disaffect the populace from their government, undermine the rule of law, and, ultimately, provoke disunion.<sup>33</sup> If allowed to persist, these social groups would "destroy that respect for the government which all ought to possess."<sup>34</sup>

By castigating the Washington Benevolent Societies as the schemes of Tories bent on siphoning off honest Federalists, and perhaps even Republicans, Republican commentators suggested that oppositional social groups would serve only to foster discontent, and even disloyalty. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson dated February 17, 1813, Waterhouse warned, "In my view of our domestic affairs, I see nothing so alarming, as our innumerable Washington Benevolent Societies."<sup>35</sup> Though these social groups might purport to school future voters in republican virtue, he feared that they could also serve to mobilize disaffected youth on behalf of the British crown. Waterhouse wondered whether the white roses they wore as a "badge of

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<sup>31</sup> *Essex Register*, May 19, 1813; *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, May 12, 1812. By "British minister," the newspaper was likely referring to the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Castlereagh. The author noted that, though the "head and shoulders" of the Societies were "among the British minister," their control was delegated to the "British envoys... when in this country." This language suggested that the Societies were a strategic object of British imperial policy, implemented by lower-level representatives of the Crown in U.S.

<sup>32</sup> "Benjamin Waterhouse to Thomas Jefferson," February 17, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008–2015).

<sup>33</sup> "Political—For the N.H. Patriot," *New-Hampshire Patriot*, May 12, 1812.

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

<sup>35</sup> "Benjamin Waterhouse to Thomas Jefferson," February 17, 1813.

distinction” might honor England and the Duke of York, as such flowers were his symbol.<sup>36</sup> While lacking evidence to ground his claims, Waterhouse speculated that the societies’ range might extend even to Canada. If proven, this allegation would imply a treasonous intent: the Societies’ founding purpose, then, would have been not to strengthen the cause of American nationalism, but to transcend the national structure entirely. Waterhouse’s inability to ascertain the geographic limits of the societies’ reach spoke to a seemingly dangerous reality: in times of war, political organizing outside the formal confines of the democratic process could neither be monitored nor mapped, and administration officials would have very little ability to determine the true intent of grassroots partisan movements. Adopting the pseudonym “a Shepard,” he appealed to the public in Boston’s *Independent Chronicle* to recognize their true designs: “political division, wor[l]dly honors, and a wor[l]dly despotism... the dissolution of the Union and the introduction of a British influence.”<sup>37</sup>

Even as Daniel Webster assured the Washington Benevolent Society at Portsmouth, New Hampshire that the Federalist Party, if united, could affect lawful political change “by the exercise of our Constitutional right of suffrage,” Republican opponents employed accusations of Tory-ism to depict their efforts as tantamount to treason. Repeatedly, Waterhouse referred to the Societies’ recruitment efforts as the “enlistment” of boys who might soon become soldiers, and noted with concern the “very large sum of money” raised by the organizations. With Republican newspapers regularly alleging that the Federalists had failed to bear their fair share for the material and human costs of the ongoing war effort, Waterhouse’s observations would suggest that their allegiances lay not with the American cause but with a distinctly separate Federalist

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<sup>36</sup> Waterhouse made the same claim in his *Independent Chronicle* article. See “Shepherd” [Benjamin Waterhouse], [Boston] *Independent Chronicle*, April 29, 1813. Cited in “Benjamin Waterhouse to Thomas Jefferson,” May 1, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*.

<sup>37</sup> “Shepherd” [Benjamin Waterhouse], [Boston] *Independent Chronicle*, April 29, 1813.

cause. Whether these Federalists' loyalties would translate into active alignment with the British cause remained the subject of rife speculation. Yet given the high emotions of wartime political culture, support for any cause other than the national war effort was grounds for suspicion. Convinced that the societies posed a very real threat to the republic, Waterhouse and his fellow Republicans employed the term "Tory" to frame the Federalists' grassroots politicking as treasonous behavior and thereby isolate the opposition's nascent social groups.

"Old Tories of 76 and young Tories of 1812": The Federalists as an Illegitimate Opposition<sup>38</sup>

Many Republican commentators employed the "Tory" charge to cast the Federalist Party as an illegitimate opposition. The imputation served to highlight the Federalist leaders' supposed self-interest. So extreme was this self-interest, the logic went, that these "Old Tories" had forsaken their ideological principles and remained in a new republic they vehemently opposed primarily to preserve their status and property. In leveling charges of "Toryism" against the Federalists, Republicans painted them as a faction consumed by its own private interests and, consequently, an intrinsic danger to their vision of a republic founded upon the ideal of public virtue.<sup>39</sup> Denunciations of "Toryism" would serve to isolate Federalist leaders and shame their followers into forsaking a disloyal and degenerate party.

Before the War of 1812 broke out and in the months that followed, Republican writers employed a variety of rhetorical strategies to draw parallels between the contemporary Federalists' dissent and the Revolutionary War-era loyalists' opposition to the cause of independence. Whereas they appear to have shared a common fear that the Washington Benevolent Societies were a scheme hatched by subversive agents of the British crown, they

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<sup>38</sup> "Celebration of the Fourth of July," [Goshen, NY] *Orange County Gazette*, July 13, 1813.

<sup>39</sup> Wood, *The Radicalism of the Republican Revolution*, 104.

disagreed about how to portray the Federalists as a whole. Considerable debate existed over whether a minority of “Tory-like” Federalists simply held views antithetical to republican principles or if party leaders themselves were actively working to undermine republican government. Some writers used the phrase “Tories” loosely to connote all Federalists, past and present. Others refrained from explicitly labeling the Federalists as “Tories” but stressed ideological and behavioral similarities between the two groups. Many Republican papers described the existence of a distinct “Tory” element within the broader Federalist Party, a holdover from the revolutionary period. But even those who wrote of a “Tory” faction disagreed over what influence this constituent group had on the larger party. Were they a mere subset of the Federalists, or a critical mass steering the once-honorable party into a pernicious embrace with the British crown?

Following the war for independence, Republicans noted, the Federalist Party had incorporated the “Tories” that remained in the U.S. into its fold.<sup>40</sup> According to the *Weekly Aurora*, the Federalists’ attachment to Great Britain stemmed not only from ideological similarities but also from the literal presence of “[party-members] who fought against American independence, and who adhered to the British throughout the revolution.”<sup>41</sup> Extending this line of reasoning, some Republicans feared that the influence of this Tory element had a fatal effect on the party as a whole, portraying the former loyalists as a cancer that had consumed Federalism from within.<sup>42</sup> Thomas Jefferson articulated this sentiment in private correspondence, asserting that a minority of Federalist leaders sought to establish monarchical state governments,

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<sup>40</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to John Adams,” June 27, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

<sup>41</sup> “Short Hints for Long Heads,” [Philadelphia] *Weekly Aurora*, February 26, 1811.

<sup>42</sup> “For the Essex Register,” [Salem, MA] *Essex Register*, February 12, 1812

“from whence the other states may gangrene by degree.”<sup>43</sup> A *National Aegis* feature entitled “What is Federalism?” described “the old Tories” as a “nest of vermin” which, like parasites, “attached themselves to federalism.” With time, the article explained, the former loyalists assumed positions of leadership, and their hold over the party tightened. The account concluded on a bleak note, “A little leaven thus leavened the whole lump. This active poison corrupted the mass of *federalism*.”<sup>44</sup> The author’s tone of finality suggested that this moral decline was permanent; any opportunity to reverse the party’s ideological trajectory had long since passed.

By claiming that the “old Tories” had led the Federalist movement astray, Republican critics insinuated that factional self-interest, not national interest, motivated the party’s opposition to the War of 1812. If the “old Tories” and other classes of men opposed to independence had elected to support the Federalist cause, the *Daily Intelligencer* explained, it was only because by strengthening the federal government they might in turn recover their war-related debts.<sup>45</sup> Under the peace settlement of 1783, the loyalists gained the right to sue for their forfeited property in American courts, yet, in practice, the fledgling nation’s weak rule of law made navigating the claims process nearly impossible. The creation of a strong federal government would enable these individuals to regain their financial standing, as well as attain

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<sup>43</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to John Melish,” January 13, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*. In his analysis of Jefferson’s hatred of New England, noted Jefferson scholar Peter Onuf references Jefferson’s use of words like “gangrene” to describe the relationship between the Federalist leaders and the body politic. Such language, he suggests, reflected Jefferson’s belief that the Federalists posed an existential risk to the union, albeit one that could be localized and extracted through “radical surgery,” namely a civil war against Massachusetts. See Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire*, 121-129.

<sup>44</sup> “From the National Aegis. What is Federalism?” [Hartford, CT] *American Mercury*, May 26, 1813. Similar baking metaphors appeared in other papers over the course of the war. For instance, the *Daily Intelligencer* wrote, “At the very onset of our present government were mingled among its advocates a numerous class of the most deadly enemies of freedom... Thus Federalism, *from its very origin*, became corrupted with a foul leaven and unnatural mixture, and contained in its heart the poison that was afterwards to work the sad and ruinous effects of which we are now daily the witness.” See “From the New York Plebeian,” [Washington, DC] *Daily National Intelligencer*, May 12, 1814.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

positions of prominence akin to those they had held prior to the revolution.<sup>46</sup> Implicit in this popular characterization of the Federalist Party was the suggestion that private interests, rather than republican values, formed the foundation for Federalist thought.

To impute the Federalists' opposition to private interest was to render their actions inimical to the republican experiment. As Gordon Wood has eloquently argued, the American revolutionaries regarded Great Britain as decadent, in large part because its leaders had allowed private interests to triumph over the commonweal.<sup>47</sup> By contrast, they believed themselves to be constructing a society in which the pursuit of public good would transcend personal concerns. During the heated debate over the ratification of the Constitution in 1787, James Madison stressed that his proposed form of republican governance would serve as a bulwark against the growth of factions hostile to the general welfare. He defined factions primarily in terms of self-interest, writing in the widely influential *Federalist No. 10*, "By faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adversed to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community."<sup>48</sup> Entitled "The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection," Madison's essay noted that historical forms of popular governments had often succumbed to the forces of factionalism and private-mindedness. The future president hoped that the diffusion of leadership over a vast American electorate meant that the nascent union would be well-protected from "the diseases most incident to republican government."<sup>49</sup> But more than three decades after the adoption of the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 175.

<sup>48</sup> James Madison, "Federalist No. 10," The Federalist Papers, Library of Congress, accessed online at [http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed\\_10.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_10.html). Madison's essay originally appeared in the *New York Packet* on Friday, November 23, 1787 as a piece entitled "The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection."

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Constitution, allegations that the Federalist opposition constituted a self-interested faction would have evoked genuine fears about the republic's natural tendency, irrespective of its size, to fall victim to local prejudices, mutual animosities, and, thus, perpetual instability.

Defining the Federalists as a self-interest faction analogous to the "Tories" of yesteryear enabled Republican critics to contrast the opposition not merely with their own party, but with the nation itself. Writing to a prominent Republican editor, William Duane, former president Thomas Jefferson emphasized the need for national unity in the face of imminent war with Great Britain. In such circumstances, he explained, to characterize Republicanism as a mere political party would be "false and degrading."<sup>50</sup> Rather, the Republicans represent "the *nation*," opposed by "a faction, weak in numbers, but powerful and profuse in the command of money, and backed by a nation, powerful also and profuse in the use of the same means."<sup>51</sup> In drawing this far-reaching juxtaposition, Jefferson expressed his belief that the Federalist-Republican split was about far more than simply whether the U.S. should favor Great Britain or France in her political leanings. Rather, the outbreak of war with Great Britain represented a watershed moment, a time for former Federalists to disavow themselves of their former party ties and support the national cause. Jefferson's blunt views seeped into the pages of Duane's influential *Philadelphia Aurora*, which boasted one of the largest circulations in the country. As the war progressed, the *Aurora* stressed that "opposition of the federalists has always been base and groundless."<sup>52</sup> Likening the Federalist leaders to "Tories," the paper extolled those "democrats" and Federalist party members who still believed that the Federalist leaders' motives were honest to see them for their

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<sup>50</sup> "Thomas Jefferson to William Duane," March 28, 1811, in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes*, Federal edition, collected and edited by Paul Leicester Ford, accessed online at [http://www.loc.gov/resource/mtj1.045\\_0220\\_0223](http://www.loc.gov/resource/mtj1.045_0220_0223).

<sup>51</sup> "Thomas Jefferson to William Duane," March 28, 1811.

<sup>52</sup> "Domestic Manufactures," [Philadelphia] *Weekly Aurora*, January 4, 1814.

true nature.<sup>53</sup> Both when in power and now in opposition, Duane's paper suggested, the Federalists actively sought to destroy the nation's republican institutions and undermine its survival. Other Republican newspapers echoed this charge, implying that any remaining Americans willing to vouch for the Federalists had been hoodwinked. The *Baltimore Patriot* summarized this growing consensus: "Federalism was the watch-word which operated as the charm to destroy all the vital republican principles of our constitution."<sup>54</sup>

It is important to note that Republican writers applied the appellation "Tories" liberally in the early years of the war of 1812. While some used the term literally to suggest that the Federalist Party had been reduced to a Tory faction, others merely voiced fears about the parallels between the opposition's language and that of the loyalists in 1776. Yet regardless of whether columnists explicitly defined the Federalists as "Tories," or simply compared their actions to the notorious pro-British colonists, the very suggestion that the two parties could be put in conversation with one another was incriminating enough. Hanson's *Federal Republican* bemoaned leading Republican politicians' purposeful ambiguity in their public references to contemporary "Tories." Singling out a Maryland state senator, the paper described how one Nathaniel Williams unequivocally used the term "tories" in his toasts to mean "the federalists generally, or at least the *principle* men of them." Yet, the *Federal Republican* suspected that "if every federalist in the union should say to him—'Sir, did you mean to include me?' He would answer No, as he has done—'No, I mean no federalist here.'"<sup>55</sup> By imputing "Toryism" to the Federalist movement but refraining from calling the Federalists "Tories" to their faces, the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> "On the Abuse of Federalism," *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, August 18, 1813.

<sup>55</sup> *Federal Republican, and Commercial Gazette*, June 28, 1813. Following the Baltimore riots in the summer of 1812, Hanson relocated the Federalist paper to Georgetown, D.C., where it would continue to be printed until December 24, 1813. See "About Federal Republican & commercial gazette. (Baltimore, Md.) 1808-1813," *Chronicling America*, Library of Congress, accessed on December 10, 2015, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016002>.



Republicans were playing a wily game.<sup>56</sup> Insulting their opponents in the press rather than in person allowed the Republicans to color public perceptions and reframe popular discourse while avoiding the risky appearance of engaging in character assassination.

As the *Baltimore American* solemnly concluded, “When war is declared, there are but two parties, *Citizen Soldiers* and *Enemies*—*Americans* and *Tories*.”<sup>57</sup> Persistent allegiance to a partisan opposition had no place in the new political order of 1812. According to the Salem-based *Essex Register*, any political opposition to the war would only further protract the conflict. Denouncing all Federalists as a self-interested “Tory” faction would shame honor-bound Federalists into abandoning any differences of opinion and supporting the national cause: “Those who oppose their country in this hour of danger, must here after be stigmatized with the odious appellation of its enemies in the struggle for independence, *Tories*.”<sup>58</sup> But by suggesting that the Federalist Party had no right to oppose the national administration in times of war, Republican slanderers implicitly raised thorny questions about the judiciousness of a permanent political opposition once America’s founding era had elapsed.

“Moderation Can Never Reclaim Them”: The Founders’ Fears of the Federalists’ Extremism<sup>59</sup>

In their personal correspondences, elite politicians like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams employed terms like “Tories,” “Tory Federalists,” and “Tory Junto,” to characterize and condemn various Federalist leaders as extremists, nursing ideologically treacherous views. Whereas Jefferson was most concerned that the certain ultraconservative Federalist leaders harbored monarchist and separatist sentiments, Adams and other former Federalists worried

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<sup>56</sup> “From the Boston (Federal) Gazette, Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>,” *Burlington Gazette*, October 21, 1814.

<sup>57</sup> *Baltimore American*, July 16, 1812.

<sup>58</sup> “For the Register,” [Salem, MA] *Essex Register*, May 15, 1813.

<sup>59</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to Henry Dearborn,” August 14, 1811, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

about a more immediate and personal threat. They feared that these extremists had perverted the Federalist cause, and by extension, damaged the reputations of all those who once identified with that party. Jefferson's use of the "Tory" charge reflected his desire to stamp out unnatural monarchist thought by force if necessary. By contrast, Adams and his peers employed allegations of "Tory Federalism" in an effort to portray these extreme Federalists as anti-revolutionaries and pretenders to the patriotic Federalist name, and ensure the purity of their own political reputations in the process.

Thomas Jefferson's frequent invocation of the term "Tories" to describe the Federalist opposition provides insight into the third president's deep ambivalence about the existence of a permanent opposition in American politics, as well as his growing agitation about monarchial extremism within the Federalist camp. As early as the 1790s, Jefferson had warned of the threat of a monarchist conspiracy organized under the guise of Federalism, conveying his fears in the editorial pieces of Philip Freneau's *National Gazette*.<sup>60</sup> His writings during this period reveal an already staunch belief in what he would later articulate as the difference between the Federalist Party and "the *people* who call themselves federalists."<sup>61</sup> He viewed his assumption of the presidency in 1801 as an opportunity to finally abolish the distinction of "Republican & federalist," or if that could not be done, replace the distinction with the more unequivocal "republican & monarchist." Stressing that the honorable Federalists represented a subset of republicanism, Jefferson emphasized that they had but temporarily veered off their ideological course, "decoyed into the net of the Monarchists by the XYZ contrivance."<sup>62</sup> In a revealing letter

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<sup>60</sup> John Lauritz Larson, "Jefferson's Union and the Problem of Internal Improvements," in *Jefferson's Legacies*, ed. Peter S. Onuf (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 351.

<sup>61</sup> Larson, *Jefferson's Legacies*, 351-355; Burton Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis*, 212-218. Jefferson would return to this framing device following the outbreak of the War of 1812. See "Thomas Jefferson to John Melish," January 13, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

<sup>62</sup> "Thomas Jefferson to Thomas McKean," July 24, 1801, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*. Cited in Larson, 355.

to leading naturalist and botanist Benjamin Smith Barton, he wrote, “The body of the nation, even that part which French excesses forced over to the Federal side, will rejoin the republicans, leaving only those who were pure monarchists, and who will be too few to form a sect.”<sup>63</sup> Once politically isolated, the remaining Federalist leaders would lack the capacity to influence American governance.

Jefferson understood this distinction between monarchists and republicans to be natural, contrasting it with the artificial lines separating Republicans from Federalists. Analogous to the Whig-Tory division now well-established in Great Britain, the monarchist-republican divide reflected fundamental differences of individual makeup and temperament: the one inclined toward vesting power in the people, the other in an authority purposely removed from the people, such as the British crown.<sup>64</sup> Comparable dividing lines, Jefferson argued in his retirement, could be found in every society.<sup>65</sup> John Adams felt that these distinctions, be they between Whigs and Tories or Federalists and Republicans, were permanent, inherent as they were human nature.<sup>66</sup> But by the time the War of 1812 came to a close, Jefferson appears to have disagreed.<sup>67</sup> In a letter to Adams, he contended that, amid revolution, “the distinctions of whig & tory will disappear like chaff on a troubled ocean.”<sup>68</sup> That Jefferson could both believe such distinctions to be natural, yet simultaneously envision an America in which they no longer existed speaks to the

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<sup>63</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Smith Barton,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*. February 14, 1801.

<sup>64</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to John Adams,” June 27, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*. Burton Spivak has analyzed Jefferson’s interpretation of the natural distinction between political affiliations during his first term. He argues that this logic helps to account for Jefferson’s frequent descriptions of the Federalists as sickly and “ill beyond recall.” See Spivak, *Jefferson’s English Crisis*, 212-15.

<sup>65</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis de Lafayette,” November 4, 1823, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

<sup>66</sup> “John Adams to Thomas Jefferson,” December 16, 1816, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

<sup>67</sup> A decade later, Jefferson had backed off of this radical line of thought, believing that the division between whig and tory was preferable to any other, more dangerous division of society that would surely arise in its absence. See “Thomas Jefferson to William Short, Esq.,” January 8, 1825, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

<sup>68</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to John Adams,” November 25, 1816, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

depth of his belief in the republic's exceptional character. The nascent nation alone possessed the capability for republican self-government; contemporary monarchies might learn from America's example but the experience of the French Revolution suggested that decades, or even centuries, would likely pass before less developed polities could put these political lessons into practice.<sup>69</sup>

Jefferson had ceased referencing the supposed monarchist threat in his correspondences for the remainder of his administration, but he returned to the theme in his retirement, contrasting the "Monarchists of our country" in New England with "the solid mass of republicanism to the South & West."<sup>70</sup> On the eve of war, he began to describe the so-called Essex Junto, a group of Anglophile Federalists perceived by many politicians to be the staunchest supporters of monarchism and separatism, as a "Tory" faction. He wrote to General Henry Dearborn of his "disquietude" concerning "the spirit indeed which manifests itself among the tories of your quarter... your Essex men."<sup>71</sup> When war finally broke out in 1812, he was quick to characterize this subset of the Federalists as monarchists, who "[bore] deadly hatred to their republican fellow citizens" and "will appear to be exactly the tories of the last war."<sup>72</sup> Subsequent writings drew

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<sup>69</sup> For an analysis of the role of exceptionalist thought in American identity formation and Jefferson's role in such discourse, see Peter S. Onuf, "American Exceptionalism and National Identity," *American Political Thought* 1, No. 1 (Spring 2012), 77-100. On Jefferson's views about the American people's natural Republicanism, see Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis*, 216.

<sup>70</sup> "Thomas Jefferson to Elijah Griffiths," May 28, 1809, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*. None of Jefferson's published correspondences in the Rotunda American Founding Era Collection make reference to the terms "monarchist" or "monocrat" between January 1, 1802 and May 28, 1809.

<sup>71</sup> "Thomas Jefferson to Henry Dearborn," August 14, 1811.

John Adams popularized the term "Essex Junto" in reference to a select group of ultraconservative Massachusetts Federalists that he accused of sabotaging his re-election. Fischer rejects this characterization, arguing that, with the exception of Timothy Pickering, most of the men of the so-called Essex Junto supported Adams' presidency during the 1790s and election of 1800. Rather, he argues "the myth of the Essex Junto" was a convenient, albeit historically inaccurate, means to justify Jeffersonian fears of an "antidemocratic and antinational" conspiracy. The Jeffersonians would then use the phrase "Essex Junto" to describe the most determined strains of Federalist opposition to the 1807 Embargo Act and the War of 1812. See David Hackett Fischer, "The Myth of the Essex Junto," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, No. 2 (Apr. 1964), pp. 191 – 235.

<sup>72</sup> "Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Levré," August 8, 1812, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*; "Thomas Jefferson to James Martin (of New York)," September 20, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

attention to the treacherous opposition of not only the old tories but also “the new school of tories, who array themselves against us, either from their inveterate love of monarchy, or the wish to yoke us again to the British car.”<sup>73</sup> But how to determine the extent of disloyalty among the Federalists and respond in wartime to the danger that they posed remained an unresolved concern.

Jefferson went to great pains to categorize the various schools of thought within the Federalist movement and characterize the nature of the monarchist threat. Drawing a distinction between the Federalist leaders and their followers, he divided the party into three groups in a letter to Scottish mapmaker John Melish: “1. the Essex junto who are Anglomen, Monarchists, & Separatists. 2. The Hamiltonians, who are Anglomen & Monarchists, but not Separatists. 3. the common mass of federalists who are Anglomen, but neither Monarchists nor Separatists.”<sup>74</sup>

Traces of this classification scheme had appeared as early as 1801, when Jefferson wrote a letter to former Secretary of War Henry Knox, outlining his opinion that, while the majority of the Federalists were “real Republicans,” two currents of monarchist thought also existed within the Federalist movement.<sup>75</sup> In that letter, Jefferson differentiated between those who supported monarchist theory alone, and would not dare disturb the nation’s governance, and the “ardent Monarchists,” headed by Alexander Hamilton, a group he would tolerate but never trust. But

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<sup>73</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Romaine,” July 11, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

<sup>74</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to Louis H. Girardin,” December 21, 1814, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*. In Jefferson’s letter to Girardin, he attached his original letter to Melish analyzing the differences between the Federalists in depth and summarized his key points. Nor was Jefferson the only republican commenter to identify three classes of Federalists. Benjamin Rush wrote of “*British* federalists, *tory* federalists and *American* federalists,” juxtaposed with “*french* democrats, *Irish* democrats, & *American* democrats.” With six mutually unintelligible currents of political thought seeking to guide the United States’ course, Rush questioned how President Madison could possibly manage the nation’s affairs. He refrained from explaining just what differentiated “*British* federalists” and “*tory* federalists” but appealed to the “laws of Epidemic diseases” to argue that the American variety had been forced to take on symptoms of the more powerful British and tory strains. See “Benjamin Rush to John Adams,” August 21, 1812, in *The Adams Family Papers*, microfilm edition, 608 reels (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1955), reel 414.

<sup>75</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to Henry Knox,” March 27, 1801, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

Jefferson's 1813 letter to Melish indicated that a new class of zealots had now emerged, more extreme in their monarchial sympathies than even Hamilton's "ardent Monarchists." During peacetime, those who espoused Anglomania and separatism might be monitored and contained. Yet in times of war, their suspect loyalty could evolve into outright neutrality, or even defection to the British cause; either course of action would amount to treason and provoke disunion. Jefferson's schematic revisions suggest a political observer struggling to understand a rapidly changing partisan landscape and fearful that domestic disloyalty could undermine the nation's existential fight against the British. Such a new strain of subversives, Jefferson must have felt, was well deserving of the appellation "Tories" that had conveyed such a terrible yet amorphous threat during the struggle for independence.

Whereas a decade earlier, Jefferson seemed willing to endure the isolated existence of the "ardent Monarchists," his later analysis of the monarchist threat revealed a desired shift toward more radical action. He welcomed their temporary separation from the union, confident that they could not govern the New England states independently for long.<sup>76</sup> Their populations would flee to the security and prosperity of the United States, and their states would soon return, humiliated, to the republican fold.<sup>77</sup> Through a war with New England, the threat of monarchist intrigue would pass for good. According to Peter Onuf, by casting the so-called Essex Federalists as a foreign threat, rather than a domestic concern, Jefferson could reasonably justify waging war against them without violating republican tenets of conciliation and union.<sup>78</sup> In the ensuing long peace, the "Tories" of this war, like "the tories of the last war," would either commit to the

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<sup>76</sup> "Thomas Jefferson to John Melish," January 13, 1813.

<sup>77</sup> "Thomas Jefferson to James Martin (of New York)," September 20, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

<sup>78</sup> Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, 124-125. Following his first inauguration in 1801, Jefferson wrote of his satisfaction that his address had been interpreted as an appeal to "conciliation and union." See "Thomas Jefferson to Henry Knox," March 27, 1801.

American republican project or seek asylum in the British Empire, as their predecessors had done three decades prior.<sup>79</sup> Past American statesmen had neutralized the old tory threat; references to a new strain conveyed the comforting implication that their political heirs could do so once more. More than simply a rhetorical tool to shame the honest majority of those who called themselves Federalists into rejoining the republican cause, Jefferson's likening of the Essex Junto to a "new school of tories" reflected his sincere fear of internal subversion at the outset of the war.

If Jefferson's references to the "Tories" revealed the former president's trepidation about Federalist treacherous ideology and his overwhelming desire to rid the republic of extreme monarchists like the Essex Junto, the rhetoric of former Federalists, such as John Adams, conveyed a different aim: to demonstrate the falsity of such extremists' claim to the Federalist political tradition and thus rehabilitate the reputations of the original Federalists, including their own. Whereas Jefferson's heightened language evinced his desire to purge the present political landscape of "Tories," or extreme monarchists, Adams and his counterparts were preoccupied with the more abstract task of purifying their place in posterity.<sup>80</sup> Any perceived association between the Federalism they espoused in early years of the republic and the contemporary political ideology now disguised under that name could jeopardize their historical legacy. By

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> As of 1809, Adams did not publicly wish the "annihilation" of the Essex Junto. Rather, he hoped that it might be controlled by "an opposite Interest, quite as interested, quite as uncontrollable, quite as dangerous, quite as destructive." The two opposing interests, in turn, would be balanced by a "third Power," presumably an independent executive authority, which he described as "[America's] more comprehensive and universal interest." This "third Power" would be above the competing democratic and aristocratic interest in American society, the "Senates and Counsels and popular Prejudices." See "From John Adams to Boston Patriot," c.a. 1809, in Founders Online, National Archives, last updated September 29, 2015, accessed online at <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-5491>. From *The Adams Papers*, Massachusetts Historical Society. Note that this is an Early Access document and is not authoritative. For a detailed analysis of Adams' ideas about the role of the executive in balancing competing societal elements (not to be confused with formal political parties) in government, see Gordon Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 188-189.

unequivocally labeling the two schools of thought as different, they could then prevent dangerous perceptions of ideological kinship.

Unlike Jefferson, Adams felt that the ideological treachery of the contemporary Federalist Party extended far beyond the so-called “Essex Junto.” In a letter to Waterhouse, Adams stressed that he found the very appellation, “Essex Junto,” to be misleading. Rather, he felt, this mutation of the Federalist movement should be named for what it was: “old Toryism.”<sup>81</sup> Moreover, its geographical limits extended far beyond Essex County, Massachusetts, from where men like George Cabot and Timothy Pickering hailed. He explained, “It is common to every State, City town and Village in the United States. There was not one without a Tory Junto in it, and their Heirs, Executors, Administrators, Sons, Cousins, etc. Compose at this day an Essex Junto in every one of them.” To write a “History of the Essex Junto” would mean to trace the narrative of the “history of the whole American Community for fifty years.” Characterizing the ultraconservative Federalist streak as a product of “old Toryism” conveyed a pointed political message: this brand of ideological treachery was a legacy of colonial- and Revolutionary-era loyalist thought and bore no relation to the patriotic “federal” movement of the 1790s.

Adams first explicitly conveyed this concern about how the “Tory Federalists” might warp posterity’s judgment of former Federalists like himself in a letter to Benjamin Waterhouse of Rhode Island. He implored Waterhouse, who had considered himself a Federalist until 1807, to recognize how association with the most extreme Federalists, or “the British Faction,” might taint their historical standing: “The Tories in Massachusetts, Rhod[e] Island and Connecticut have all Reputations in their Powers[:] Yours, mine, my Son’s and Son in Law’s. [A]nd

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<sup>81</sup> All quotes are from “John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse,” September 17, 1810. Cited in Hackett Fischer, “The Myth of the Essex Junto,” 225.



Washington's too."<sup>82</sup> By attaching their treacherous ideology to the Federalist name, extremist Anglophiles like Timothy Pickering, Stephen Higginson, and George Cabot corrupted the honest, patriotic cause of those before them.<sup>83</sup> The potential imputation of shared monarchist and separatist sentiments could mar how present society and future generations might remember the former Federalists' character and achievements. During the early years of his retirement, Adams' intense concern about his place in history had prompted him to engage in a tireless paper campaign in defense of his own reputation, most notably in a series of letters to the *Boston Patriot*.<sup>84</sup> He now approached the potential reputational damage wrought by the "Tory Junto" with a similar fervor.

What made the problem of the "Tory Junto" so pressing for Adams was its intimate nature. Not one to deny himself credit for his actions, he confessed to Rush that "those who owe me most obligations are the most hostile to me."<sup>85</sup> Adams felt personally responsible for Essex Junto's present influence on the American body politic; they had taken up his views about government in the early years of the republic and benefited from his patronage.<sup>86</sup> His desire to unify the American people had led him to be "the most tender, the most compassionate, the most indulgent to the Tories."<sup>87</sup> In "gratitude," they had provided him only with "Treachery and Perfidy."<sup>88</sup> Despite Adams' lengthy campaign to overcome the false perception that he was a

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<sup>82</sup> "John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse," September 15, 1812, in *The Adams Family Papers*, reel 118.

<sup>83</sup> Adams had singled out Higginson and Cabot, along with Theophilus Parson and Jonathan Jackson in an 1809 letter to the *Boston Patriot* as "the four main Pillars, the four mighty Oligarchs of that [Essex Junto] Faction in Boston." See "From John Adams to Boston Patriot," c.a. 1809.

<sup>84</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 79-80.

<sup>85</sup> "John Adams to Benjamin Rush," December 21, 1812, in *The Adams Family Papers*, reel 121.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* Although he specified only that the Essex Junto had "adopted my Sentiments of Government in 1779 and 1788," Adams was likely referring to his role in the drafting of Massachusetts's state constitution in 1779 and that document's influence on the United States Constitution, which was ratified in 1788. (Adams was abroad serving as minister to Great Britain during the ratification debates over the Constitution but expressed support for its passage.)

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> "John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse," September 15, 1812.

“crypto-monarchist,” these contemporary Federalist leaders’ very existence could undermine his efforts.<sup>89</sup>

By employing the term “Tories” to describe the extremist Federalists, former Federalists like Adams posited themselves in diametric opposition to contemporary Federalists’ mentally treasonous views and protected their historical reputations from the imputation of separatist sympathies.<sup>90</sup> Adams felt that the “whole Body of Tories,” both in North America and overseas, considered themselves “[his] Political Enemies.”<sup>91</sup> Situating those who were “determined to destroy the Country” within that broader Tory fold implied that their unpatriotic ideology was actively hostile to Adams’ own. The “Tory” charge also cast these Federalists as reactionaries, opposed to the cause of independence for which revolutionaries like Adams, Benjamin Rush, and Elbridge Gerry had argued and fought. Gerry proposed distinguishing between “revolutional, and antirevolutional federalists” in the hope that the two groups might be wholly separated, the latter contained and, ultimately, dismantled.<sup>92</sup> Given the former Federalists’ well-known role in some of the most critical debates associated with the America’s founding, they could rest assured that such a differentiation would remind Americans of their own patriotic contributions even as it emphasized the historical significance of the present opposition’s disloyalty.

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At the outset of the War of 1812, colorful descriptions of “Tory” Federalists peppered the pages of Republican newspapers and the founders’ personal correspondences. The implied

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<sup>89</sup> Ellis, 128.

<sup>90</sup> Elbridge Gerry famously declared that extremist Federalists opposed to the war were guilty of “mental treason.” Cited in Buel, *America on the Brink*, 146; Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War*, 256.

<sup>91</sup> “John Adams to Jonathan Mason, Jr.,” August 13, 1813, in Founders Online, National Archives, last updated September 29, 2015, accessed online at <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-6130>. Source: *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 4, *February–August 1776*, ed. Robert J. Taylor. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979, pp. 479–481.

<sup>92</sup> “Elbridge Gerry to Henry Dearborn,” September 2, 1811. Cited as a note in “Thomas Jefferson to Henry Dearborn,” August 14, 1811, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

meanings of these charges varied widely. Some commentators simply noted similarities in the conduct of “the federalists *now* and that of Tories of *old*.”<sup>93</sup> Others maintained that “Tories” were a constituent and corrosive element of the Federalist Party whose very presence had corrupted the entire political movement, rendering the opposition illegitimate. Some leveled these accusations against the leaders of Federalist social groups, namely those of the Washington Benevolent Societies. Others alleged that select groups of ultraconservative Federalists, like the so-called Essex Junto, were in fact a “new school of tories.”<sup>94</sup> And still others disputed that charge, preferring to frame these extremists as *old* Tories. Considerable disagreement remained over who deserved to be characterized as foreign and disloyal subversives: Wayward Federalists? False Federalists? All Federalists?

Tracing the usage patterns and intended purpose of these accusations exposes extraordinary discrepancies, but it also reveals the profound and widespread anxieties that motivated Republicans, as well as former Federalists, to employ the “Tory” charge against the Federalists. With the coming of war in 1812, the future of the nascent republic appeared more precarious than ever. To the Republicans, the Federalists’ potentially subversive social organizing or seditious monarchist sympathies might be tolerated, albeit with grave suspicion, during peacetime, even as they looked forward to an era of one-party rule.<sup>95</sup> But in wartime, such behaviors and beliefs posed looming threats to the nation’s stability and, given Great Britain’s known interest in provoking insurrection, the very sanctity of the union. The era of waiting for party distinctions to fall away of their own accord had passed; only by characterizing the

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<sup>93</sup> “The Indians,” *The Reporter* (Washington, PA), June 22, 1812.

<sup>94</sup> “Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Romaine,” July 11, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*.

<sup>95</sup> Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire*, 122.

Federalists, and especially their leaders, as disloyal, illegitimate, and self-interested did their counterparts feel they could ensure national unity.<sup>96</sup>

More than simply a medium for projecting deep-set concerns about the persistency of organized partisanship and monarchist thought, the “Tory” charge operated as a political weapon. Wielded skillfully, these allegations could serve as a tool capable of denouncing both the present motives of political opponents and the future existence of political opposition. Seeking to isolate and dismantle the organized opposition, Republicans consciously used the insult as an othering device. Fearful of themselves being associated with this disloyal “other,” former Federalists like John Adams leveled their own accusations of “Toryism” against their erstwhile allies.

Examining how these charges of “Toryism” functioned at the outset of the war illuminates how tenuous party divisions remained in the early years of the republic. Americans still understood their burgeoning political institutions to be temporary and fluid in nature. References to “Toryism” reflected the Republicans’ abiding fear of the hostile intent of a partisan opposition, and that of Federalist “Anglomany” in particular.<sup>97</sup> They envisioned the coming war with Great Britain as a revolutionary restart: an opportunity to defeat the illegitimate Federalist Party and overcome organized partisan interests altogether. The ubiquity of “Tory” charges suggests a widespread, genuine belief that oppositional thought must have limits, even in a constitutional republic. Appreciating the underlying fears that prompted these accusations reveals a nation still struggling to come to terms with the meaning of its revolutionary character and the reality of its present political composition some three decades after its founding.

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<sup>96</sup> Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 298.

<sup>97</sup> Spivak, *Jefferson’s English Crisis*, 215.



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